

## Negotiating the Flow: Treaty Politics and Power Asymmetries in Indo-Bangladesh Water Governance

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### Abstract

Water sharing across borders continues to be one of South Asia's most challenging and long-lasting geopolitical problems, especially for Bangladesh and India, which share 54 transboundary rivers. This paper examines the political developments of water management between the two countries since 1971, with a specific focus on the key agreements, transformed political regimes, and the overall regional politics related to water. Based on a theoretical framework emanating from ideas like transboundary water cooperation, political ecology, hydro-hegemony, and environmental security, the research explores India's upstream positioning and political impact upon the water availability in downstream Bangladesh. Some of the important cases used to study include the 1974 and 1996 Ganges water-sharing agreements as well as long-standing stalemates over the Teesta River. Using a qualitative approach, while the PRISMA method is utilized, the investigation uses treaty documents, policy statements, and scholarly literature. The results indicate that although diplomatic advancement has been made at certain stages, an imbalance in power relations and internal political limitations – specifically on India's part – remain barriers against the formation of fair and sustainable agreements. The paper ends with the practical policy suggestions to promote sustainable cooperation, which include establishing enforceable legal frameworks, improving bilateral institutions, and increasing involvement through regional organizations, such as SAARC and BIMSTEC. The steps are vital to achieving ecological balance, food and water security, and long-term political stability of an ever-more climate-stressed territory.

### Keywords

Transboundary Water Politics, Bangladesh–India Relations, Hydro–Hegemony, Political Ecology, Teesta River Dispute, Ganges Treaty, Environmental Security, Regional Cooperation.