

The Amur River: Russo-Chinese joint venture or apple of discord?

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The Amur River is the longest river border in the world (2 824 km) and separates two great Eurasian powers, Russia and China. This paper will examine three main basin contradictions. The first one refers to the common pool problem: high importance of domestic water use in the Russian part of the Amur basin (almost 30% of total withdrawal) faces pollution challenge from Chinese tributaries. A second conflict has a direct implication for sustainable development issues. Chinese withdrawal will increase by 50% over the next 20 years destabilizing the basin's environment. The third question relates to border disputes. In 2005, Russia and China were able to solve their contentious border issues. However there is little chance for a long-lasting *status quo*: the international borders are defined along the middle of river fairways, and the Amur's fairway is unstable. It is not a challenge *per se* but China has already strengthened its own riverside. As a result, the border is moving deeper into Russian territory: 30 km² of Russian territory became Chinese over the past few years. This case study allows us to assess potential tensions between two countries and provides contributions both to theories of hydro politics and sustainable development.