

# Streams of trouble

As demand for water becomes unmanageable, conflicts are brewing between nations that share transboundary freshwater reserves. Such conflicts are primarily plaguing developing countries of Africa, Asia and South America

## Water conflict triggers

### ● Development dispute:

Where water systems are a major source of contention in economic and social development

### ● Military intervention:

Where water systems are used by a nation or state as a weapon during military action

### ● Political intervention:

Where water systems are used by a nation, state, or non-state actor for a political goal

### ● Terrorism:

Where water systems are either targets or tools of violence or coercion by non-state actors

## History

### Water treaties are as old as civilisation

The history of international water treaties dates back to 2500 BC, when the two Sumerian city-states of Lagash and Umma crafted an agreement ending a water dispute along the Tigris River—often said to be the first treaty of any kind. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, more than 3,600 treaties related to international water resources have been drawn up since 805 AD. Majority of these treaties deal with navigation and boundary demarcation.

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Data sources: United Nations, Pacific Institute, Global Water Partnership, US Central Intelligence Agency and news reports

For more infographics, visit: [www.downtoearth.org.in/infographics](http://www.downtoearth.org.in/infographics)

The information on the conflict zones is for the period between 2000 and 2016

Map not to scale

## Global scenario

# 45%

earth's land surface covered by water basin

# 276

transboundary basins in the world

# 148

countries that fall within international basins

# 3,600

international water treaties

# 40%

world population in the countries that fall in international basins

### ISRAEL, PALESTINE, JORDAN & LEBANON

Israel, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine have been fighting for a long time over sharing the Jordan River. Israel seized control of the area's water resources when it took over the West Bank in 1967, and has been managing them as it sees fit ever since. In June 2016, Israel reduced the amount of water it supplies to Palestinian communities in the northern West Bank

### AFGHANISTAN, TAJIKISTAN & UZBEKISTAN

Tajikistan plans to build the Rogun Dam on a tributary of Amu Darya, one of the largest rivers in Central Asia that originates in war-torn Afghanistan and flows through the fractured border region of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Once completed, it will be the tallest dam in the world. Fearing irrigation shortfalls, Uzbekistan has imposed tariff and travel restrictions on Tajikistan

### INDIA, PAKISTAN & CHINA

India has had estranged relations with the two neighbours over water sharing for a long time. Sharing the Indus River with Pakistan has been a problem since Independence. Partially resolved through a treaty in 1960s, the crisis has been rekindled by the recent terror activities by Pakistan. With China, the problem with the Brahmaputra River started after the Indo-China war in 1962

### LAOS, CAMBODIA, VIETNAM & THAILAND

The construction of the Don Sahong hydropower project by Laos has cut off a main fish migration channel in the Mekong River, compromising the livelihoods of millions of people along the river basin. The project is being opposed by Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand as fisheries in these countries will take a major hit

### EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA & HONDURAS

Reckless extraction of minerals by multinational companies has led to surface water pollution that has triggered civil unrest and mass migration in the three Central American countries. UN estimates that the water situation in the region will only aggravate in the future due to climate change and population growth

### BRAZIL

Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, two of Brazil's largest cities, ran dry after consecutive droughts in 2015. Water scarcity became so acute that residents started migrating to other parts of the country for clean water

### NIGERIA

Population explosion and pollution in the Niger Delta are the primary reasons for the water crisis. The situation is so bad that regular conflicts have been happening in the area between farmers and pastoralists over water sources since 1992. Terror activities by the Boko Haram terror group have added to the crisis

### ETHIOPIA, EGYPT

In 2011, Ethiopia started building the Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile to generate electricity. Its potential impact on water supplies, particularly downriver, is a grave concern in Egypt, which is opposing the project. The dam will be ready by 2017

### SOUTH AFRICA

The country faces chronic shortage of energy and water, which have been a cause of civil unrest. The last major protest happened in 2014 that killed several people in the northern town of Brits

### SYRIA, TURKEY AND IRAQ

Turkey plans to construct the Ilisu Dam on the Tigris River as part of the Southeastern Anatolian Project that has 22 dams and 19 hydroelectric plants in the Tigris-Euphrates basin. Iraq and Syria see the Turkish project as a serious threat because the Tigris and Euphrates rivers meet 98% of Iraq and 90% of Syria's water requirements. Some analysts blame the current water crisis in northern Iraq and Syria for the rise of terror groups like ISIS in the region