

**Overcoming Negotiation Asymmetry
in Transboundary Water Relations:
The Rhine River Basin Case**

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Abstract

When and why do states cooperate in international basins? In recent years, there have been increasing attempts to apply international relations theories such as realism and neo-liberal institutionalism in understanding prospect of cooperation among sovereign states over shared rivers. Realists of hydro politics argue that fate of cooperation resides in hands of hegemony and distribution of aggregate power among riparian states. Such pessimistic contention has been challenged by neo-liberal institutionalists, especially through regime theory. However, regime theory barely explains why and how cooperation emerges in the first place prior to regime formation. Therefore, the research suggests the game theory from neo-liberal institutionalism as an alternative theoretic approach. The accountability of Oye (1986)'s theoretical framework is illustrated through the case of cooperation in the Rhine River Basin.

Keywords: Transboundary cooperation, Transboundary rivers, Power asymmetry, Neo-liberal Institutionalism, Rhine River Basin