International Relations · GS - II

Examine how the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty has affected the institutional framework for water cooperation between India and Pakistan. What challenges does this pose for regional stability and transboundary water governance?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Indus Waters Treaty, Permanent Indus Commission, transboundary river governance, water security, bilateral relations, dispute-resolution mechanisms, regional stability

Model Answer

Introduction

The Indus Waters Treaty (1960), brokered by the World Bank, established a framework for sharing the Indus river system between India and Pakistan. Its suspension has disrupted an important institutional channel for bilateral water cooperation.

Implications for water cooperation

1. **Institutional disruption:** The Permanent Indus Commission, established for regular communication and information exchange, faces constraints.

2. **Reduced predictability:** Restrictions on routine cooperation can increase uncertainty regarding river flows, projects and water management.
3. **Dispute-resolution challenges:** The treaty's technical and legal mechanisms for resolving disagreements become difficult to operationalise.
4. **Regional stability:** Water-related disagreements can intensify existing political tensions and reduce opportunities for confidence-building.

Challenges for transboundary governance

- **Climate change:** Glacial melt, changing precipitation and extreme floods require coordinated basin-level management.
- **Data sharing:** Hydrological information is essential for flood forecasting, irrigation planning and disaster preparedness.
- **Trust deficit:** Security concerns and competing interpretations of treaty obligations complicate technical cooperation.
- **Human security:** Farmers and communities dependent on river systems may face uncertainty.

Conclusion

Sustainable transboundary water governance requires predictable institutions, scientific cooperation and credible dispute-resolution channels. Addressing security concerns while preserving communication mechanisms remains important for regional stability.

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