



**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI
SHORT ABSTRACT OF THESIS**

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Thesis Title: WATERS OF CONFLICT OR WATERS OF COOPERATION?: GEOPOLITICS OF SINO-INDIAN TRANSBOUNDARY WATER MANAGEMENT IN THE YARLUNG TSANGPO AND THE BRAHMAPUTRA

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SHORT ABSTRACT

The thesis aims to analyze the Sino-Indian bilateral interaction and dynamics on management of shared transboundary rivers, specifically focusing on the Yarlung Tsangpo-Brahmaputra river. The emphasis of this research study is on cooperation between China and India on the shared transboundary river, going beyond the prevailing aspersions of conflict over management of transboundary water resources. The thesis uses a three-fold approach to answer its research questions concerning the factors determining conflict and cooperation between China and India on shared transboundary rivers, the linkage of the Brahmaputra river to the unresolved territorial dispute between China and India, and the past behaviour of China and India on other transboundary rivers in the region, focusing on the Mekong and the Ganges rivers. The first approach involves analyzing the Sino-Indian bilateral dynamic of conflict and cooperation over the past on the Yarlung Tsangpo-Brahmaputra through the lens of International Relations theories, which helps frame the geopolitical reference, the factors influencing riparian behaviour, and linking it with the territorial question. The second approach involves employing the Transboundary Waters Interaction Nexus (TWINS) framework, which furthers the understanding of the factors determining conflict and cooperation in the Sino-Indian riparian engagement, and helps underline the layered nature and the varying intensities of past conflict and cooperation events. The third approach involves a comparative analysis of past Chinese and Indian behaviour and engagement on regional transboundary rivers, the Mekong and the Ganges, which helps inform the Yarlung-Tsangpo-Brahmaputra case study, as there is no ready reference of past Sino-Indian formal and institutionalized negotiations on shared transboundary rivers. The Mekong and the Ganges are examples where both China and India have been involved separately, and they provide a regional reference. The primary data used for the analysis are joint statements and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) between China and India, past water treaties, joint statements and declarations on the Mekong and the Ganges. This three-fold approach, analyzing the water related events during the time period of 1990-2015, brings substantive direction to Sino-Indian cooperation, identifies the drivers of conflict and cooperation, the power contexts in the riparian engagement, underlines the overarching reliance on bilateralism by both China and India, while showing some signs of multilateral intent.