

# Hydropower Development In The Mekong Region Political Socio Economic And Environmental Perspectives Earthscan Studies In Water Resource Management

Hydropower Development in the Mekong Region Political, Socio-economic and Environmental Perspectives Routledge

This book assesses river health in the Lancang River Basin with regard to the impacts of hydropower projects. It studies key components of the transboundary effects of Chinese dams on the Lancang River including its hydrology, sediment transport, water temperature, and fish community. It also investigates the specific impacts of hydropower on women's lives and livelihoods, and factors that influence women's participation in river health management. In closing, the lessons learned regarding environmental protection and hydropower development in the Lancang River Basin are shared, e.g. with hydropower developers and regulators in Laos. This issue brief discusses the current status of hydropower planning, development, cooperation and decision-making in the Mekong Basin. Hydropower dams, especially large dams on major tributaries and mainstems, have long been highly controversial because of their negative impact on other components of the water-food-energy-livelihoods 'nexus.' Growing pressures by governments and commercial developers

to build up to 11 dams on the mainstream of the Lower Mekong have roiled the Mekong River Commission (MRC), an intergovernmental body created by Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam in a 1995 treaty to promote cooperation on the sustainable and equitable use of the Mekong River's mainstream. Without a more clear and binding process to address development disputes, the MRC faces complete marginalization of the organization and the Mekong basin will become an uncoordinated rush by commercial developers to build as many as seven more mainstream dams on the Lao and Lao-Thai stretches of the river and two more under consideration by Cambodia. The cumulative impact of even some dams will put at risk the food security and livelihoods of tens of millions of people.

The Mekong Basin is home to some 70 million people, for whom this great river is a source of livelihoods, the basis for their ecosystems and a foundation of their economies. But the Mekong is also currently undergoing enormous social, economic, and ecological change of which hydropower development is a significant driver. This book provides a basin-wide analysis of political, socio-economic and environmental perspectives of hydropower development in the Mekong Basin. It includes chapters from China, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Written by regional experts from some of the region's leading research institutions, the book provides an holistic analysis of the shifting socio-political contexts within which hydropower is framed, legitimised and executed. Drawing heavily on political ecologies and political economics to examine the economic, social,

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political and ecological drivers of hydropower, the book's basin wide approach illuminates how hydropower development, and its benefits and impacts, are linked multilaterally across the basin. The research in the book is derived from empirical research conducted from 2012-2013 as part of the CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food's Mekong programme.

Celebrated for its natural beauty and its abundance of wildlife, the Mekong river runs thousands of miles through China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Its basin is home to more than 70 million people and has for centuries been one of the world's richest agricultural areas and a biodynamic wonder. Today, however, it is undergoing profound changes. Development policies, led by a rising China in particular, aim to interconnect the region and urbanize the inhabitants. And a series of dams will harness the river's energy, while also stymieing its natural cycles and cutting off food supplies for swathes of the population. In *Last Days of the Mighty Mekong*, Brian Eyler travels from the river's headwaters in China to its delta in southern Vietnam to explore its modern evolution. Along the way he meets the region's diverse peoples, from villagers to community leaders, politicians to policy makers. Through conversations with them he reveals the urgent struggle to save the Mekong and its unique ecosystem.

The Center for Development Research (ZEF) is an international and interdisciplinary research institute of the University of Bonn, Germany. This book focuses on how various social actors influence the planning process for Se San River Basin's management in response to the

effect of Vietnamese Yali-Falls dam on Cambodian local communities' livelihoods. The author examined why responses employed by dam development agencies produce a particular outcome. He attempted to demonstrate their strategies and cultural means in taking control over negotiation process to win the battle for expanding hydropower exploitation in the Se San River for maximum economic gain. The organizing responses by local communities and their distant supporters are constrained and resisted by politics, resources and strategies of dam promoting agencies.

An international river basin is an ecological system, an economic thoroughfare, a geographical area, a font of life and livelihoods, a geopolitical network and, often, a cultural icon. It is also a socio-legal phenomenon. This book is the first detailed study of an international river basin from a socio-legal perspective. The Mekong River Basin, which sustains approximately 70 million people across Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, provides a prime example of the socio-legal complexities of governing a transboundary river and its tributaries. The book applies its socio-legal analysis to bring a fresh approach to understanding conflicts surrounding water governance in the Mekong River Basin. The authors describe the wide range of uses being made of legal doctrine and legal argument in ongoing disputes surrounding hydropower development in the Basin, putting to rest lingering caricatures of a single, 'ASEAN' way of navigating conflict. They call into question some of the common assumptions concerning the relationship between law and

development. The book also sheds light on important questions concerning the global hybridization or crossover of public and private power and its ramifications for water governance. With current debates and looming conflicts over water governance globally, and over shared rivers in particular, these issues could not be more pressing.

The water resources of the Mekong river catchment area, from China, through Thailand, Cambodia and Laos to Vietnam, are increasingly contested. Governments, companies and banks are driving new investment in roads, dams, diversions, irrigation schemes, navigation facilities, power plants and other emblems of conventional "development." Their plans and interventions pose multiple burdens and risks to the livelihoods of millions of people dependent on wetlands, floodplains, fisheries and aquatic resources.

The Mekong River is a vital source of livelihoods and economic activity in continental South-East Asia and extends from the Tibetan Plateau to the South China Sea. Its length is 4 800 km. More than half circulates in China, but its channel runs through Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. The Mekong has the world's largest inland freshwater fishery industry, vital to the region's food security, representing around USD 3 000 million per year. Its unique and rich biological habitat provides diverse livelihoods as well as four fifths of the animal protein for more than 60 million people. At the level of biodiversity, the importance of this river for global nature is vital. The Mekong region is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and to the

degradation of ecosystems. The uncontrolled growth of the population both in China and in Southeast Asia is exerting unsustainable pressure on the Mekong in terms of a massive exploitation of all kinds of resources linked to the River: water, food, wood, energy, especially recent infrastructure and hydropower development, together with deforestation, illegal wildlife trade and habitat fragmentation. Water scarcity leads to reduced agricultural productivity, unemployment and poverty. Four countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam) formed an intergovernmental agency in 1950, The Mekong River Commission (MRC), to defend the sustainable development of the Mekong River and to plan its future. The absence of China and Myanmar mitigates and erodes the effective dialogue of the MRC on the management of the River. The lack of implementing mechanisms denatures the organization itself.

The catchment area of the Mekong River and its tributaries extends from China, through Burma/Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and to Vietnam. The water resources of the Mekong region - from the Irrawaddy and Nu-Salween in the west, across the Chao Phraya to the Lancang-Mekong and Red River in the east- are increasingly contested. Governments, companies, and banks are driving new investments in roads, dams, diversions, irrigation schemes, navigation facilities, power plants and other emblems of conventional 'development'. Their plans and interventions should provide some benefits, but also pose multiple burdens and risks to millions of people dependent on wetlands,

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floodplains and aquatic resources, in particular, the wild capture fisheries of rivers and lakes. This book examines how large-scale projects are being proposed, justified, and built. How are such projects contested and how do specific governance regimes influence decision making? The book also highlights the emergence of new actors, rights and trade-off debates, and the social and environmental consequences of 'water resources development'. This book shows how diverse, and often antagonistic, ideologies and interests are contesting for legitimacy. It argues that the distribution of decision-making, political, and discursive power influences how the waterscapes of the region will ultimately look and how benefits, costs and risks will be distributed. These issues are crucial for the transformation of waterscapes and the prospects for democratizing water governance in the Mekong region. The book is part of the action-research of the M-POWER (Mekong Program on Water, Environment and Resilience) knowledge network. Published with IFAD, CGIAR Challenge Program on Water & Food, M-POWER, Project ECHEL-EAU and HEINRICH BOLL STIFTUNG

This book is both a needed methodology for evaluating the sustainability of hydropower/ dam projects, and a case study of one of the more precedent setting dam developments of our time, the Nam Theun 2 project in the Lao PDR. It combines issues of biodiversity, indigenous persons, and poverty alleviation, against the backdrop of the World Bank's search for legitimacy for returning to a role promoting massive dams.

In recent years, both Chinese overseas investment and

hydropower development have been topics of increasing interest and research, with Chinese actors acting as financiers, developers, builders and sub-contractors. Chinese Hydropower Development in Africa and Asia explores the governance and socio-economic implications of large Chinese dams' development in low- and middle-income countries in Asia and Africa and asks how these big infrastructure projects promote sustainable local and national development in the recipient countries. The book first discusses general aspects of Chinese involvement in hydropower development in Africa and Asia, looking at political and economic aspects, before presenting selected case studies from large dams built and financed by Chinese actors in Asia and Africa. Based on these results, the book further makes recommendations on how to improve the planning, implementation and governance of large dams for sustainable global dam-building. This volume is a valuable resource for academics, researchers and scholars in the areas of Development, Environmental Studies, Politics and Economics.

Decreasing supplies of fresh water, growth of the global population, and the transnational nature of much of the world's water resources have made global competition over water increasingly common. In Southeast Asia, Chinese hydroelectric dams at the Lancang Cascade have enabled China to control the headwaters of the Mekong River and threaten downstream states' access to this vital resource. Cambodia and Vietnam are two Southeast Asian states whose economic prosperity is inextricably linked to undisturbed access to the Mekong.

Despite similar requirements for river usage, the two states have responded to Chinese control in surprisingly different ways. This study investigates the different Vietnamese and Cambodian responses to China's Mekong River development by analyzing their requirements for the Mekong River and contrasting each state's relationship with China. The study finds that Cambodia has developed a strategy of appeasement toward China, placing its short-term interests in Chinese economic assistance ahead of its long-term requirements for riparian productivity, while Vietnam has balanced against the super power, demonstrating the resolve to protect its riparian interests. Similarly, the two states both use institutions to offset the super power's significant size and power advantages, providing them an alternative path to shape China's actions. I.

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There is much controversy over the development of new dams for hydropower, where concerns for environmental protection and the livelihoods of local people may conflict with the goals of economic development. This book analyses the opportunities and barriers that NGOs and civil society actors face when conducting advocacy campaigns against such developments. Through a comparison of two NGO coalitions in Cambodia and Vietnam advocating against the Xayaburi hydropower dam on the Mekong River, the book explores the intricate interactions of formal and informal rules and norms and how they influence advocacy strategies. A framework for analysis is proposed which serves as a tool for analysis by civil society actors. The author generates fresh insights into the way in which opportunities and barriers are created for NGOs to

influence state-centric decision-making processes. The book also discusses Mekong riparian states' negotiation process over the Xayaburi hydropower dam in detail, providing an analysis of the Mekong River's governance under the 1995 Mekong Agreement. The book concludes by suggesting ways to improve the engagement of civil society actors in the governance of transboundary rivers and development projects.

In Southeast Asia, China's growing economic and political strength has been accompanied by adept diplomacy and active promotion of regional cooperation, institutions and integration. Southeast Asian states and China engage in 'strategic regionalism': they seek regional membership for regime legitimation and collective bargaining; and regional integration to enhance economic development, regarded as essential for ensuring national and regime security. Sino-Southeast Asian regionalism is exemplified by the development plans for the Mekong River basin, where ambitious projects for building regional infrastructural linkages and trade contribute to mediating the security concerns of the Mekong countries. However, Mekong regionalism also generates new insecurities. Developing the resources of the Mekong has led to serious challenges in terms of governance, distribution and economic externalities. Resource-allocation and exploitation conflicts occur most obviously within the realm of water projects, especially hydropower development programmes. While such disputes are not likely to erupt into armed conflict because of the power asymmetry between China and the lower Mekong states, they exacerbate Southeast Asian

concerns about China's rise and undermine Chinese rhetoric about peaceful development. But the negative security consequences of developing the Mekong are also due to the shared economic imperative, and the Southeast Asian states' own difficulties with collective action due to existing intramural conflicts.

The Mekong is the most controversial river in Southeast Asia, and increasingly the focus of international attention. It flows through 6 countries, China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Viet Nam. The 4 downstream countries have formed the Mekong River Commission to promote sustainable development of the river and many of their people depend on it for their subsistence ? it has possible the largest freshwater fishery in the world, and the Mekong waters support rice agriculture in the delta in Viet Nam (which produces about 40% of that country's food) as well as in Cambodia, Laos and Thailand. China is now building the first large mainstream dam on the river, and has proposals for several more. These dams are likely to affect the downstream countries. Several of the downstream countries also have plans for large scale hydropower and irrigation development which could also impact the river. This book will provide a solid overview of the biophysical environment of the Mekong together with a discussion of the possible impacts, biophysical, economic and social, of some possible development scenarios. It is intended to provide a technical basis which can inform the growing political and conservation debate about the future of the Mekong River, and those who depend on it. It is aimed at river ecologists, geographers, environmentalists and development specialists both in the basin and (especially) outside for whom access to this material is most difficult. This book will be the first comprehensive treatment of the Mekong system. The first comprehensive overview of all aspects of

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the Mekong River system Deals with a regionally critical ecosystem and one under threat The Mekong supports the world's largest freshwater fishery and provides water underpinning a major regional rice paddy system Presents the authoritative findings of the Mekong River Commission's research for a wider audience for the first time outside of limited distribution reports

One of the most controversial issues of the water sector in recent years has been the impacts of large dams. Proponents have claimed that such structures are essential to meet the increasing water demands of the world and that their overall societal benefits far outweigh the costs. In contrast, the opponents claim that social and environmental costs of large dams far exceed their benefits, and that the era of construction of large dams is over. A major reason as to why there is no consensus on the overall benefits of large dams is because objective, authoritative and comprehensive evaluations of their impacts, especially ten or more years after their construction, are conspicuous by their absence. This book debates impartially, comprehensively and objectively, the positive and negative impacts of large dams based on facts, figures and authoritative analyses. These in-depth case studies are expected to promote a healthy and balanced debate on the needs, impacts and relevance of large dams, with case studies from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and Latin America.

Traces the history and impact of the Mekong River on the societies that developed on its banks.

This book conceptualises the ongoing hydropower expansion in Southwest China as a socio-political and transnational project transcending the construction of dams. Chapters in this volume are organised around three sections spanning hydropower and resettlement governance, rural livelihoods, and international relations connected to China's hydropower

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expansion. Dam projects of various scales are analysed as infrastructure projects that shape peoples' livelihoods, the environment, and China's relations with Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The Mekong River is a vital and valuable resource, with huge development potential for the six states through which it flows. Given the significant asymmetry of power between those states, however, there is a real risk that some might utilise it to the detriment of others. Without a sense of regional belonging, it is difficult to imagine that these states and their constituent communities will take regional imperatives to heart, participate in joint regulatory frameworks, or adopt behaviours for upstream-downstream and lateral cooperation over the appropriation and use of their shared resources. How effectively has closer interdependence of the Mekong countries accommodated the development of a political-social-cultural space conducive to the growth of a regional "we-ness" among not only political elites, but also the general public? The contributors to this volume approach this question from a range of directions, including the impacts of tourism, regional development programmes, the Mekong Power Grid, and Sino-US rivalry. This edited volume presents valuable insights for scholars of international relations, Asian studies, development studies, environment studies, policy studies, and human geography.

?This Brief provides a cross-sectional analysis of development-directed investments in the wider Mekong region. The wider Mekong region includes Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, and the Chinese province of Yunnan. Evidence highlights that a few critical dynamics, including human migration, natural resource flows, and financial

investments, generate a high level of connectivity between these countries. Such high levels of connectivity increase complexity and the potential for ripple effects of national decisions. The emerging links between countries can unfold in financial investments, migration, or the flow of resources. As these links intensify the regional connectivity increases and over time a highly connected region can emerge, as experienced by the Mekong region.? This Brief also contains a chapter at the end of the book featuring numerous charts and diagrams further illustrating the impact of development activities in the area.

The Mekong River has undergone vast infrastructural changes in recent years, including the construction of dams across its main stream. These projects, along with the introduction of new fish species, changing political fortunes, and international migrant labor, have all made a profound impact upon the lives of those residing on the great river. It also impacts how they dream. In *Mekong Dreaming*, Andrew Alan Johnson explores the changing relationship between the river and the residents of Ban Beuk, a village on the Thailand-Laos border, by focusing on the effect that construction has had on human and inhuman elements of the villagers' world. Johnson shows how inhabitants come to terms with the profound impact that remote, intangible, and yet powerful forces—from global markets and remote

bureaucrats to ghosts, spirits, and gods—have on their livelihoods. Through dreams, migration, new religious practices, and new ways of dwelling on a changed river, inhabitants struggle to understand and affect the distant, the inassimilable, and the occult, which offer both sources of power and potential disaster.

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