

Question no: 01

Indus Water Treaty in abeyance: Impacts and policy Options

Introduction:

The Indus Water Treaty - signed in 1960, mediated by the World Bank has been regarded as a cornerstone of South Asian water cooperation. Initially, divided the water resources of Indus Basin, with three eastern rivers belonged to India and three western rivers to Pakistan.

However, after the Pahalgam terrorist attack in April 2025, India announced it will 'keep the treaty in abeyance'. This unilateral suspension makes a serious violation of international law. Along with this, India's bold move of keeping/suspending the treaty has serious socio-economic, legal, and geopolitical implications for Pakistan.

The Indus water treaty will remain in abeyance until Pakistan permanently renounces support for cross-border terrorism.

(India's minister S. Jaishankar)

7. Impacts of keeping the Indus water treaty in abeyance:

a) Legal and institutional erosion

The Indus water treaty (IWT) contains no clause allowing unilateral suspension. According to the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA),

the treaty continues in force until terminated by mutual consent

India's abeyance declaration therefore violates Article XII of the treaty and customary international law under the Vienna Convention.

This sets a dangerous precedent undermining global transboundary water regimes.

b) Water security impacts:

Western river (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) provides nearly 80% of its irrigation water. India's suspension announcement and its upstream dam construction projects like Rattle and Kishanganga increases uncertainty in seasonal flows.

The perception of water weaponisation escalates tensions in a region already facing climate-induced water stress.

India's move weaponises water
turning a life source into a lever
of coercion

(Aljazeera)

c) Economic and agricultural fallout

Pakistan's economy is primarily based on agricultural products, with over 40% of its labour force, is highly water-dependent. Reduced water certainty could lead to crop losses, rising food prices and energy fallouts.

Disruption affects major crops like wheat, rice and cotton.

water stress could reduce Pakistan's GDP by 6-8% annually.
(World Bank Report, 2024)

d) Energy fallouts

Hydropower ~~will~~ ^{is} ~~fall~~ ^{falling} such as Taibela and Mangla may fall reduce generation. It will lead to ~~increase~~ ^{heighten} dependency on expensive thermal energy resources.

e) Internal political divide and social repercussions

There is Punjab vs Sindh debate over water distribution, thus leading to rise in political tensions. Also, increased political resentment against India pressurized Pakistan's policymakers and chances are that water nationalism could dominate domestic discourse.

f) Regional security implications

Water insecurity can escalate India-Pakistan hostility. It accentuated the risk of transforming water into a geopolitical weapon.

The real flashpoint between India and Pakistan is not Kashmir — it's the Indus.

(Brookings Institution)

g) Erosion of trust and regional diplomacy

The suspension of IWT undermines the spirit of cooperation established since 1960. It jeopardizes future SAARC-level collaboration on climate and environment.

2. Policy Options for Pakistan

a) Strengthening technical and hydrological capacity

Pakistan must direct its resources to modernize hydro-networks to monitor river flows in real time, to verify any upstream alterations.

Moreover, enhancing water storage projects like Diamer-Bhakra, & Dasu) and irrigation efficiency would reduce dependence on India's release patterns.

b) Diplomatic and multilateral engagement

Islamabad should internationalise the issue through diplomatic outreach;

→ Raising it in UN General Assembly, OIC and SAARC forums

→ Framing India's act as a violation of international law and humanitarian norms

India's unilateral actions are setting a dangerous global precedent for transboundary water politics.
(Foreign policy journal)

c) Legal recourse and international arbitration

Pakistan must activate dispute-resolution mechanisms under article VIII and IX of the treaty — referring the issue to a neutral expert or the court of arbitration.

Also, Islamabad should invoke article 33 of the UN charter for peaceful settlement and engage the World Bank to assert its role as a facilitator.

The IWT continues to be binding. Unilateral abeyance has no legal validity.

(PCA, The Hague 2025)

d) Strategic and communication measures

Pakistan must avoid reactionary militarisation of water disputes but maintain firm diplomatic signalling.

Establishing a National Water Security Council under the Prime Minister can unify civil, military and technical coordination.

Furthermore, Islamabad should pursue quiet-back channel diplomacy to restore IWT functionality, as both nations depend on predictable hydrology for domestic

stability.

India's unilateral abeyance of the treaty represents not only breach of international law but also as an attempt to weaponise natural resources for political leverage.

Pakistan's path forward lies in building water resilience and diplomatic engagement.

By combining ~~foreign~~ policy of ~~the~~ with domestic reforms, Pakistan can protect its riparian rights.

Water should never be turned into a weapons - it is the lifeblood that sustains nations, not divides them

(UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, 2025)

Question no: 03

Devastating floods in Pakistan: Reasons and policy Options

Introduction:

Pakistan faces recurrent and devastating floods ^{posing} severe human, economic and environmental losses. These disasters are the result of environmental

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degradation, institutional weaknesses and climate change. ~~due to its multi-dimensional causes, it requires the urgent need for robust, climate-resilience policies.~~

1. Causes of Pakistan's recurring floods:

a) Intensification of monsoon due to climate change

Pakistan lies in the monsoon belt where climate change has amplified erratic rainfall patterns.

Even, the climate change made the 2022 extreme rainfall events by 73% more intense.

The monsoon has become erratic, and violent, breaking the rhythms of centuries.

(UN-Climate Report, 2023)

b) Melting of glaciers :

Rising temperatures are accelerating glacial melting in the Hindu Kush, Karakoram, and Himalayan regions. It results in retreating of glaciers, thus causing glacial lake outburst floods.

c) Degradation of land

Pakistan's forest cover is less than 5%, one of the lowest in Asia. Deforestation in key areas like Swat, Dir, Hazara) reduces soil infiltration and increases surface run-off thus worsening flash floods.

d) Siltation and outdated river infrastructure

Sedimentation in Tarbela and Mangla dams coupled with poor maintenance of embankments have reduced storage and water-carrying capacity.

Tarbela lost 28% of its capacity due to siltation — increasing downstream flooding risk.
(WAPDA report)

e) Poor urban planning and encroachment

Unplanned urbanization, housing colonies in floodplains (like in Karachi, Lahore and Hyderabad) and clogged drainage systems (nullahs) lead to urban flooding.

Our cities are expanding without vision - and draining it that our negligence.

(Dawn, editorial)

f) Agricultural practices and irrigation mismanagement

Excessive canal irrigation and lack of flood diversion channels aggravate waterlogging and breaches. Irrigation canals often overflow during monsoon especially in Sindh and South Punjab.

g) Weak disaster management

The NDMA and provincial authorities lack coordination, real-time data and enforcement capacity. Despite early warnings in 2022, response delays caused preventable losses.

2. Policy Options and Recommendations for Pakistan

i) Development of climate resilient infrastructure

Investing in climate-resilient dams, river embankments, and urban drainage systems. Also, the rehabilitation of Tabeles,

Sukkur and Guddu Barrages with modern flood gates and silt control mechanism is essential.

ii) Ecosystem-based flood management

Reforestation through Programs like Ten billion tree tsunami and wetland restoration in the Indus delta can naturally reduce the chances of overflowing of rivers.

iii) Technological and early warning Systems

By modernizing hydro-meteorological networks, satellite rainfall predictions and sms based alerts through SUPARCO and UDMA can significantly detect and prepare early warning and management.

Bangladesh's flood forecasting model offers a useful template.

iv) Financial mechanisms and climate funds access

Pakistan must ^{get} access green climate fund (GCF) adaptation funds and issue resilience bonds to finance mitigation.

infrastructure.

Pakistan contributes less than 1% to global emissions yet bears the brunt of climate injustice.

(COP-27)

Conclusion:

Pakistan's floods are a climate and governance emergency. Their recurrence is due to combined effect of human negligence and weakened institutional framework. To prevent future devastation, Pakistan must transition from reactive to proactive approach - this demands political will and coordination.