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The Brahmaputra: An ongoing tale of the water war between India and China

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Abstract
According to the United Nations, over 50% of the global population will reside in nations experiencing water stress or scarcity by 2025. South Asia is a water-scarce region. China and India are engaged in a dispute over the resources of the Brahmaputra River, which flows through regions in Asia with a history of territorial conflicts. The development of large dams and diversion projects along the river is a significant cause of concern and tension between the two nations, as it affects the livelihoods of millions of people who depend on the river for their survival and economic well-being. Amidst the Doklam crisis, the Brahmaputra problem also emerged due to the lack of collaboration or agreement between the two nations. There is presently no water-sharing treaty in place, and there are no ongoing negotiations for an agreement. Indian media and experts have emphasized the perils associated with these dams for India, such as the possibility of diverting water to other regions of China and the storage of water, which might render it unavailable to India during the yearly dry period. Therefore, the paper aims to emphasize international laws and conflict resolution strategies.

Keywords: Environment, hydro-politics, dam construction, international treaties, water crisis

Introduction
Access to freshwater is fundamental for every community's daily lives, including housing, cultural practices, agriculture, energy production, industry, transportation, and navigation. However, the availability of water may alter over time and place due to the erratic patterns of precipitation and temperature brought about by climate change. U.N. projections show that by 2025, more than half of the global population will reside in nations with insufficient or scarce water supplies. One such area is South Asia [1]. Along the Brahmaputra River, which runs through regions of Asia where there have historically been territorial conflicts, China and India are vying for resources. China, which has more than 20% of the world's population but less than 7% of its freshwater resources, is at odds with India over plans to build dams and divert the river. Since Tibet has more water than northern China, the distribution of available water is different. However, Chinese cross-border projects in Tibet negatively affect countries downstream [2]. The Brahmaputra River is essential to India for two reasons: first, it contributes 29% of the country's total river discharge, which is essential to the Indian River Connection Project; and second, the Brahmaputra Basin generates roughly 44% of India's hydroelectric power.

From its source in the Himalayas, the Brahmaputra River flows almost 2,000 miles to its destination in the Bay of Bengal via Bangladesh, India, and China. Along its course, millions of people depend on it for survival. A third of the surface water in India, which is home to roughly 17% of the world's population, comes from rivers that are not native to the country. On the other hand, China has started several projects to build dams and divert water, which could seriously alter the course and flow of the river and cause serious harm to those downstream. As India's population and water needs increase, water scarcity will increase the nation's economic and social costs [3]. Concerns over water security, a combination of factors such as a growing population, a booming economy, and intense global rivalry for energy resources, as well as other factors, have a major influence on China-India relations.

Features of the Brahmaputra River's Structure
The Brahmaputra River flows through China (Tibet), India, and Bangladesh for a distance of

2,880 km from a channel along the Ganges before flowing into the Bay of Bengal. "It covers the first 1,625 km in Tibet, the next 918 km in India, and the final 337 km in Bangladesh. The Brahmaputra River is known as the Tsang PO in Tibet and China. It is the largest river flowing in southeastern Tibet and north-eastern India. Of the 580,000 km2 that the Brahmaputra River drains, 50.5 percent is in China, 33.6 percent is in India, 8.1 percent is in Bangladesh, and 7.8 percent is in Bhutan [4]." The river has several names, including the "Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet (named Zangbo), the Brahmaputra in India, and Jamuna in Bangladesh, indicating the variety and topography of the people along the Ever. Arunachal Pradesh (41.94/0), Assam (36.3%), Nagaland (5.6%), Meghalaya (6%), Sikkim (3.7%), and West Bengal (6.5%) "are among the Indian states that are part of the Brahmaputra Riva Basin—percentage of shares. The Brahmaputra River has many tributaries; the two most significant ones on the left are the Lhasa (Kyi), which flows past the Tibetan canir-al of Lhzsa and joins the Tsangpo at Qüxü, and the Raka Zangbo (Raka' Tsangpo), which mingles the Ever west of Xigazé (Shigatse). At Zela (Tsela Dzong), the Nyazg Qu (Gyamda) river mixes with the river from the north. A second river, the Nyang Qu (Xyzng Chu), joins the Tsangpo near Xigazé on the right bank [5].

Why Is There a Conflict or Controversy?

For years, the Indian media, security professionals, and some foreign commentators have warned of an impending OEZ water war between the two nations. Numerous news pieces on this subject have been published in India's local newspapers, such as the Times of India, as well as international publications, including "the Huffington Post, the New York Times, the Guardian, the South China Morning Post, and the Washington Times." NDA, the Indian Express, and India Today. Christopher authored a paper for the Naval College 2013 titled "Water War: The Brahmaputra River and Sino-Indian Relations." In this piece, he makes the case that China's determination to continue building dams indicates its careless water management, which might put it in a confrontation with India [6]. Water issues are becoming more pressing for China and India as they strive to become significant global powers, support their populations, and take on new responsibilities. This issue is made worse by its general nature: the Brahmaputra River runs across a large portion of India and borders China.

The struggle for water resources in the basin might lead to violence jeopardizing human security, as China and India have voiced in the last ten years. Renowned Indian Water writer Brahma Chellaney of Inida cautioned about Chinese attempts to construct a dam in Brahmaputra in her 2011 book "Asia's New Battle Ground." One of the world's greatest rivers, the powerful Brahmaputra, dried up on February 27, 2012. The residents of Pasigat, in the eastern region of Siang in Arunachal Pradesh, a state acknowledged by China but governed by India, reported that the ordinarily mighty river had abruptly shrunk [7].

China is now highlighting large river basins and inter-river water transfer projects. Before the Brahmaputra River approaches India, China hopes to resurface the water in the north. Fresh water for China also comes from the Brahmaputra. The rising need for freshwater has prompted the building of artificial structures such as dams and barrages. China hopes to raise power production from 960 gigawatts in 2010 to 1900 GW by 2020 to fulfill its future energy demands. In China's development route, large-scale hydroelectricity projects for energy and water are strategically crucial for food supply. The area is facing water conservation issues due to the tongue. In contrast, India's present water supply is around 740 billion m3, despite the country's projected 1.5 trillion m3 water demand by 2030, according to a McKinsey 2009 assessment. Therefore, unless coordinated action is done, a large portion of India's coastline is predicted to experience acute shortages by 2030 [9].

Bilateral Agreement about the Brahmaputra River

The need for improved management of this significant river basin by "China, India, and Bangladesh" has been brought to light by the current flood crisis in the Brahmaputra and the sharing of satellite data displaying the areas of Assam and China affected by flooding. Though "the Brahmaputra is the world's fifth-largest river," there isn't a water distribution treaty in place at the moment, nor is one being negotiated, in contrast to the central water systems of the Indus and Ganga. "Progress has yet to be achieved in the continuing discussions among political leaders and other stakeholders on multilateral, regional cooperation for water management in the Brahmaputra basin [9]." China, however, always utilizes the Tibet River to further its foreigutilizes objectives. The Doklam dispute has brought up the topic of Brahmaputra because of the two nations' lack of collaboration or understanding. Since the two nations have not agreed on a water-sharing agreement or any other matter, water issues are frequently mistaken for border disputes. The two nations do, however, have an agreement with China that mandates upstream nations share river hydrology data during the monsoon season, which runs from May 15 to October 15. Most data is river water levels to alert nations downstream of impending floods [10]. On a bilateral level, India and China have a Memorandum of Understanding (Memorandum of Understanding 2013); "this was signed after the 2007 Agreement's expiry and focuses on the provision of hydrological data on the Brahmaputra Rivet during floods between China and India [11]." Even after signing a memorandum of understanding, China and India refused to share this information with their neighbors. For instance, "China and India only exchange hydrological data on the Brahmaputra River with Bangladesh and India during the lean season." Throughout the year, and particularly during times of flooding, data is not shared. The MOU from 2013 does. Exclude any dispute resolution procedure about data exchange. The MOU's legal scope is restricted to rivers, so eliminating other bodies of water limits the scope of colmakestion [12].

To guide the Indian reaction, one must first understand the Chinese mentality about its transboundary rivers and political connections. The historical exchanges between China and India over water show three essential themes. First, the Brahmaputra deal between China and India must be revised in the context of essential considerable bilateral ties. China has committed to providing "hydrological data on the Yarlung Tsangpo/Brahmaputra (YTB) during the monsoon season per the present arrangement." Given that it has blatantly refused to collaborate for years, why did China agree to work with other riparian nations that the Mekong passes through in the first place? One reason would be that

"China's larger political aim of projecting an image of a responsible neighbor is well-aligned with this cooperative gesture." However, additional collaboration on water is at a standstill after twenty years of talks. At most, China's contribution to the accord is a piecemeal discount. Moreover, the border dispute often overshadows talks over YTB. China and India signed the 2002 Memorandum of Understanding extension to share information on the Brahmaputra River in 2013, despite the Chinese army occupying the border in the Depsang Valley in Ladakh. However, there has yet to be progress in discussing who has the right to control the amount of "water and the impact of dams and diversions on the river's upper reaches." Despite tense bilateral relations, sino-Indian history is full of examples of cooperation across transboundary rivers. Before ministerial discussions, many border incursions have occurred between China and India in the last several years [13].

Finally, local policy and development imperatives shape India's stance on the YTB problem. The Brahmaputra is a significant source for India's diversion plans. This project links the country's rivers and is seen as a potent center that would eventually satisfy the country's energy demands. To show support for its internal political constituency, particularly Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, India aims to use the lower coast maps. Because India was seen as an "alleged bully" for sharing water with "China, Bangladesh, and Pakistan have attacked India" for its duplicity in dealings with that country. Although India has maintained a certain amount of "Chinese threat" to conceal its administrative failings and defend its dam-building efforts to local audiences, concerns about China's subversive ambitions may be legitimate.

Furthermore, these bilateral agreements cover some, mainly localized components of the more general problem of localized water resources management. Without an institutional mechanism to address "water management at the river basin level," the Brahmaputra Basin needs a standard procedure for data distribution between riparians despite bilateral agreements. This is in contrast to other international river basins. As previously said, nations will purposefully create nebulous channels for information sharing even in the event of a consensus to guarantee more resource "flexibility in the face of uncertainty or to further domestic political agendas." Despite the possibility of starting or participating in basin cooperation, China and India only have bilateral interactions, mainly regarding transboundary rivers. The involvement of multiple countries, particularly in the Brahmaputra basin, is another issue with bilateralism that China and India support. "China is willing to continue multilateralism when it has its interests and greater trust and participation between China and the participating countries; in this regard, its multilateral policy on international river systems will be different and more general in its relations with other riparian states [14]."

China's concern

Nearly all "the world's population resides in China, although only 7% of its water resources exist. The nation is dealing with a water deficit, and pollution is a factor in the country's water demands. A quarter of China's river water is now deemed unsafe for drinking, agricultural, or even industrial use, according to the country's Ministry of Environmental Protection." Furthermore, even though China is almost self-sufficient in water—all of its renewable freshwater resources originate from domestic rivers—its surface water distribution is not evenly distributed throughout its territory. The south and southwest of the nation have the majority of the freshwater resources, which is advantageous for the farmers and industries in those areas but dries out the nation's industrial north and wheat-producing core. Beijing has implemented the South-North, North-West, a very ambitious hydrological engineering plan to correct this imbalance. "China hopes to transport 45 billion cubic meters of water annually by 2050 through a network of canals, aqueducts, and tunnels [15]." China has promised India to protect and manage water resources wisely in the Himalayan Trans River, which runs from the upper Himalayan border to China. At an average height of around 4,000 meters, the system starts to generate power and may be used as a helpful tool for preventing floods. The lower coastal nations intend to produce non-water-bearing energy for China via dam building. The Chinese government will always uphold the values of justice and reasonableness and give equal weight to the building section of water in the interests of downstream areas. This hydro project "does not have a large capacity and does not need to store water, and it does not affect the environment and the environment [16]."

India's concern

Despite China's assurances, there has been a stir in India regarding "reported plans to build more dams closer to the Line of Actual Control. Indian media and analysts have emphasized the risks that India faces, including the possibility of water being diverted to other parts of China, the storage of water that would make it unavailable to India during the annual dry season, or the sudden release of water during the monsoon months that could cause flash flooding."

Other Indian authorities have mentioned taking more proactive steps to lessen the possible effects of the proposed new Chinese dam, including perhaps constructing their own dam. "Teerath Singh Mehra, the commissioner of India's Ministry of Water Resources and the country's delegate to the India-China Expert-Level Mechanism on Transborder Rivers," was quoted by Reuters as saying that the proposal for a new 10,000-megawatt dam in "India is "under consideration at the highest level in the government." Nevertheless, India has a mixed record for building new dams, complicated by protracted delays brought on by both localized protests and technical difficulties. Further localized, neither the location nor the means of resolving the issues raised by a Chinese mega-dam in the "Great Bend" region are known [17]."

The Indian government's measured response to reports of Chinese plans to construct a large dam for national security purposes (rather than a conventional run-of-the-river dam that would not store water, divert it, or release it all at once) stands out in the context of extremely strained relations between the two nations over north-eastern territory and borders. Despite the fact that discussions over rivers have only just entered the Sino-Indian dialogue, riparian problems are quickly becoming a cause of contention rather than cooperation.

Strategies for Handling Conflicts

Conflict over how and where water is administered stems

from something other than a shortage or scarcity of water. Many regulations are required to control water consumption and provide just and sustainable governance where something other than water is limited in places where water is limited. Unfortunately, water management organizations—particularly those in developing nations—lack the organizational and human resources necessary to create and carry out "comprehensive management plans that effectively support the installation of suitable management mechanisms."

The Parties must decide if entering a cooperative agreement will result in more opportunities than hazards from not cooperating. Among the risk categories that decision-makers have chosen are the following dispute resolution techniques [18].

Knowledge and ability

At this point, the parties start to worry that they could end up in an embarrassing situation when they get to the bargaining table. There are two primary ways that risk might appear: either (1) there is a sense that the parties lack correct knowledge about the typical water flow, or (2) there is a greater awareness of the potential of the discussions than there is among the others.

Voice and accountability

The worry held by decision-makers is that local organizations, other singers, or third parties could fail. The organizations that their parties won't be satisfied to be pretty assessed when the proceedings' outcomes are compiled and think the suggested structural agreement could not be profitable.

Both autonomy and sovereignty

The perception of danger associated with the decision-making process's jurisdictional authority is present in this risk. The struggle for autonomous decision-making and the desire to be in charge of infrastructure, resources, and development goals are equally important.

Access and Equity

In every agreement, the parties take great care to ensure equity, whether it relates to project costs, benefit streams, or water amounts and characteristics. The parties also want to make sure that they have the legal right to utilize the watercourse, which might include the ability to utilize historical customs, access to a river that flows through or into certain lands, and advantages depending on the relative sizes of the regions or their contributions to the hollow.

Consistency and Assistance

The last risk is crucial for "all parties involved, but particularly for those with strong and varied stakeholders." In making their choice, the parties will consider the agreement's support or opposition from the major stakeholders and the public's perception. Once this danger is removed, the parties may start collaborating to settle current conflicts and avoid future ones. Blomquist and Ingram suggested developing institutional capital in order to accomplish justice and equality, as well as to satisfy the demands of both parties and cultural values, in order to successfully manage cross-border operations.

The Helsinki Rules, as well as other global accords

The Convention on the Law of International Waters (1997), based on the Helsinki Regulations approved by the International Law Society in August 1966, governs the sharing of water rather than any one belief system [19]. According to the guidelines, this "rational and equitable sharing" should be considered together with the 11 factors based on the conclusion. It specifies that every valley has the right, in its area, to partake in the equitable and equitable use of international river water. The legislation includes measures for information exchange, installation projects, environmental protection, and fostering state-to-state collaboration. 38

Even if it makes up "nine-tenths of the legislation, international water law is still relevant. Adopted in 1966, the Helsinki Rules for the Use of River Water established that nations must be permitted to use water that flows across their boundaries. Furthermore, conventional international water law lays out a framework for permissible water use that considers historical use, the amount of water each country's regional rivers contribute, population, and future needs. This legislation is part of the United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-Maritime Use of International Water Resources, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1997 but has yet to be in force (China is not a party or signatory to this agreement) [20]." The legal requirements for the first state to "use" by constructing dams, dam projects, irrigation systems, or other design work are particularly significant in this case. The development of dams and other infrastructure has improved wastewater management along the river. China is consolidating its position and acquiring absolute authority by building a giant dam on the Brahmaputra.

Even while it is maximized for pragmatic reasons—"getting water first and for legal ones—to use it first, Beijing has chosen to maximize its leeway by refusing to participate in a sharing agreement with its neighbors." China stated that it was not formally involved in or required to share information about its design when it announced its plans to construct the Brahmaputra dam in 2010. Instead, "it chose to do so generously for a sense of trust, as it was not a party to a water distribution treaty with India [21]." China has listened so far, but officials in India and other countries have voiced their dissatisfaction at the country's recurrent unwillingness to adequately provide the planning data required to oversee development and its effects. Despite these objections, New Delhi lacks an international court with the authority to hear its appeals unless Beijing adopts treaties or accords committing it to act differently.

Concluding remarks

The infrastructure along the border was closely examined when ties between China and India were at their worst since the war of 1962. Other approaches to the water problem must be used to end this water war. Both countries must stop developing new rivers and focus on less harmful alternatives, such as constructing a dispersed network of dams, using conventional water catchment resources, and creating rainwater catchment lakes. These actions could successfully maintain the region's population and re-establish ecological equilibrium. China and India do not have a water-sharing agreement; thus, they must behave

appropriately. To continue a continuous discussion and to communicate accurate data, both nations must come forth with warnings about impending droughts, floods, and high water levels. Plans for water diversion and hydroelectric generation in the Brahmaputra River Basin have raised safety concerns, which have harmed ties between China and India. China still has to ratify any multilateral agreement. It ratified the UN Watercourse Convention of 1997, which created legal ion guidelines and collaboration among over a hundred countries. Their international need to ratify does not take the lead in titling the Brahmaputra River issue with India; there will be no system for addressing the mutually agreed problems in sharing waters across the transboundary river. India's most significant resources, domestic rivers, and rainfall, must be measured well.

Furthermore, India can spearhead a coalition against nations that share transboundary rivers and establish a unified organizational framework to facilitate improved transboundary management of shared rivers. Both countries must step up organizational management methods to prevent a water conflict in the foreseeable future.

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