Subnational Water Conflict: a Turbid Future for Hydropolitics

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The Movement Away from Geopolitics

Subnational Water Conflict

• What are we talking about?
  • **Sub-national**: Concerning groups that are defined by shared features independent of their being political
  • **Conflict**: A broader set negative interactions between these groups – including riots, strikes, communal violence, demonstrations, and political upheaval.

• What we want to know:
  • Is water insecurity **explanatory** of various forms of human insecurity and risk?
  • Is water insecurity **a useful predictor** of various forms of social and violent conflict?
### Kinds of Conflict
- Moore (2016)
  - Infrastructural
  - Allocative
  - Distributive
  - Qualitative

### Sources of Conflict
- Institutions
- Diverse senses of scarcity
- Historical political advantage
- Climate and opportunity
- Relative economic and cultural advantages
China – The Yellow River
East Africa - Militancy and Rainfall
The Midwestern US – Nutrient Pollution

Phosphorus delivered to the Gulf of Mexico

Alexander, R. et al., 2008.
What do we need to know?

• Where would we expect cooperative institutions of type C to be successful? How do they fare at avoiding conflict?

• What relationship is there between agricultural subsidy policy and water conflict?

• How do (e.g.) US national security priorities line up with what we’re gathering in more granular work on water insecurity?

• Can the water conflict literature remain politically relevant if it moves away from the geopolitical model?
• What is the prevailing belief system about transboundary governance?
• Is this adaptable to sub-national cases?
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