

Abstract

Water is the main source of life on our planet, yet it is becoming scarce for reasons as simple as climate change, pollution or its uneven distribution. This research analyzes the two major transboundary rivers that originate in the Tibetan plateau and flow through South and Southeast Asia, and how the race for regional geopolitical power will be the result of tensions for their domination. This research will be theoretically based on water securitization, as well as geopolitically based on geoeconomic and critical geopolitical theories. Firstly, the context of both the Brahmaputra and Mekong basins and the importance China sees in them will be introduced, as well as what the Chinese domestic causality is. Secondly, it will investigate the relationships that China maintains with all the downstream countries involved, what their cooperative tactics are, and whether there are points of conflict, as in the case of Sino-Indian territorial disputes and how these affect them. Finally, a comparison is made between the two basins on hydraulic mission, economic, environmental and social issues in order to understand whether securitization leads to cooperative or conflicting relationships. The results indicate that a comparison between the two basins is quite complicated due to the limited information on the Brahmaputra side, which is more sensitive to Chinese effects as it involves territorial disputes, just as China considers hydrological or hydropower station information as secret or as a national matter. On the other hand, it is more than evident the more open relationship with the Mekong states either by economic superiority or by the lack of conflicts between them, therefore they see in China an opportunity for development.