

Lancang-Mekong Cooperation

The Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism is a multilateral format for cooperation among members on the Lancang-Mekong River. Multilateral organisations and groupings are an important part of the [UPSC](#) international relations segment. In this article, you can read all about the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) for the IAS exam.

What is the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC)?

The Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanism is a multilateral initiative led by China for cooperation between the riparian states of the Mekong river. Lancang is that part of the Mekong that flows through China.

- The member countries of this mechanism are Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.
- The LMC was founded by China in 2016 to basically lend itself a voice on the Mekong river issues.
- The objective of the LMC is to deepen good-neighborliness and pragmatic cooperation among the six member states.
- The other goals include:
 - Make collective efforts to the socio-economic development of the LMC countries.
 - Improve the well-being of the people and narrow the development gap among its members.
 - Support the [ASEAN](#) community.
 - Advance South-South cooperation
 - Enhance the implementation of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).
- China also seeks to bolster its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) through this mechanism.

Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Origins

The LMC framework was created in 2015 to promote Mekong cooperation at a sub-regional level. The idea behind the mechanism was led by China with support from Thailand. The genesis of the LMC was Thailand's proposal of the Conference on Sustainable Development in Lancang-Mekong sub-region, which aimed to organize the ways to address challenges faced by all 6 Mekong riparian countries, and explore possible cooperation for sustainable development.

The LMC was officially launched in March 2016, according to its official website.

LMC Mechanism

As per the Sanya Declaration, the LMC is focused on enabling cooperation in three pillars:

1. Politics and security
2. Economic and sustainable development
3. Social, cultural and people-to-people exchanges

It has also identified five priority areas which are:

1. Regional connectivity
2. Industrial cooperation
3. Cross-border economic cooperation
4. Water resources management
5. Agriculture cooperation and poverty reduction

The above areas are together termed the '3+5' Cooperation Mechanism.

Mekong River

The Mekong river originates from the glaciers of Tibet and flows through six countries before emptying into the South China Sea. The six countries are China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. The river is 4909 km long and about half of its flows through China. Upper Mekong river, located in Chinese territory, is called in Mandarin as "Lancang Jiang". The Lower Mekong Basin is rich in natural resources, commonly shared within Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam.

The Mekong river has been a very important lifeline for the people in South East Asia. It sustains a rich biodiversity and is the eight longest river in the world. It also marks the border line between Myanmar-Laos and Thailand-Laos.

China has built many dams in its part of the Mekong river. China uses the LMC to share the Lancang River's hydrological data for the whole year with the Mekong countries. There have been criticisms that China's dam building activities leave the other Mekong riparian states with problems of drought and less water.