This paper introduces the basic concepts of hydro-hegemony which are employed in the analysis of the contributors of this special issue. It emphasises the roles of hegemony, power and political–economy processes in shaping international transboundary water relations. Central to the analysis is Lukes’ concept of the three dimensions of power and Gramscian notions of hegemony (see S. Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, 2005). Hegemony depends on the skilful use of hard and soft forms of power, between formally equal parties such as nation states. Hydro-hegemony is hegemony active in international transboundary water settings, the analytical framework for which is laid out in detail by Zeitoun and Warner in *Water Policy* vol 8 (2006, 435–460). The challenges of conceptualising the complex nexus of international water relations are also addressed. A recurring theme is that both power and political economy processes are especially effective when they operate invisibly. The approach furthermore sets the frame for exploration of improvement of the options of hegemon riparians and non-hegemon riparians alike for more principled transboundary water governance.

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Water management today is faced with new challenges such as climate change or the effects of human activity. Public and private stakeholders who are active in this field must develop new ways to better manage the water cycle "as a whole". The objective of this MOOC is to develop an understanding of the problems related to water management. The course will look at water management in detail through the analysis of the different types of rights and obligations associated with, for example, the development of a multi-sectorial regulation system or a watershed management approach. We will present the framework of hydro-hegemony with the aim of understanding transboundary interactions. This will be illustrated with the case of the Nile River Basin.

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