
'We Can Make Money, But We Can't Make Water': The World Bank's Development Diplomacy in the Indus and Mekong Basins

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Abstract (in French and English)

After World War II, international organizations like the United Nations and the World Bank recognized rivers as a potential resource and backbone for regional development. According to a recent inventory, the world has 263 international river basins. River therefore not only act as potential resources, they also constitute potential problems. The World Bank gained extensive experience dealing with both river development and mediating between antagonizing riparian states, which gained the label of 'development diplomacy'. Based on original archival research at the World Bank and the United Nations, this paper examines how the World Bank's experiences from the Indus Basin mediation (leading to the Indus Water Treaty of 1960) influenced its actions in the Lower Mekong Basin. It seeks to unravel how the World Bank the origins, application, and evolution of a non-political, technical approach to riverine conflicts by tying them to development schemes.

Keywords: International cooperation, rivers, India, Pakistan, World Bank, United Nations

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