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Submitted Abstract

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Transboundary water management issues in the Himalayas often turn problematic due to a lack of equity in water management. However, the partnership between India and Bhutan has so far evaded imbroglios in water resource management. Bhutan, located in the highlands of the upper catchment of Brahmaputra is drained by several transboundary rivers that flow through Indian lowlands. All the major highland rivers of Bhutan have immense hydropower potential. The role of hydropower development in raising Bhutan's GDP had been crucial. To strengthen the bilateral relation and procure energy resources India took the initiative to develop hydropower in Bhutan. Indo-Bhutan water cooperation and collaboration in developing hydroelectric projects may be analyzed in three phases. The first phase began with the implementation of the first development plan of Bhutan that was prepared with the help of India in 1961. The second phase of water cooperation started with the fifth plan in 1981 which paved the way for Bhutan's economic elevation by means of hydropower. The third phase in Indo-Bhutan water cooperation began with the enactment of Bhutan's Electricity Act in 2001 whereby Bhutan exhibited a considerable amount of self-sufficiency in the hydropower sector. In a trade-off, India purchased hydropower from Bhutan at a reasonable rate to meet the power deficit in its border states. Thus, the highland-lowland cooperation in developing the hydropower resources in Bhutan has been a win-win situation for both partners.