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# Role of Water Security in the National Security of India

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## ABSTRACT

*When considering threats to national security, rivers, lakes, and glaciers are often not included. Lack of water, on the other hand, is becoming a threat to the security of many countries in a way that is not usual and is not well understood. There are threats to national security from non-military sources, such as climate change, which endanger people's lives and the stability of states. Climate change, resource scarcity, communicable illnesses, natural disasters, illegal immigration, food insecurity, narcotics trafficking, and transnational criminality. Many of these threats manifest on a worldwide scale, making individual efforts futile. To stop these threats, we need political, economic, and social changes, as well as the use of armed force by the people. Non-traditional security threats are often multinational in origin, perception, and effects. Political and economic concerns, rather than interstate competition or alterations in the balance of power, are often the driving forces behind these events. Non-traditional security threats include a lack of resources and migration that doesn't follow the rules. Both of these things can lead to social unrest and political instability. Human meddling with the delicate natural order often causes other risks, like climate change, which can have devastating effects on nations and people and can be difficult to reverse. Most countries' efforts to address these issues on their own fall short, calling for international and regional collaboration. In this paper we tried to show how water affects the national security of India.*

**Keywords:** National Security, Water, Non-Traditional Security, Resources

## I. INTRODUCTION

Water is crucial to a person's survival. It is crucial to a country's short-and long-term economic and social ambitions. This development plan takes into account a wide range of issues, from traditional to unconventional security challenges, which all have an impact on the overall national security policy. The Indian government has a comprehensive plan in place to protect against both traditional and novel threats to the nation's supply of clean water. Threats to India's national security strategy are discussed, with both traditional and non-traditional security perspectives being highlighted. India's security policy is being tested most severely by the

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emerging difficulties of Trans boundary river water sharing with its neighbours and the repercussions on geopolitics and strategy. In this paper, I have tried to lay out some of the reasons why India should be concerned about these specific challenges.

The availability of water is critical to human survival. It also plays an important role in any country's medium-and long-term economic development goals. Economic and environmental safety are two aspects of national or regional water security that should be prioritised in planning. Food, health, and economic security all depend on other forms of security, but water security is the foundation of all of them. Thus, river courses and other freshwater resources have become an increasingly important aspect of the overall development strategy for modern nations. The increased need for irrigation and agricultural production, urbanisation, industrialization, population growth, and climate change are only some of the challenges we face today. As a result, river flows that affect many different regions have entered into the political sphere. These days, ensuring a reliable supply of clean water is a major issue all around the world. Freshwater scarcity and increasing environmental stress are two potential sources of conflict between and among riparian governments. As freshwater supplies and quality deteriorate, the likelihood of conflict between and among riparian countries rises. Wars over water have been on the rise in several regions, including the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Northern Africa.

India, a country in South Asia, is having issues with river water that flows across international borders. India's agriculture strategy places a premium on freshwater because of rising concerns about the nation's food, health, and economic security. To combat these issues, India has built numerous multipurpose dams on the Indus, Ganga, Brahmaputra, and other rivers. However, the overexploitation of water resources by dams and agricultural projects in higher riparian states today poses a serious threat to India's water security. South Asian riparian governments have been involved in an acrimonious political struggle over the rivers that flow across international borders. Numerous dam-related projects have been developed on the Ganga, Brahmaputra, Barak, and Indus River basins, each having an impact on food security, the environment, and people's ability to make a living.

China, which is a part of India, is an upper riparian state on the Brahmaputra River, which flows along India's border with Bangladesh. With its dams being the principal cause of water scarcity in both Bangladesh and India, China is seen as a serious danger to India's water security in this scenario. Because of the difficulties posed by trans boundary rivers, water has become a focal point of India's national security plan. India should be aware of the significance of resolving trans boundary river issues with its neighbours, whether those issues constitute conventional

security dilemmas or unconventional security concerns.

In this paper, we will look at the perceived danger to India's national security strategy from both traditional and nontraditional security perspectives. India's national security is threatened by rising tensions with its riparian states over the equitable distribution of water from trans boundary rivers, which threaten India's geopolitical and strategic interests in maintaining the integrity of its borders (traditional). It's important to strike a balance between ensuring people have enough money, food, and medical care, so these problems are intertwined with that goal (non-traditional).

## **II. STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN INDIA'S WATER SECURITY**

It has been previously stated that India, a developing nation, needs a substantial amount of water to ensure its continued provision of electricity, food, health care and economic stability. Numerous mega-projects are currently being carried out along the Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra, Barak, and other rivers because of how important water is to the Indian economy and society. The National River Linking Project is illustrative of India's efforts to secure energy supplies in service of its long-term economic agenda. As part of its National River Linking Project, India has been building dams of varying sizes. India's national development strategy still prioritises the construction of large and medium-sized dams. India's water security plan is most often represented by the construction of dams like the Tipaimukh and Teesta, as well as the Farakka barrage. The Indian government is building these structures with the long-term purpose of ensuring water supplies for agriculture, industry, and households. India is struggling to achieve its goal of water security in the face of climate change, increased urbanisation, and a growing population. Food, energy, and economic security are all crucial to India's progress, and both of these can't be guaranteed without water security. India, unlike China, has an upper riparian nation over the Brahmaputra River, giving it more influence. India has stronger access to freshwater resources because it controls major river basins, including the Indus, GBM, and Brahmaputra in Bangladesh, as well as those rivers' tributaries, the Teesta, Mahakali, and Barak. But many dams have made it much more difficult for governments along the river to work together, and this has become an important issue in contemporary South Asian geopolitics.

### **India and the Water Security Dilemma**

The Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers present water security issues for India and its neighbours in China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal, and are thus the subject of most of the academic investigation into trans boundary river concerns in South Asia. The government's plan to maintain territorial integrity could be influenced either directly or indirectly by these factors.

The fundamental security issue in water security is the increasing threats to the trans boundary river between and among riparian states, which can have an effect on state security, territory security, and military security strategy. This section looks at how water-related worries are seen as a danger, with an emphasis on the following scenario of water-sharing diplomacy, conflict, and disputes.

### **Water Diplomacy Between India and China**

China and India frequently come into conflict over water due to their disagreements over transboundary rivers in South Asia. As a country that is rapidly expanding its influence in the region, China is increasing its demands on the water supply at the expense of other riparian states (South Asia). The security of China's water supply has been an issue for decades. China has launched a water resource management policy to ensure its food and energy supply. China's water strategy for increased development and the country's Twelfth Five-Year Plan both assess progress toward this objective. China is building the South-North Water Diversion project to make sure it has a steady supply of clean water. All of these considerations inform India's approach to Brahmaputra River water diplomacy. China's rapid growth strategy requires massive water diversion projects, which threaten India's development goals like the National River Linking Project and could lead to friction and conflict. India has brought up Chinese dam projects because they hurt water flows and have bad effects on the environment, like reducing biodiversity and making water levels change too much.

China's stance toward unilateral initiatives, such as the South-North Water Diversion Project, increases the risk of a water conflict. In addition, China's refusal to ratify the deal and acquiesce to water sharing has been a major source of stress between the two countries. China was one of three states that voted against ratifying the Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of the International Watercourses (Biba, 2018). In order to defuse the rising tensions, it is imperative that both countries take the initiative to find a solution to the problem of equal opportunity for both. India, as a lower riparian state than China, needs to be aware of the importance of water sharing. First, the Tibetan Plateau, which China currently controls, is the source of the vast majority of South Asia's transboundary rivers. Second, both countries have limited water-sharing agreements and treaties, giving China, as the upper riparian state, the flexibility to act independently. Third, the Brahmaputra River has its source in Tibet and flows into Arunachal Pradesh, a territory of significance to both China and India. China and India have had a long-standing rivalry and a territorial dispute in Arunachal Pradesh, which also affects Ladakh and Sikkim (Yasuda, 2020), which has made it hard for them to work together on water issues.

### **India and other downstream countries**

For a very long time, India and Pakistan have been at conflict over who should be responsible for how much of the Indus River's water. Political tensions have been high between the two nations because of water disputes involving the Ganga River and the Indus River. The Indus Waterway Basin became a shared resource between the two countries after their respective independences in 1947. India has become an upper riparian state of Pakistan because it now has all six of the water sources for the Indus river system. The World Bank helped bring the two countries together and find a peaceful way to settle their disagreement. The World Bank helped the two countries talk about how to share the water from the Indus River, and in 1960, the Indus River Water Treaty was signed. Projects involving dams built after the accord have proven to be the biggest impediment to a resumption of hostilities. Violence has been caused by many projects, such as the Uri-II Power Project, the Kishanganga Project, the Baglihar Dam, and the Tulbul Navigation Project. The long-term management and utilisation of the Indus river system necessitates cooperation between India and Pakistan. As a result of all the attention it has received in the media, the ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan over the use of a river's water has captured the political attention of leaders on both sides of the border. The war between these two countries is currently being securitized. The planned water discharge from India's Indus River project is being viewed as a war act by Pakistan (Water Conflict Chronology Timeline List, n.d.). Pakistani civil unrest can be traced back to the country's water shortage. Pakistan has been named by the World Economic Forum as the country most at risk of a water shortage due to terrorist attacks. Shimla in India, and Lahore in Pakistan, are experiencing unrest due to water scarcity.

All of these water-related worries centre on Indian dams, which have reduced the amount of water available in Pakistani territory. Thus, the Indus watershed has been highlighted as a potential flashpoint for war between India and Pakistan. Political figures in the area are concerned. According to Major General Asif Ghafoor, a spokesman for the Pakistani military, "any future confrontation that comes will be on these concerns." In addition, he suggests that we give it serious thought.

Water sharing between India and Bangladesh is another issue in the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna river basin. The rivers Ganga, Barak, and Teesta have been at the centre of a prospective water-sharing conflict between the two countries in recent decades. Bangladesh had raised the concerns multiple times at international forums before the 1996 signing of the Ganga pact. Bangladesh has raised the Ganges water crisis at international forums like the Conference of Non-Aligned States in Colombo and the sixth Islamic Foreign Ministers' Conference of the

Economic and Social Commission for Asia in Islamabad. (Hossain, 1998) Since its approval in 1996, the Ganga water accord has effectively resolved the problem. Both countries have major problems associated with the Teesta River and the Barak River. Since India is worried about Bangladesh from a geostrategic point of view, it is very important for India to solve these problems. Because of its proximity to India, Bangladesh plays a vital role in the country's neighbourhood strategy. India's Act East Policy is impacted by the geopolitical situation in Bangladesh. Maintaining peace and security between the two countries is critical for India. because the river concerns are having an effect on their bilateral relations. The Belt and Road Initiative is also being implemented in Bangladesh, which is sponsored by China (BRI). Both situations are made worse by China's involvement in South Asia.

### **Water's Non-Traditional Security Concerns**

Because of issues with transboundary river water sharing, India confronts non-traditional threats to its agricultural, economic, health, and ecological security. Irrigation and water diversion projects have created security risks for riparian countries. Water has become a top national security concern because of the crucial need for it in agriculture and in ensuring food security. Indeed, water security, which is connected to food security, has an effect on economic stability. When it comes to protecting our country, environmental factors cannot be ignored. As more and more dams are built for a variety of purposes, safety concerns have arisen.

These three reasons have combined to make India nervous about new types of security threats. The availability of safe drinking water has become an issue of national security in recent years. The construction of dams in the upper riparian states, in particular, poses a serious threat to human life and the Indian economy. In fact, many people lose their lives, become homeless, and lose their land as a direct result of flooding and water shortages or crises. China's plans to build dams pose a serious threat to India's environment, people's lives, and ways of making a living. However, as the upstream state of countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh, India needs to be aware of emerging security threats. The quality of life in many places in India has been negatively impacted by the influx of Bangladeshi migrants seeking refuge from water scarcity or flooding in their home country. Both the escalation of ethnic conflict and the formation of insurgency-related crises are affected by this phenomenon. For instance, in Northeast India, where insurgency movements and ethnic conflict have emerged, migration from Bangladesh has played a key role. A number of experts blamed Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh for the 2012 ethnic violence between Bodos and Muslims. It's no secret that people in Bangladesh and Northeast India have been on the move due to unease about the prospect of dam development in their areas. Several groups in the public sphere are vocally opposed to the

Tipaimukh dam's planned construction on the Barak River because of environmental and resettlement concerns. The area lost to flooding in India is estimated at 311 square kilometres, of which 229 square kilometres are forest reserve and agricultural land. This will force the relocation of almost 60,000 people in Manipur, India, and 40,000 people in Bangladesh in 2012 alone (Mehta). However, the dam's site is now in an active earthquake zone, which has the potential to trigger large earthquakes.

National and international development policies are also influenced by migration patterns. Its negative impact on Indian policy has already led to increased political instability. The NRC and the Citizenship Amendment Bill are two such examples (CAB). The transboundary river water sharing issues are the root cause of all these conflicts inside the Indian Union. Furthermore, India has been seeing an increase in unconventional security challenges. For instance, political arguments have been made against the National River Linking Project on the basis that it will severely impact human relocation and ecological equilibrium. Countries further down the river, such as Bangladesh and Pakistan, have also been negatively impacted, sparking heated debates. Both countries have voiced concerns about a possible water deficit in the region, which they attribute to India's national strategy of population displacement. Nearly a hundred million people in Bangladesh would be affected.

### **III. THE WAY FORWARD**

National security is at risk from threats to water supply and other issues related to water since it is water that determines national values. Due to its importance and widespread application in modern development plans, water has emerged as a novel security threat. Even more so in agrarian economies, where access to clean water is crucial to economic growth. Issues related to water security, like shortages or crises, can have a knock-on effect on national might and economic development. Recent international and security studies, especially peace and conflict studies, have paid less attention to water security problems than other areas of national security, such as military security. However, in the modern world, this is becoming increasingly important as we learn more about the wide range of water-related issues, from peace and quiet to physical and moral safety. It has big effects on a lot of different things, like the economy, the military, and social safety nets. Water-related threats to national security are growing more challenging, especially in emerging nations like those in South Asia. Among the riparian governments of South Asia, water security concerns have become a geopolitical problem. The research concludes that in South Asia, including China, water security issues have become divisive in bilateral and multilateral interactions. The territorial conflict and their existing

problems with military security may be affected by these factors. As the territorial battle heats up, it's crucial to remember that nuclear-armed countries like China, India, and Pakistan have nuclear-related difficulties.

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