INFORMAL DIPLOMACY IN BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER BASIN

CAN IT BE AN ENTRY POINT TO TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION?

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Yarlung – Zangpo – Brahmaputra – Jamuna River Basin (Brahmaputra River Basin)

- Shared by China, India, Bhutan and Bangladesh
- The 6th largest river in the world in terms of water resource
- Immense potential for regional development

**Key challenges are**

- Regional geopolitics
- Mistrust, suspicion, lack of communication
- Failure to identify opportunities of cooperation/cost of non-cooperation
- Lack of institutional capacity
What does Transboundary Cooperation mean? (coordination between states, where they collaborate to achieve common interests with mutual benefits)

- What are the common interests, who decides?
- What precisely can be the entry point of such cooperation?
- Can informal transboundary dialogues and diplomacy be an entry point of cooperation?
- Are state the only and most important actors in international relations?
Formal Dialogues in Brahmaputra have not yielded many results so far

• Why?
  • direct mutual benefits from the water resources
  • diverse national interests of the riparian countries

• Challenge?
  • driven by the political moods of the riparian countries
  • an official process of transboundary interactions
  • complex and inherently political process
Informal diplomacy in Brahmaputra River Basin

• What?
  • communication at different tracks and between different actors
  • Identify avenues of cooperation
  • broadening the definition of “cooperation”.

• How?
  • civil society collaborations on transboundary concerns
  • joint research by academics for knowledge creation
  • joint stories by media personnel for the river basin.

• Why?
  • build trust between multiple stakeholders sharing the same rivers
  • create socio-political environments that enable potential “formal” cooperation
Moving from informal to a formal process - Brahmaputra Dialogue
Common Themes and Common Interest

Data and knowledge sharing
- Track 1.5
- Track 2
- Track 3

Collaborations
- Track 1.5
- Track 2
- Track 3

Bridging the gap
- Track 1.5
- Track 2
- Track 3

Multi-track cooperation
- Track 1.5
- Track 2
- Track 3

Re-interpretation of cooperation

- Active
- More active than passive
- More passive than active
- Passive
Challenges

• Generating Political willingness
• Sustainability of the dialogue
• Gender (women voices)
"Multi stakeholder collaboration is already paving the way in the Brahmaputra Basin and can be seen as an entry point of cooperation among the Brahmaputra Basin countries"
Thank you!

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