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# Bibliography

## “What is hydropolitics? Examining the meaning of an evolving field”

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### Introduction

The study of *hydropolitics* is relatively young and ‘borrows’ concepts from other well-established disciplines such as political science, geography, or sociology. The roots of this nascent but blossoming research arena date back only to the late 1970s. As with any new field of study, there is much conceptual fuzziness surrounding *hydropolitics*. For instance, to this day, no single, universal definition of *hydropolitics* exists and is unlikely to be established any time soon.

Following is a selection of major peer-reviewed contributions that deal with the definition of *hydropolitics*. The selected contributions are ordered chronologically and give a specific insight into the evolution of this definition. Furthermore, for each contribution, a brief comment is provided to facilitate users’ reading.

### **Waterbury, J. 1979. *Hydropolitics of the Nile Valley*. Syracuse University Press.**

The term hydropolitics was first coined by Waterbury (1979) in his book *Hydropolitics of the Nile Valley*<sup>1</sup>. In questioning “how can sovereign states, pursuing national self-interest [...], cope with the challenge of bi- or multinational coordination in the use of a common resource?”, Waterbury implicitly defined hydropolitics as the study of inter-state politics regarding the management of shared water resources.

The reference is available [here](#).

### **Elhance, A.P. 1997. *Conflict and cooperation over water in the Aral Sea basin*. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 20(2): 207–218.**

A more explicit definition of hydropolitics came almost two decades later when Elhance (1997) described it as the “systematic study of interstate conflict and cooperation over transboundary water resources”. The unpacking of this definition reveals three primary dimensions of hydropolitics. First, it involves only states as relevant actors. Second, it is restricted to the international arena of transboundary water resources. Third and lastly, it revolves solely around conflict or cooperation.

The reference is available [here](#).

### **Meissner, R. 1999. *Water as a source of political conflict and cooperation: A comparative analysis of the situation in the Middle East and Southern Africa*. Rand Afrikaans University.**

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<sup>1</sup> A similar definition was provided by Ohlsson (1995) in his book *Hydropolitics: conflicts over water as a development constraint*.

Meissner (1999) provided a broader and more comprehensive interpretation of hydropolitics, portraying it as the “systematic investigation with respect to the interaction between states, non-state actors and a host of other participants, like individuals within and outside the state, regarding the authoritative allocation and/or use of international and national water resources”. The divergence from Elhance’s concise but narrow definition is evident. From Meissner’s perspective, hydropolitics entangles both state and nonstate actors, both internal and external to the basin. Furthermore, hydropolitics is not limited to water resources crossing (or forming) the border between states; it also includes those flowing within national boundaries. Finally, hydropolitics is more than the conflict/cooperation dichotomy: it is an analysis of the many ways heterogeneous actors interact over water.

The reference is available [here](#).

**Trottier, J. 1999. *Hydropolitics in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*. Jerusalem: PASSIA - Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs,**

In her book *Hydropolitics in the West Bank and Gaza strip*, Trottier (1999) used the term for the “investigation of water conflict in order to uncover the tensions among competing interests, as well as the types of political, imaginary and symbolic relations which the issue of water mobilizes”. For Trottier, hydropolitics covers not only conflict over water use, but also its access, regulation, pollution, and use as a media or propaganda tool, as well as a leverage for pressuring other actors.

The reference is available [here](#).

**Mollinga, P.P. 2001. *Water and politics: Levels, rational choice and South Indian canal irrigation*. *Futures* 33(8-9): 733-752.**

Mollinga (2001), inspired by the link between water and politics, identified hydropolitics as the first level of contestation of water resource planning and use; that of “inter-state politics regarding the allocation, distribution, control and quality of water resources”. The other two levels are: the politics of water resources policy (i.e., policy formulation and implementation within states), and the everyday politics of water use (i.e., the day-to-day use of the resource).

The reference is available [here](#).

**García-Ávila, P. 2002. *Agua, cultura y sociedad en México*. El Colegio de Michoacán. Instituto Mexicano de Tecnología del Agua.**

This book includes new conceptualizations of hydropolitics. García-Ávila (2002), when transposing the concept of hydropolitics to the local level, defined it as the “manifestation of tensions arisen from control and management of an increasingly scarce and strategic resource”. Maury (2002) saw hydropolitics as the outcome of water policing or, in his words, the “set of critical situations that arise from the lack of a water policy or, in many cases, by a change in such policy”.

The reference is available [here](#).

**Turton, A. and Henwood, R. 2002. *Hydropolitics in the developing world: a southern African perspective*. African Water Issues Research Unit (AWIRU).**

Going a step further in defining hydropolitics, Turton and Henwood (2002) proposed to expand the concept. Deeply ingrained in Easton's (1965) notion of politics as “the authoritative allocation of values in society”, Turton and Henwood referred to hydropolitics as the “systematic study of the authoritative allocation of values with respect to water in society”. This broad definition incorporates two fundamental elements. First, the vertical dimension of scale: hydropolitics encompasses (and impacts) many different levels of society, from “the individual to the household, village, city, social, provincial, national and international level with a number of undefined levels in between”. Second, the horizontal dimension of range: hydropolitics covers almost endless issues, from conflict and its mitigation to water for food, water and gender, water and ecosystems, and ultimately water as a critical element in sustainable development.

The reference is available [here](#).

**Meissner, R. 2005. *Interest Groups as Local Stakeholders involved in the Water Politics of a Transboundary River: The Case of the Proposed Epupa Dam across the Kunene River*. In Wirkus, L. (Ed), *Water, Development and Cooperation-Comparative Perspective: Euphrates-Tigris and Southern Africa*, Paper 46. Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC).**

Grounded on the idea of the authoritative allocation and use of water, Meissner (2005) completed Turton and Henwood's definition by adding that hydropolitics was the "transnational interaction, through norm creation and utilization, between a plethora of nonstate and state actors, varying from individuals to collectivities, regarding the authoritative allocation and use of, and perception towards domestic and international water resources".

The reference is available [here](#).

**Meissner, R. 2015. *Hydropolitics, Interest Groups and Governance - The Case of the Proposed Epupa Dam*, Springer International Publishing.**

In this more recent rendition of hydropolitics, Meissner (2015), further emphasizes the role that nonstate actors play in hydropolitical processes within a specific space and scale. According to this definition, "hydropolitics is a continuation of actor interaction or governance when state interactions have ceased in a river basin". Therefore, hydropolitics results from the networking between state and nonstate actors within and outside the basin's geographical reach.

The reference is available [here](#).

**Moore, S. 2018. *Subnational hydropolitics: conflict, cooperation, and institution-building in shared river basins*. Oxford University Press.**

In this book, Moore (2018) put the spotlight on the concept of 'subnational hydropolitics' to reflect how dynamics over shared waters are inherently shaped by a complex constellation of actors at both subnational and international levels.

The reference is available [here](#).