POWER AND HYDRO-HEGEMONY: UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATER INTERACTIONS IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTHERN AFRICA

By Thobekile Zikhali

Department of Political Studies at the University of Witwatersrand. Address: Postnet suite 122. Die Wilgers X1, Pretoria East. 0084. Cellphone number: 0027 711142327. Email address: tzikhali@hsrc.ac.za or thobekilezikhali@yahoo.com.

Abstract

The birth of democracy in South Africa in 1994 introduced various reforms in the country’s water resources management. These reforms have had a positive impact on transboundary water resources governance in the Southern African region as the country moved from being a ‘foe’ to a ‘friend’ after years of isolation during the apartheid era. In both periods (apartheid and post-apartheid), South Africa as a nation has been a regional hegemon, being able to project power beyond her national borders. The scarcity of water and the economic significance of the common pool resources in the region have made the resource subject to securitization by states– with the hegemon ‘first among equals’ expected to dominate the process and outcomes of interactions. The question is how water becomes an instantiation of state power. The paper explores how transboundary water relations, particularly how cooperation and conflict are managed in the Incomati River Basin. Focusing on power and hydro hegemony context of the river basin, the paper will use Constructivist Institutionalism to contribute to an empirical and theoretical understanding of the geopolitical landscape of transboundary water relations in the Incomati River Basin after apartheid. The paper sets to understand what the interactions of Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa over the shared resource portray about power and hegemony after apartheid in the Southern African region.

Keywords: Cooperation, Conflict, Hegemony, Transboundary Water Governance, Power

Topics Preferences:

1. Water Governance, management and society

2. Inter and transdisciplinarity in the water sector

3. Environmental Water and water resources