

Webinar series on Hydro-diplomacy

Background

Water is the lifeline of human civilisation, and is often referred to as the ‘commons’ – resources that are meant for collective use and belonging to all rather than for individual ownership and exploitation. The rise and fall of civilisations was marked by the flow pattern of rivers, and their use for irrigation and transportation. For all its worth, however, water is not immune to diplomatic issues because searching for solutions to manage and cope with water issues creates a set of different problems that are political, sensitive and divisive. While cooperation has been the norm around transboundary water at the interstate level, sub-state levels have witnessed rising tensions among water users as non-state actors and civil society groups oppose one another and the central government over waterworks projects and as communal groups compete for dwindling water supplies in pastoral areas. Hydro-diplomacy, the dynamic practice of negotiating ways to manage shared water resources, promises a means to uphold cooperation and preclude water tensions from escalating into armed conflict.

Hydro-diplomacy is inherently political. Diplomacy is understood as the art of managing interpersonal relations, international relations by government officials in the nation context. To date, however, there is a relative dearth of academic insight on water diplomacy in the social sciences, with much literature deriving instead from the natural and physical sciences. In theory, water diplomacy is relevant to all levels of water management, given that negotiations over shared water occur at multiple levels. Yet in practice, existing policy tools of water diplomacy focus primarily on interstate interactions. Water diplomacy aims not simply to understand water cooperation and conflict, but rather to cultivate sustainable and peaceful solutions for all water users. This characteristic is frequently overlooked in more technical approaches to water diplomacy.

Diplomacy is not without discourse and power relations. Hegemony at the river basin level is often established through water resource control strategies and containment. The strategies are sometimes employed through existing power asymmetries, like the upstream and downstream context where usually the resource control lies with the upstream nation favourably. The framework of hydro-hegemony was developed with the intention of providing an analytical paradigm to explore options with regard to powerful or hegemonized riparians and to move away from domination towards cooperation. India itself scores highly on hydro-hegemony. It wields the most power in South Asia in terms of political, economic and military might. Because of this, it also has significant capacity for water resource exploitation such as the construction of dams for hydropower generation. Shared waterscape of South Asia represents scope for cultural integrity and therefore also requires deliberation and analysis towards the greater ecological and economic integration of the region. Yet any formal level of dialogue in the region has not manifested well.

Gender intersects with hydro-diplomacy yet remains at the margins of academic perspectives and policy priorities on hydro-diplomacy in South Asia. It is important to recognize the lived experiences as political and bring local issues to the international realm. It is also important to recognize that everyday experiences of women in South Asia are varied and are defined by their social situatedness, where particularly issues of caste, class, region and religion impinge on the relationship between gender and hydro-diplomacy. Despite all this, a gender perspective is missing from the realm of hydro-diplomacy. As the short film “The Wives” (by ActionAid) let us reflect or dwell on some pertinent issues - how the field of hydro-diplomacy and water governance was/is masculinist and why engendering hydro-diplomacy remains a pertinent but challenging task. The film allows to consider how women’s experiences with respect to water in India and South Asia are intersectional, and identifies with caste, class, religion and region; and provides insights on how women have also used access to water to renegotiate their agency both in public and in private spheres (sometimes at the cost of their own physical health and compromising on their perceived future).

In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals seeking better conservation of water resources and parallel changes in national interests and the geopolitics of the region, there is an urgent need for an interdisciplinary and non-politicised approach to transboundary water cooperation, in line with the international principles to “not cause significant harm” to other riparian countries and “reasonable and equitable use” of scarce water resources.

Webinars

The proposed webinars promises to expand dialogic spaces for competing narratives around water and South Asian rivers. It aims to bring young and experienced minds to a shared space. The lecture series will begin from 18th September 2020 with an inception webinar. The series of webinars followed by the inception webinar will bring experienced academics from across the globe to generate conversations on water, politics, power and diplomacy.

Target Audience:

We are particularly targeting the students and faculty from the universities within The Asia Foundation’s programme of *Promoting Improved Water Cooperation in South Asia: Building a Cohort of Practitioners through Interdisciplinary Training in Hydro Diplomacy* (IITG, Pondicherry University and Sikkim University) as a warm up to the course on hydro-diplomacy, before

implementing it as a full-fledged course in the individual universities. We would also want to utilize this platform to orient other prominent IITs and Indian universities to bring into realization the necessity for introducing courses on water diplomacy. Students from technical institutes specially remain unexposed to the political nuances of water resources utilization and management, and this webinar series wants to address this gap.

Tentative Schedule:

Date and time (IST)	Webinar	Panellists and lecturers (please find their details in the annexure)	Discussants (please find their details in the annexure)
18 th September 5 pm – 7 pm	Inception webinar It will open up the series of lectures with a panel discussion. “Water and diplomacy in South Asia”	Opening remark Prof. T.G. Sitharam Ms. Nandita Baruah Panel: Fundamentals of hydro-diplomacy 1. Tariq Karim 2. Shyam Saran 3. Undala Alam 4. Mahendra P Lama	Moderated by: Anamika Barua
25 th September 5 pm – 6:30 pm	Bonus lecture: Water Security and Integrated Modelling Studies	Roger A Falconer	Chair: T. G. Sitharam <i>Host and co-discussant:</i> Anamika Barua
1 st October 5 pm – 6:30 pm	Webinar 1: Power in water diplomacy	Jeroen Warner	Sumit Vij <i>Host and co-discussant:</i> Anamika Barua
9 th October 5 pm – 6:30 pm	Webinar 2: Communication and media in water diplomacy	Emanuele Fantini	Joydeep Gupta <i>Host and co-discussant:</i> Anamika Barua
16 th October 5 pm – 6:30 pm	Webinar 3: Gender and hydro-diplomacy	Natasha Carmi	Jenniver Sehring <i>Host and co-discussant:</i> Anamika Barua
21 st October 5 pm – 6:30 pm	Webinar 4: Transboundary Water Conflict and Cooperation	Mark Zeitoun	Selina Ho <i>Host and co-discussant:</i> Anamika Barua
30 th October 6:30 pm – 8 pm	Webinar 5: International Water Laws	Christina Leb	Léna Salamé <i>Host and co-discussant:</i> Anamika Barua
6 th November 6:30 pm – 8 pm	Webinar 6: Mediation, dispute resolution and conflict management in hydro-diplomacy	Aaron T. Wolf	Zaki Shubber <i>Host and co-discussant:</i> Anamika Barua
12 th November 3 pm – 4:30 pm	Bonus lecture 7: Rising water scarcity and sustainable solutions	Muttucumaru Sivakumar	Arup Kumar Sarma <i>Host and co-discussant:</i> Anamika Barua

Organizers:

The webinar series is being organized by IIT Guwahati in collaboration with The Asia Foundation (TAF), Australia India Water Centre (AIWC) and International Association for Coastal Reservoir Research (IACRR), and with support from Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australia and DGIS UNESCO-IHE Programmatic Cooperation (DUPC). This shall be the first of several future collaborations, online or otherwise, and the coordinators from IIT Guwahati would like to continue this series towards exploring into the nuances of hydro-diplomacy, like one series would be specifically dedicated towards media and water diplomacy.

Annexure I

Panellists, lecturers and Discussants (Alphabetic order):

1. Aaron T. Wolf is a Professor of Geography in the College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences at Oregon State University. He has acted as a consultant to the World Bank and several international governments and agencies on various aspects of transboundary water resources and dispute resolution. A trained mediator/facilitator, Wolf directs the Program in Water Conflict Management and Transformation, through which he has offered workshops, facilitations, and mediations in basins throughout the world.
2. Anamika Barua is an Ecological Economist and a Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences in IIT Guwahati. For the last ten years she has been involved in academic and consultancy projects related to water issues in South Asia including transboundary water governance. Since 2013, she has been facilitating a dialogue project called Brahmaputra Dialogue, which aims to create a platform for the Brahmaputra riparian countries to find avenues for co-management of the River. She is leading the development of hydro-diplomacy course in IITG.
3. Arup Kumar Sarma is an engineer and a Senior Professor at the Department of Civil Engineering in IIT Guwahati. He is presently holding the prestigious B P Chaliha Chair Professor position given by Ministry of Water Resources, Government of India. He has developed an NPTEL video course on Hydraulic Engineering which is getting wide appreciation from different parts of the globe and has entered the top 5 most visited course. Apart from working for management of many Indian Rivers, he has also provided his technical expertise for management of Mekong River. He is also leading the development of hydro-diplomacy course in IITG.
4. Christina Leb works as Senior Counsel and previously as a Senior Water Resources Specialist at the World Bank's Water Global Practice and is one of the focal points for transboundary waters. She currently is the Program Manager for the Central Asia Energy and Water Development Program and leads the Bank's engagement on transboundary waters in the Indus Basin and Afghanistan. Prior to working at the World Bank, Christina Leb worked at the Faculty of Law, University of Geneva, and remains an associate member of the Platform for International Water Law.
5. Emanuele Fantini is Senior lecturer and researcher at the Department of Water Governance of IHE Delft Institute for Water Education (The Netherlands). He coordinates the project "Open Water Diplomacy. Media, science and transboundary cooperation in the Nile basin". He holds a PhD in Political Sciences (University of Turin) and a European Master in Human Rights and Democratization (University of Padua). Emanuele's research interests include: water governance, water conflicts and the human right to water, media studies, social movements, visual research methods, inter-disciplinarity in water research, religion in public spaces, with geographic focus on Ethiopia, the Nile basin, and Italy.
6. Jeroen Warner is an Associate Professor at Sociology of Development and Change Group of Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR). He has researched immensely on transboundary water resources, framework for analysing hydro-hegemony and water conflicts, power in water diplomacy, etc. He has written extensively on the politics of water and is editor of 'Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Integrated Catchment Management' and co-editor of 'The Politics of Water'. In addition to transboundary water governance, his main research interests are in social resilience and the disaster studies domain.
7. Jenniver Sehring is a Political Scientist who joined IHE Delft in 2018 as Senior Lecturer in Water Diplomacy at the Department of Integrated Water Systems and Governance. Her research and teaching focus on water governance at local, national and transboundary level and on institutional arrangements as well as practices of water cooperation and diplomacy. She coordinates the master programme "Water Cooperation and Diplomacy", a joint programme with the University of Peace (UPEACE) in Costa Rica and Oregon State University in the US, as well as the DUPC2 Water Diplomacy Programme.
8. Joydeep Gupta, South Asia Director of The Third Pole, writes, commissions and edits articles on climate change, water, biodiversity, pollution and sustainable development. He also trains environmental journalists and teaches environmental journalism at OP Jindal Global University. Joydeep won the 2012 Green Globe Award at the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit organized by The Energy and Resources Institute. He has reported earlier for Indo-Asian News Service, The Statesman, The Sunday Observer and Sunday Mail. Joydeep is the Vice President of the Forum of Environmental Journalists in India.
9. Léna Salamé is a lawyer in international public law, specialized in conflict mitigation. She is also a professional mediator, negotiator and dialogue facilitator. For 17 years, she managed UNESCO's programme on water cooperation (i.e. PCCP: from Potential Conflict to Cooperation Potential). She now is involved in a variety of projects related to transboundary

waters, international law, ethics and conflict mitigation. She played a central role in the development and promotion of the modern concept of hydro-diplomacy. She conceived around a 100 training courses and capacity building activities on international law, conflict management, confidence building and cooperation processes.

10. Mahendra P Lama is a noted development economist and a Senior Professor in the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. He is presently Chief Economic Adviser in the rank of a Cabinet Minister in the Government of Sikkim. He is presently Government of India's nominee in the Eminent Persons Group set up by the Prime Ministers of India and Nepal. He was India's representative in the Steering Committee of the coveted South Asian Forum set up by the Heads of the States and Governments in the 16th SAARC Summit in Thimphu in 2010 and Independent Expert Group set up by the SAARC leaders in Colombo in 1997. He has been particularly active in engaging the north-eastern region of the country with the neighbouring Southeast Asian nations.
11. Mark Zeitoun is a water engineer Professor of Water Security and Policy, School of International Development, University of East Anglia with more than a decade of experience in conflict and post conflict zones, including the Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, Chad and the Republic of Congo. Mark's research on environmental policy and politics follows three themes: a) transboundary water conflict and cooperation, at international, sub-national and trans-national levels; b) water policy and social justice issues; and c) urban water supply and treatment during and immediately following armed conflict.
12. Muttucumaru Sivakumar is Associate Professor, School of Civil, Mining & Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and Information Sciences, University of Wollongong. His areas of expertise include water quality and water resources engineering; Pollutant export from urban catchments; Water and wastewater treatment; Environmental hydraulics and Modelling; Sediment transport. He is also the coordinator of Sustainable Water and Energy Research Group in his university.
13. Nandita Baruah is The Asia Foundation's country representative in India, and formerly served as deputy country representative in Nepal. She has over 25 years of professional experience working on gender, human rights, labor migration and human trafficking issues in South and Southeast Asia. She has headed South Asia regional programs on gender-based violence, human trafficking and migration and rural development. In these roles Nandita Baruah worked to support national governments and civil society partners to design and deliver programs that effectively address the core socio-economic and political dimension of development through a rights-based and gender-equitable framework.
14. Natasha Carmi is the Lead water specialist at the Geneva Water Hub and contributes to the establishment of the Global Water Observatory on Water and Peace, as well as the development of the women, water and peace agenda. Prior to that, she worked as water policy advisor to the Palestinian Negotiations Support Project, working closely with decision makers, and has experience in bilateral and regional water negotiations. She serves frequently as a faculty member for conferences and workshops dealing with transboundary water resources in general, and hydropolitics in particular, at which water is a core political issue and international water law is a necessary framework for resolving conflicts and identifying opportunities and solutions.
15. Roger Falconer is Emeritus Professor of Water Engineering (1997-18 Professor) and Founding Director of the Hydro-environmental Research Centre (1997-14) in the School of Engineering at Cardiff University, U.K. He was also President of the International Association for Hydro-Environment Engineering and Research (2011-15). He continues to pursue research on modelling flow (including flooding), water quality and sediment transport processes in coastal, estuarine and river waters. He was awarded the 1999 Royal Academy of Engineering Silver Medal, the 1994 Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) Telford Premium and the 1991 International Association for Hydraulic Research (IAHR) Ippen Award.
16. Selina Ho is Assistant Professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. She specializes in Chinese politics and foreign policy, with a focus on resources and infrastructures. Her book, *Thirsty Cities: Social Contracts and Public Goods Provision in China and India*, is under contract with Cambridge University Press and is expected to be published in Sep/Oct 2018. She is simultaneously working for a book project on China's construction of a high-speed railway from Kunming to Singapore. Selina has been appointed a Global Futures Council Fellow (Regional Governance) with the World Economic Forum from September 2017 to September 2018.
17. Shyam Saran is a former foreign secretary and has served as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Nuclear Affairs and Climate Change, chairman of the National Security Advisory Board, and chairman of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries. He is currently a member of the governing board of Centre for Policy Research (CPR) and is also on the Advisory Board of World Development Forum, an upcoming forum that aims to bring together citizens' groups, development organizations, businesses and governments, to a common platform to produce evidence-based politically actionable guidance and unlock greater value, through human enterprise.

18. Sumit Vij is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Faculty of Sciences, Vrije University Amsterdam and Public Administration and Policy Group, Wageningen University and Research. His research interests are climate governance, power in policy-making, and transboundary water politics. His PhD focused on how power influences the climate policy-making processes in South Asia. Recently (May 2020), Sumit published a special issue on power in water diplomacy in *Water International*. He has published articles in various international journals such as *Environmental Science and Policy*, *Climate Policy*, *Environment Development and Sustainability*, *International Journal for Water Resources Development*, *Land Use Policy*, *Water*, *Water International*, *Water Policy*, *Action Research*, *WIREs Water and Geoforum*.
19. Tariq Karim is a former High Commissioner to India from Bangladesh, political analyst and an independent consultant. He is currently also a Senior Fellow at Bay of Bengal Institute Project, Office of Vice Chancellor, Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) and also served as a Strategic Adviser to the South Asia Water Initiative of the World Bank. He played a seminal role in qualitatively improving the tone, tenor and substance of Bangladesh-India relations. He was instrumental in finalizing the negotiations that resulted in the signing in December 1996 of the landmark Ganges Water Sharing Treaty with India.
20. T. G. Sitharam has taken over as the Director, IIT Guwahati on July 01, 2019, and is also holding additional position Chairman, BOG of IITG. He was a Senior Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore (he is on deputation from IISc from July 01, 2019). He was formerly a Chair professor in the area of Energy and Mechanical Sciences at Indian Institute of Science (IISc). He was former founder Chairman of a Centre for Infrastructure, Sustainable Transport and Urban Planning (CiSTUP) at IISc, Bengaluru. In 2015, he received the prestigious IGS Kuckleman Award for his life time contributions in Geotechnical Engineering.
21. Undala Alam is the Energy Policy Adviser for the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). She previously worked as Water Resources and Climate Adviser in South Asia Water Governance (SAWG) program Department for International Development (DFID) and as Water Resources Specialist/TRIB Coordinator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). She is also a trained mediator and has worked with several institutions in international development, including the UN and the World Bank, focusing on water resource management. Her areas of expertise include water resources management and international development, with particular emphasis on international rivers.
22. Zaki Shubber is a lecturer in law and water diplomacy at the IHE Delft Institute for Water Education in Delft, The Netherlands. She holds an LLM in Water Governance and Conflict Resolution from the University of Dundee and an LLM in Public International Law from the University of London. Prior to joining IHE Delft, she worked as a lawyer in London. She now focuses on water law at a national and international level as well as on the judicial and non-judicial settlement of water disputes.