



## **Module 3**

### **Hydrodiplomacy in South Asia**

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**Author:** Imtiaz Ahmed, Professor, Department of International Relations and Medha Bisht, Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, South Asian University

**Coordination:** Archana Chatterjee, IUCN and Aditi Jha, Independent Consultant

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## Introduction

This Module rests on three questions—what is hydro-diplomacy, why do we need to understand/unpack hydro-diplomacy and how do we contextualise hydro-diplomacy with a ‘South Asian’ sensibility.

The question of ‘what’ draws attention to ways through which hydro-diplomacy has been defined and conceptualised. It focuses on differentiating hydro-politics from hydro-diplomacy and while drawing attention to politics and approaches to hydro-diplomacy, it takes the discussion further by revisiting frames, which should be taken as fundamental entry point for understanding hydro-diplomacy in South Asia.

The question of ‘**why**’ draws attention to the term ‘hydro’ as a prefix to diplomacy. It argues that hydro-diplomacy should be qualified through a water-centric understanding, as the scientific/hydrological understanding of rivers merits attention. Hydro-diplomacy therefore should not be limited to transboundary rivers (surface water), but should include the supporting eco-system around it, which means—paying attention to sediments, wetlands, bio-diversity, groundwater, and resource benefits (hydro-power, navigation etc.) which could stem from cooperating on transboundary rivers, but are nevertheless a part of the larger eco-system.

The question of ‘**how**’ contextualises hydro-diplomacy in the South Asian context and offers insights on how ‘hydro diplomacy’ needs to be approached in South Asia. An eclectic approach has been employed to understand water and its related dimensions. The foundational principle of how is a human centered understanding or consciousness rather than a state centric understanding. In this regard, the module focuses on emancipating the individual through ‘critical pedagogy’ which in turn is a way to emancipate the discourse on hydro-diplomacy itself. Some successful cases from the South Asian context, which have been taken up in the past by civil society and states in South Asia can be highlighted in this context.

The module also highlights important questions related to macro-frameworks and micro-perspectives and introduces students to discourses and methodologies which become significant for writing an inclusive 'narrative' of hydro-diplomacy in South Asia. These inclusive narratives consciously recognise the element of human by critically engaging with hydro-diplomacy from a multi-faceted perspective

### Module Objectives

- Participants will be able to understand emerging trends around rivers/water, which are specific to South Asian region.
- Beyond conventional ways of understanding hydro-diplomacy, critical pedagogy is offered as a perspective to understand hydro-diplomacy in South Asia.

### Learning Objectives

- Get a multifaceted and emancipator view of approaching water issues. They will be familiarised with negotiation analysis as well as alternative ways needed for understanding water/rivers in South Asia.
- Will empower an individual in political, ecological cultural, technological and psychological terms.

## **Module 3: Hydrodiplomacy in South Asia**

### Topic 1: Facets of Hydro-diplomacy - Limitations and Way Forward

Diplomacy is often defined as the management of international relations through peaceful means. Negotiations often find an important place in diplomatic engagements as they draw attention to multiple processes through which such interactions/engagements are facilitated. However, given the fact that, states are primary actors in international/bilateral negotiations, we often find that the discourse on hydro-diplomacy has a bias towards the bilateral state interactions. While significant, a key challenge for hydro-diplomacy in South Asia is to include multiple scales- which take into account some of the complexities associated with water governance at the local and sub-national level. A key challenge for 'hydro-diplomacy in South Asia' is to upscale some of the local issues. While a way forward has been offered by negotiation theories (discussed below), it is often found that they have a limited logical angularity inbuilt into them. Though useful, in terms of observing and organising multiple techniques of negotiations, the essential challenge remains to arrive at cooperative outcomes on transboundary water sharing. In response to overcome this important limitation, a 'pedagogic approach to river basin management' is offered, which critically takes a holistic account of understanding Rivers in South Asia.

#### *1.1 Negotiation Theories*

Cooperation between actors is primarily described through distributive bargaining and integrative bargaining. While the former focuses on a non-zero sum approach—where one actor loses and the other wins (but does end up in having an agreement), the latter emphasises a positive (win-win approach), where both parties equally gain. In both the cases actors prefer some agreement than no agreement at all---cooperation therefore becomes a desirable choice, as all parties gain some benefit from cooperating, even if it might differ in degrees. Both these frameworks are different from Zero-sum games, where both parties lose and prefer no agreement. Zero-sum games are not relevant to

the South Asian context as most of the countries have treaties around trans-boundary rivers.

### *1.2 Non-Zero Sum Game*

In a non-zero-sum agreement, while one party benefits more from the other, both will gain, even though the benefits of cooperation seem to be inequitably distributed. The reason why one agrees to cooperate and reconcile with a seemingly inequitable agreement is contingent on types of communication strategies which are often used. These communication strategies often use interactive approaches which are directed towards maximising ones benefits and minimising ones loss. The use of 'bluff', 'threat' and 'promise' dominates this approach. How one commits on specific issues and communicates the same to the other, primarily determines the outcome in a non-zero game. This approach draws upon the tradition of rational choice theory and underlines how beliefs and perception of actors are instrumental in negotiating an agreement (Thomas Schelling, *An Essay on Bargaining*)

### *1.3 Positive Sum Games*

Positive Sum Games or win-win agreement emphasises more on the processes of interaction rather than the end-goal. It is built on the assumption that opportunities for cooperation stem from the process itself. The communication strategies often use Full Open Truth Exchange (FOTE), and are directed towards joint decision making. In joint decision making, the communication strategy has a strategic (long term vision) in mind and is essentially a process of moving backwards by identifying mutual benefits that countries can achieve from joint action. Positive Sum Outcomes are possible when trust is high between parties. It is suggested that actors should start with Partial, Open Truth Exchange (POTE) to effectively transit to Full Open Truthful Exchange (FOTE). (Howard Raiffa: *Negotiation Analysis: The Art and Science of Negotiations*)

### *1.4 Negotiated Analytic Approach*

The third alternative framework –Negotiation Analytic Method (NAM) offers a way to transform non-zero sum games to positive sum games. With the aim to reduce uncertainty in Negotiations, it focuses on how information can be generated around specific issues. New information on specific issue areas can be generated by epistemic or expert communities, which can lead to learning by removing uncertainties in negotiations. How perceptions of key actors can be changed by applying multiple techniques of communication and dialogue is the key argument offered by Negotiation Analytic Method. It is assumed that generating information could lead to learning, thus making the Zone of Possible Agreement (ZOPA) more attractive for parties concerned. The core focus of this approach is on addition and subtraction of issues, as adding some issues can lead to successful agreements, while adding others can break agreements.

Information generated by experts (scientists and social scientists working on water related issues) and creatively choosing issues which can facilitate cooperation can lead to reducing disagreements. (James Sebenius, Negotiation Analysis and Case for Epistemic Communities)

## Topic 2 Case: The South Asian Context

While the afore-mentioned frameworks can be useful in understanding a 'Negotiated Approach to hydro-diplomacy', it could be restricted to a bilateral scale, even though some specific issues can be upscaled from the local to the national and bilateral level. Significantly, water governance and water diplomacy has emerged as a double edged sword for water professionals in South Asia. While the internal challenges are complex, externally communicating them and reaching a win-win agreement is an equally daunting task. Given that issues related to water mismanagement is an enduring feature embedded in the South Asian fabric—which often has unintended consequences for the politics of water diplomacy and foregrounds any attempts to engage with issues related to governance and effective implementation of agreements, a new approach is needed which revisits water from alternative prisms, which are often invisible in mainstream discourses. In this context, the limitations of a negotiated framework to understand hydro-diplomacy is addressed and a way forward offered.

Given the nature of hydro-politics in South Asia, where multiplicity of actors complicate discourse, and where hydro-diplomacy remains hostage to trust deficit between South Asian neighbours, the module offers a pedagogic approach to hydro-diplomacy built on multiple facets needed for understanding and learning about water. The core philosophical approach is to empower the individual in terms of political, ecological, technological, cultural and psychological aspects related to water. The objective is to emancipate the discourse on hydro-diplomacy by applying a critical approach, which emphasises going beyond the disciplinary understanding of water politics and water diplomacy. It encourages one to understand eclectic discourses around water by keeping the individual as the central referent point for analysis. Most of these issues address the sensibilities associated with water governance and water diplomacy. They address challenges to incorporate micro-perspectives, shared aesthetics around water and also address ways through which mind-sets and consciousness in South Asia can be empowered (psychologically, ecologically and technologically) by employing tools of critical pedagogy.

This course therefore intends to be a departure point for understanding hydro-diplomacy. From a generic/conventional way of understanding hydro-diplomacy, it draws upon the specificities and patterns which emerge in the South Asian context. It explores the core foundations on which hydro-diplomacy should rest and suggests that one needs to move beyond the limitation of negotiated approaches and explore frameworks—which can capture some emerging, fluid trends around the understanding of water in a critical manner.

## 2.1 Politics and Approaches to Hydro-Diplomacy

This unit will explore politics and approaches to hydro-diplomacy and hydro-politics in South Asia. While politics can be both creative and destructive, the unit will examine examples from South Asia and address approaches which can offer some hope for revisiting, reconceptualising, re-thinking water diplomacy in South Asia. It will raise important questions related to macro and micro approaches to hydro-diplomacy. The unit also takes into account the role played by epistemic/expert communities, trans-national actors and social movements. Specific issue areas which can facilitate discourses around water diplomacy around every cooperation and navigation are also taken up for discussion.

## 2.2 Engendering Hydro diplomacy

In this unit participants will learn about a gender sensitive approach to water diplomacy. Do we engender diplomacy through thin rationality, which means being satisfied with women representation at negotiating tables, or do we engender diplomacy through thick rationality, which means taking women's stories, experiences, narratives into account. In what ways can a gender lens enable sustainable hydro-diplomacy? This unit highlights the invisibility of women and addresses three specific questions—what does engendering hydro-diplomacy mean, why do we need to engender hydro-diplomacy and how is hydro-diplomacy being engendered in South Asia. The last question engages with some existing examples from South Asia, where civil society interventions have played an

influential role in making women issues visible and facilitating cooperative partnership amongst/between border communities.

### 2.3 Ecology of Hydro-diplomacy

South Asia presents a distinct case as it is one of the regions where water agreements have been signed between all the relevant stakeholders. However, what has been missing from such agreements is an eco-systems perspective. Do the negotiated agreements take into account a holistic -hydrological approach which is sensitive to the ecological concerns and the impact they have on potential eco-system services. Effectiveness of negotiated agreements is one of the primary yardsticks for facilitating resource sustainability. However water interacts in complex ways and in this context, the ecology of hydro-diplomacy cannot be divorced from how negotiated water agreements effectively translate to achieving food, energy and water security at the domestic level. This unit highlights whether water treaties resonate with issues witnessed by basin communities at the domestic level and brings to attention the need of a hydrological /eco-system's perspective to look at some of emerging ecological challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### 2.4 Technology and Hydrodiplomacy

This unit explores technologies that could potentially reinvent the wheel for furthering cooperation in South Asia. Technology not only facilitates diffusion and sharing of ideas across border, but the application of science necessitates that one develops appropriate skill and technology to manage water scarcity. Technologies that help water conservation are becoming important agendas for South Asian states in their foreign policy and water technologies will be a priority agenda for governments in coming years. However, a forgotten aspect of technology are the indigenous structures (such as ponds, naulas, step-wells) which are present in South Asia which are often marginalised from the mainstream. A question that remains to be addressed is the existing memories and efforts which are there in terms of reviving these architectures. Another question, which

becomes pertinent to address is- how can the understanding of technology be mainstreamed to have a human/ecological face, which is more responsive to the dynamism inherent in the changing ecology? While this unit addresses some of these questions, social media in South Asia is also emerging as a medium for facilitating effective communication between people of South Asia. Connecting people virtually, social media is acting as a platform for advocacy where techniques for facilitating resilience and developing adaptation strategies are often shared. There are debates on how water apps based on geo-spatial data and satellite imagery and smart phones can be important tools for activist mapping and crowd sourcing in the hands of non-governmental actors. This unit focuses on futures of South Asia by introducing participants to some new debates and existing practices which exist and could be relevant for water governance and water diplomacy in South Asia.

## 2.5 Culture and Hydro-diplomacy

Each river has a distinct story to tell. There are multiple stories, folklores, songs which are associated with rivers of South Asia. While some rivers have a romantic symbolism, some are politically symbolic. Some rivers are cultural sacred sites where different spiritual traditions took birth. How a river got a distinct identity of its own as it flows through different eco-cultural zones is the focus of this unit. These stories give an identity to the river and re-endorse the cultural plurality of South Asia. These stories are also important as they help in understanding the cultural universe of the other, which is an important tool in diplomatic practice, particularly when it comes to understanding the nature of inter-cultural communication. This not only helps in evoking symbolism but offers techniques of relating to the other. This unit will reveal cultural identities of the river where they are divorced from a resource centric understanding which exist to serve national interests. Stories around rivers and performances around rivers can be important tools in sensitising stakeholders about the needs of riparian communities and can be a potential tool when we discuss the issue of culture and hydro-diplomacy.

## 2.6 Psychology and Hydrodiplomacy

This unit will highlight the need to revisit our mental maps towards managing and cognitively understanding rivers of South Asia. Trust deficit among South Asian countries and colonial legacy of water infrastructure have primarily shaped the way South Asian states interact with rivers in South Asia. The psychological structures of understanding rivers are entrenched in mechanical knowledge about water augmentation. The emphasis of this unit will be to understand impact which water has on human mind. How does a psychological analysis of water bereft of political overtones sound like? Does a psychological analysis of water provide us new cognitive frames and alternative ways of approaching water agreements. What do Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung have to say about this? The concept of “collective unconscious” addresses some of the challenges that the diplomatic culture around transboundary rivers has witnessed in South Asia.

## 2.7 Riverine Diplomacy

Hydro-diplomacy is not restricted to understanding strategies employed by state actors. It does include some every-day practices—which are often used by non-state actors and ordinary people living around rivers. The geographic continuity of South Asia as a region is a boon to non-state actors as they defy any limitations posed by artificial borders. If one looks at the case of India-Bangladesh, grey economy of these two countries supersedes formal trade which takes place. Riverine diplomacy is therefore an appropriate entry point to understand not only how the informal economy works but also elicits strategies and tactics unique to non-state actors of South Asia. An important lesson learnt from non-state actors is their willingness to adapt to nature and negotiate with the flow of the river, rather than ‘inventing’ ways to control and design River for maximising benefits. The unit also explores specific methodologies for engaging with riverine diplomacy by looking at ways through which some micro-perspectives of riparian communities can be recorded and shared.

## Annexures

### Annexure 1: Suggested Readings

Ahmed, Imtiaz (ed). 2018. *South Asian Rivers: A Framework for Cooperation*. Cham: Springer.

Bisht Medha. 2017. Water diplomacy: Bottom–up approach needed to address concerns of riparian communities, *Counterview*, June 27, 2017, at:<https://counterview.org/2017/06/27/water-diplomacy-bottom-up-approach-needed-to-address-concerns-of-riparian-communities/>

Schelling ,Thomas. 1980. *The Strategy of Conflict*, Harvard: Harvard University Press (Chapter Two).

Raifa, Howard. 2007. *Negotiation Analyses: The Science and Art of Decision making*, Harvard: Harvard University Press (Chapter Five).

### Unit One-Politics and Hydro-diplomacy

Bisht, Medha. 2012. “Bhutan–India Power Cooperation: Benefits Beyond Bilateralism.” *Strategic Analysis*. 36(5): 787-803.

Gerlak, Andrea K, Robert G Varady and Arin C Haverland. 2009. “Hydrosolidarity and International Water Governance”. *International Negotiation*. 14: 311-328.

Gyawali, Dipak. 2013. “Reflecting on the chasm between water punditry and water politics.” *Water Alternatives*. 6(2): 177-194.

IUCN. 2010. “Towards Kabul Water Treaty: Managing Shared Water Resources – Policy Issues and Options.” IUCN Pakistan, Karachi.

### Unit Two-Engendering Hydro-diplomacy

Carlos, Lopes and Thomas Theisoehn. 2003. “Ownership, leadership and transformation: can we do better for capacity development?” New York: Earthscan Publications Ltd.

Meinzen-Dick, Ruth and Margreet Zwarteveen. 1998. “Gendered participation in water management: issues and illustrations from water users association in South Asia.” *Agriculture and Human Values*. 15: 337-345.

Sultana, Farhana. 2009. "Fluid lives: subjectivities, gender and water in rural Bangladesh." *Gender, Place & Culture*. 16(4): 427-444.

### **Unit Three- Ecology and Hydro-diplomacy**

Bandyopadhyay, Jayanta and Nilanjan Ghosh. 2009. "Holistic Engineering and Hydro-Diplomacy in the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna Basin." *Economic and Political Weekly*. 44(45): 50-60.

Islam, Shafiqul and Amanda C. Repella. 2015. "Water Diplomacy: A Negotiated Approach to Manage Complex Water Problems." *Journal of Contemporary Water Research & Education*. 155: 1-10.

### **Unit Four: Technology and Hydro-diplomacy**

Susskind and Islam. 2012., *Water Diplomacy: Creating Value and Building Trust in Transboundary Water Negotiations*, August 22, 2015,  
at:<http://www.sciencediplomacy.org/perspective/2012/water-diplomacy>

### **Unit Five- Culture and Hydro-diplomacy**

Cohen, Anthony. *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (Chapter 4). Routledge.

Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Chapter 1). New York: Basic Books.

Lederach, John Paul. 2010. *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (Chapters 1 to 7). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### **Unit Six- Psychology and Hydro-diplomacy**

Jung, Carl G. 1966. *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Imtiaz Ahmed. 2018. "Diplomatic Challenges in Contemporary Times", 16 January 2018, *Daily Star*.

### **Unit Seven- Riverine Hydro-diplomacy**

Imtiaz Ahmed. 2015. *People of Many Rivers: Tales from River Banks*, Dhaka: University Press Limited.