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Water Diplomacy as an approach to regional cooperation in South Asia: A case from the Brahmaputra Basin

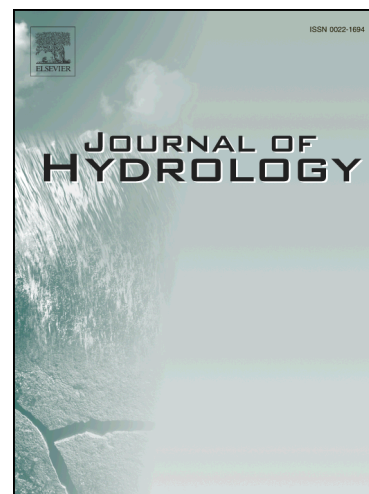
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**Water Diplomacy as an approach to regional cooperation in South Asia:
A case from the Brahmaputra Basin**

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Water Diplomacy as an approach to regional cooperation in South Asia:

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Abstract

The Yarlung Zangbo-Brahmaputra – Jamuna river basin (*further referred to as Brahmaputra River Basin*) is one of the most important river systems in South Asia. It originates on the Tibetan Plateau and links Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, and India. Despite being an important river system of South Asia, with an immense potential for regional development, very little progress has been made so far at regional level to manage this transboundary river. Apart from stereotypical upstream-downstream syndromes, a lack of trust, an atmosphere of hostility, and an asymmetric information and power situation as also the absence of regional principles or frameworks make transboundary interaction between the Brahmaputra riparian countries complex and challenging. The lack of information and knowledge regarding the river itself makes decision-making further complicated. Negotiation for a basin-wide treaty on cooperation in the absence of trust is a non-starter for the Brahmaputra basin, for it may result in asymmetric cooperation, opening up ground for future conflicts. To avoid such asymmetric cooperation, information-rich, multilateral informal dialogues need to take place to develop an accepted definition of cooperation, which meets the needs of all riparian states.

The article provides an outline of the current issues in the Brahmaputra river basin and illustrates the need for multitrack and multi-stakeholder dialogues in the Brahmaputra region. The paper is inspired by the ‘Brahmaputra Dialogue’ project

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