

Transforming Water Conflicts: Global Lessons in Hydrodiplomacy

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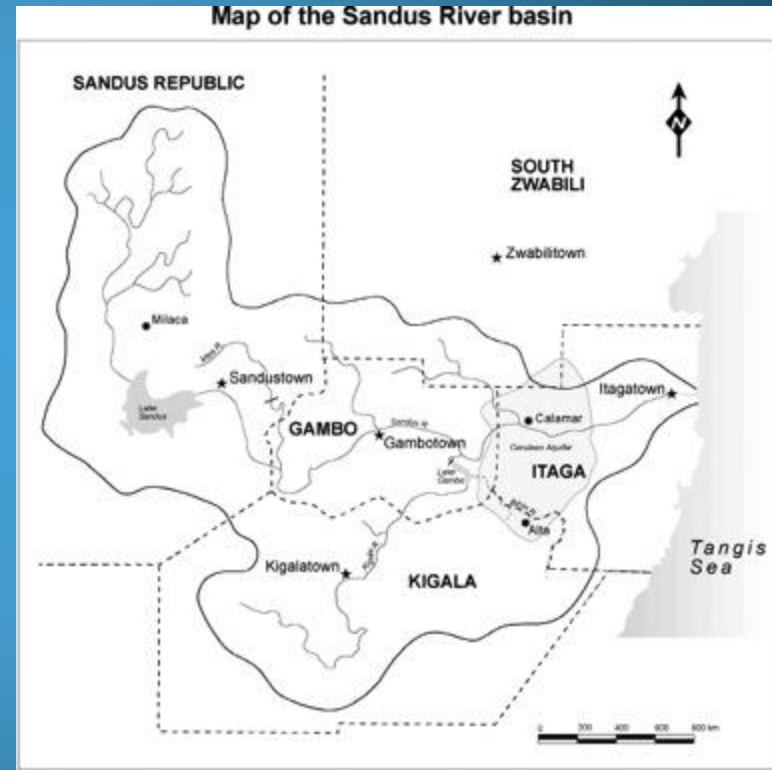
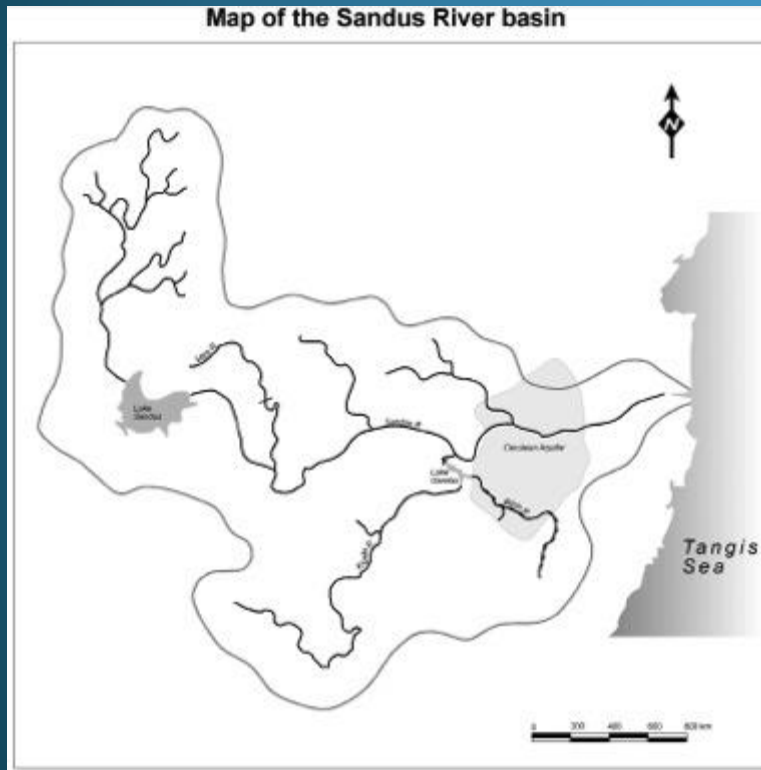
May 2025



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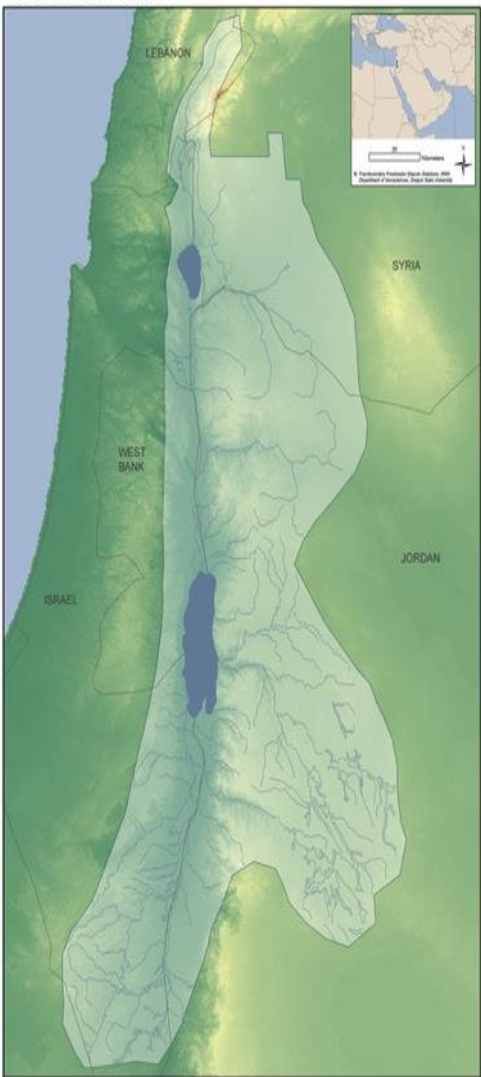
What is Water Conflict Management & Transformation??



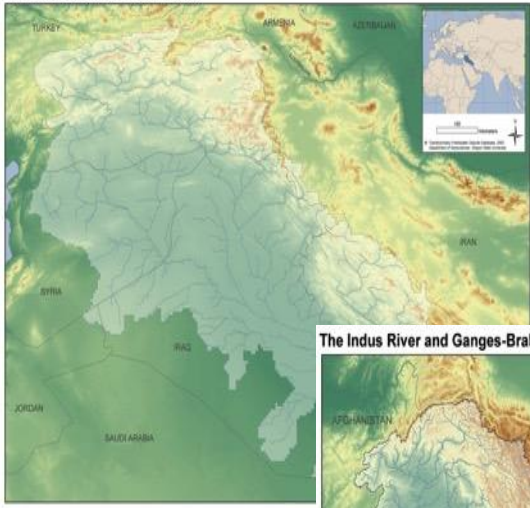
What changes when a border is present?

What capacity do we need to address the change?

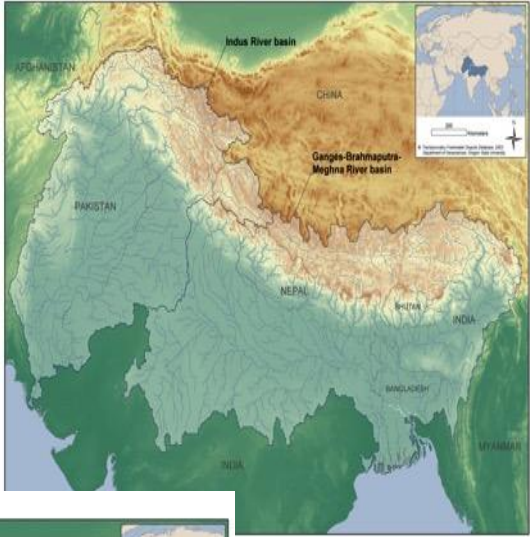
The Jordan River basin



The Tigris-Euphrates River basin



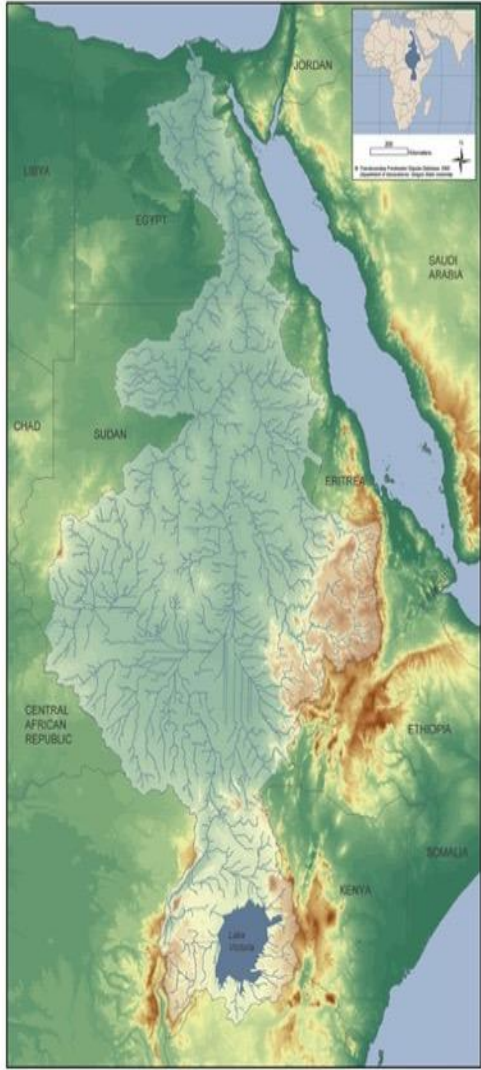
The Indus River and Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna River basins



The Aral Sea basin



The Nile River basin

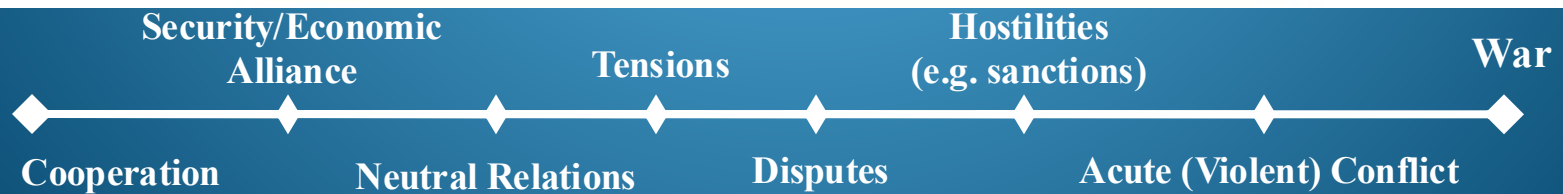
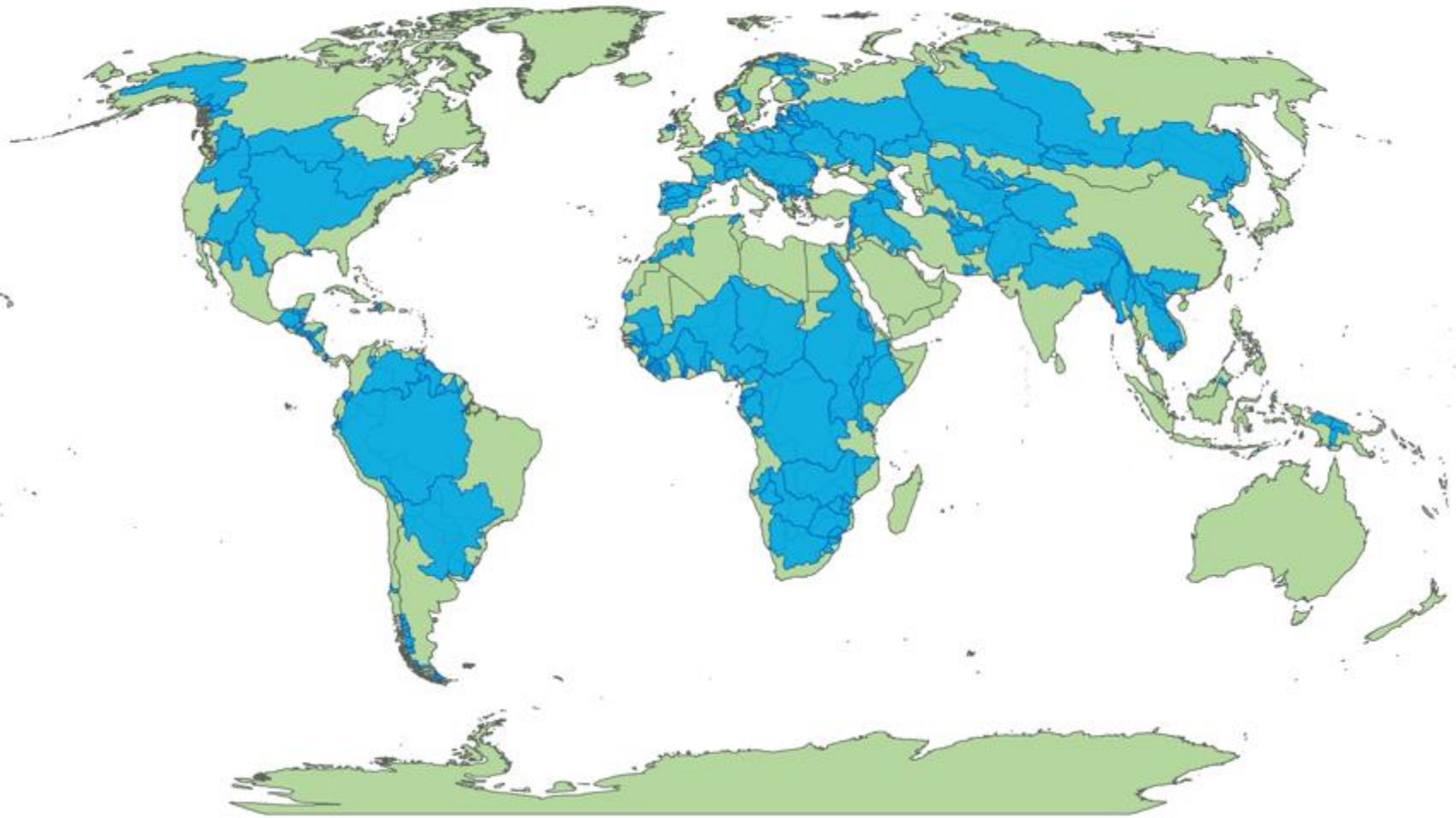


Water and Conflict

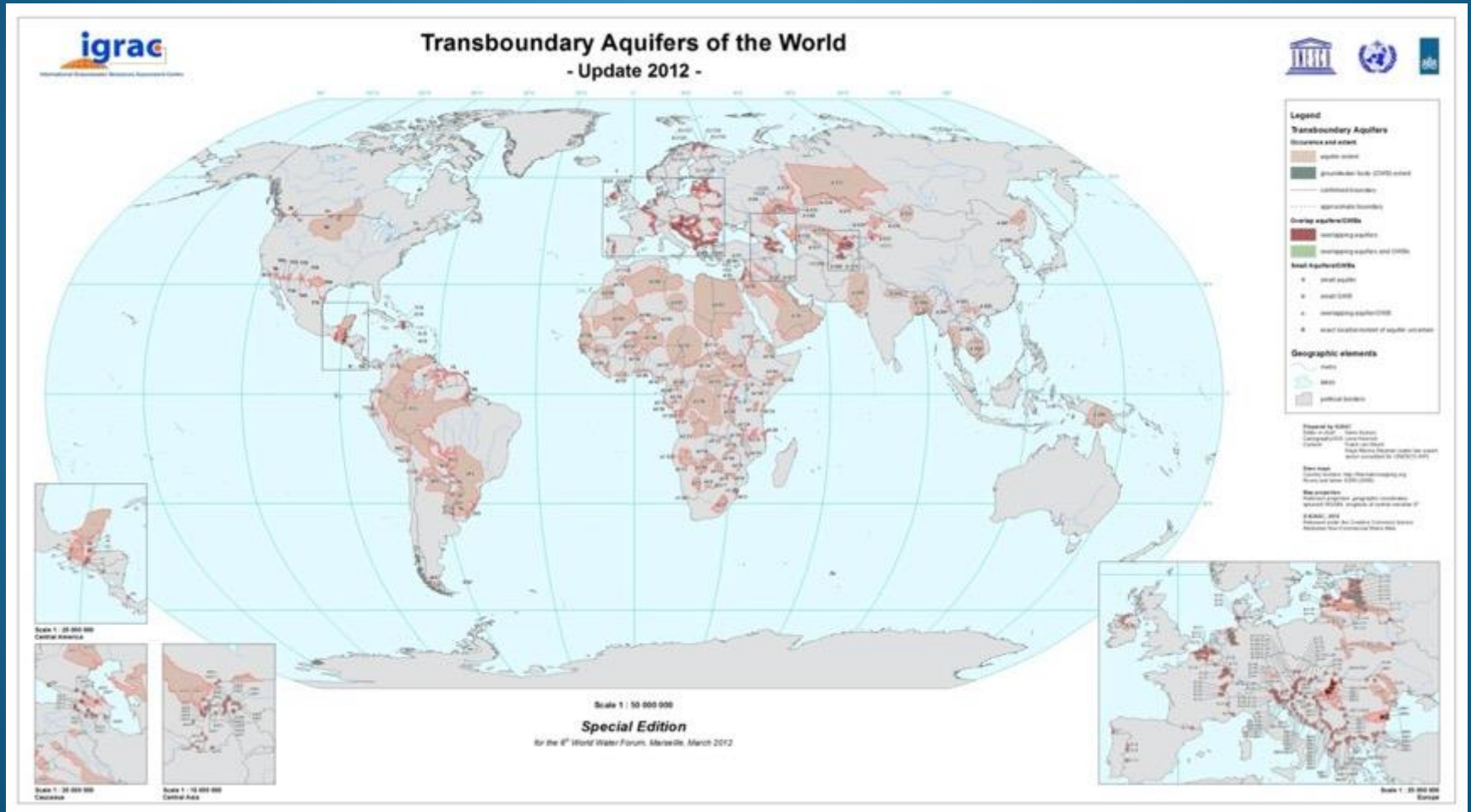
“Fierce competition for fresh water may well become a source of conflict and wars in the future.”

- Kofi Annan, March 2001

Scale of Conflict



Transboundary Aquifers of the World



Water Conflict & Cooperation: Assumptions & Evidence

PREVAILING WISDOM:

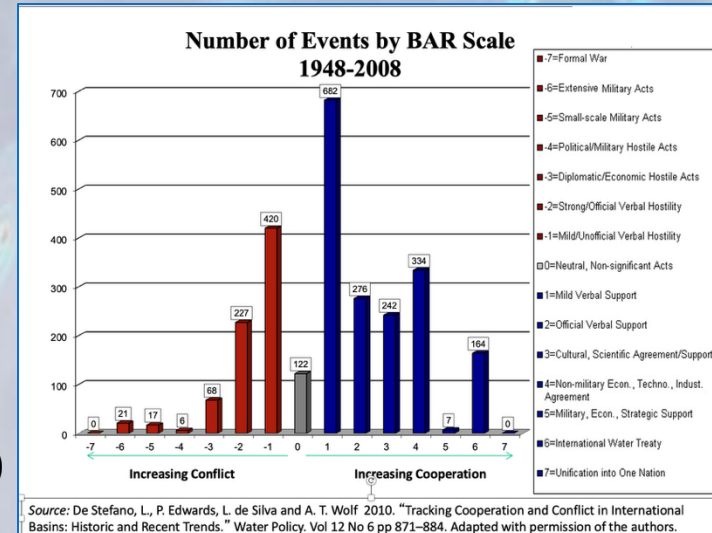
“Conflicts over water are widespread, inevitable, intractable, and violent.”

EVIDENCE:

- At the international scale:
 - 2/3% of interactions are cooperative
 - “Conflict” is mostly verbal (press and politicians)
 - 800 water-related treaties, generally adhered to, even through conflict

BUT

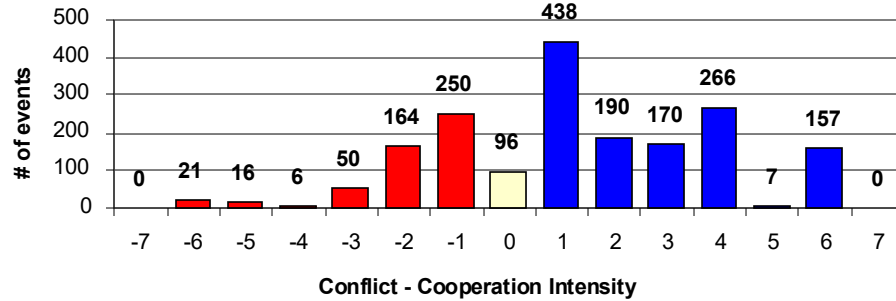
- Disputes seem to be increasing
- Not all cooperation is “good”
- Likelihood & intensity of conflict increases at sub-national level



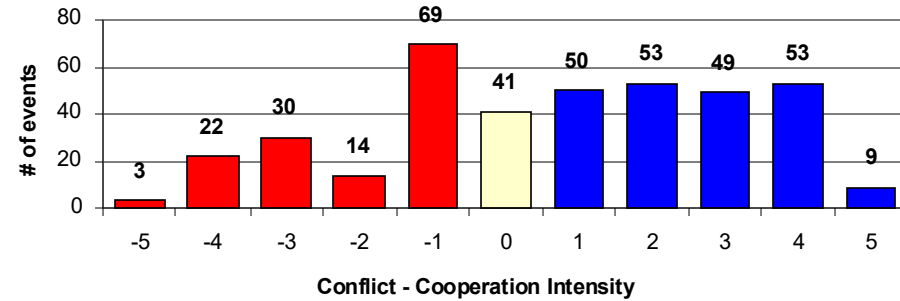
Israeli and Palestinian Water Professionals
During 2024 Gaza War

Event Intensity

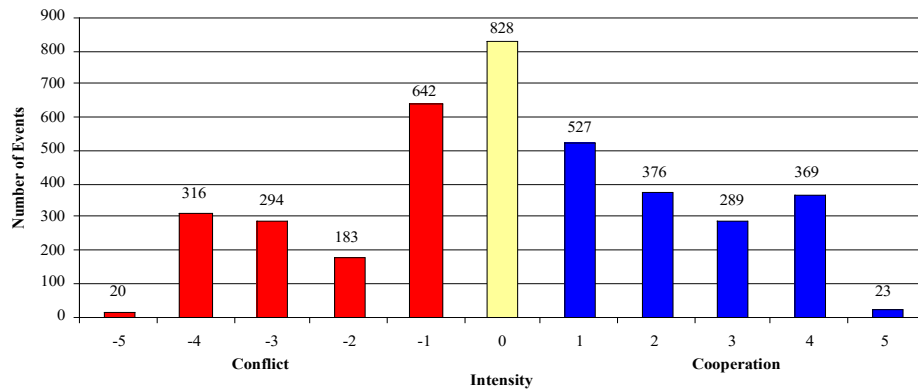
International



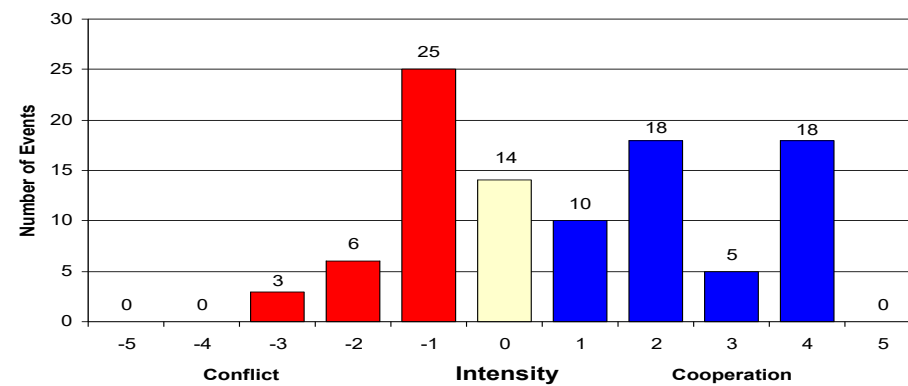
Oregon



UC Region Events



Soeth Database Events



All Scales: More Collaboration than Conflict

Lesson 1:

The Four Worlds Within & Without

Four Worlds Framework: Four Needs and Four Claims

NEEDS FOR:

- Intrapersonal
- Interpersonal
- Groups
- Nations

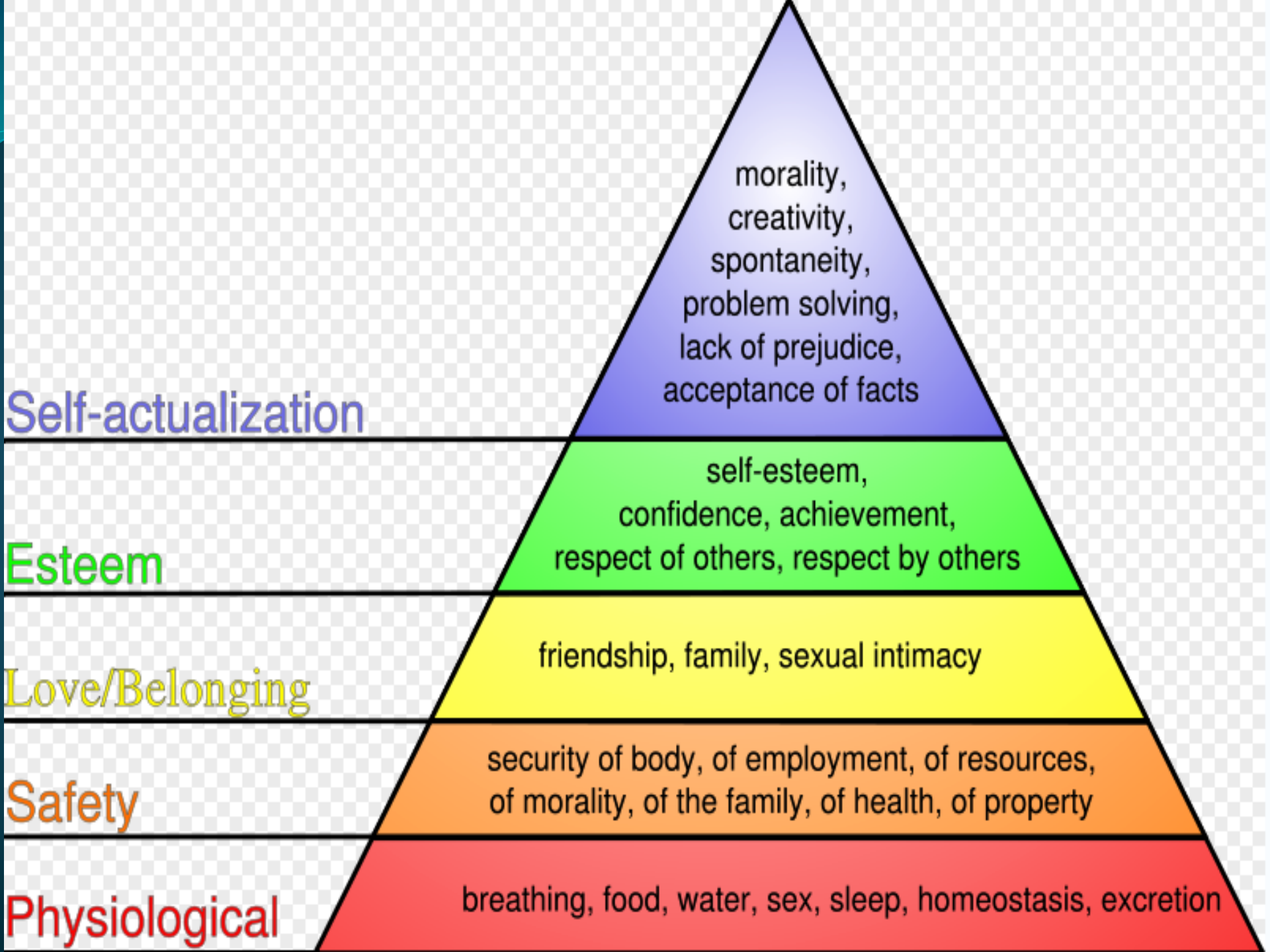


Spiritual	Harmony
Mental	Values
Emotional	Interests
Physical	Positions

CLAIMS:

Expressions of
needs in
negotiations





Basic

Human

Needs

**Self-
actualization**

Creativity, Problem solving,
Authenticity, Spontaneity

Esteem

Self-esteem, Confidence, Achievement

Social Needs

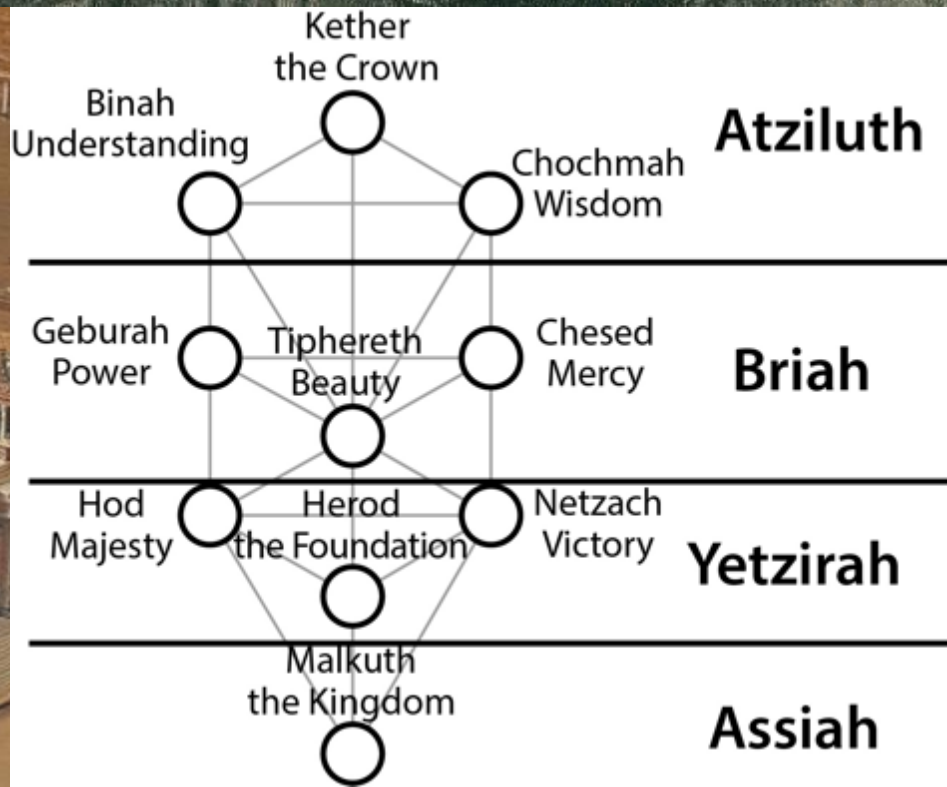
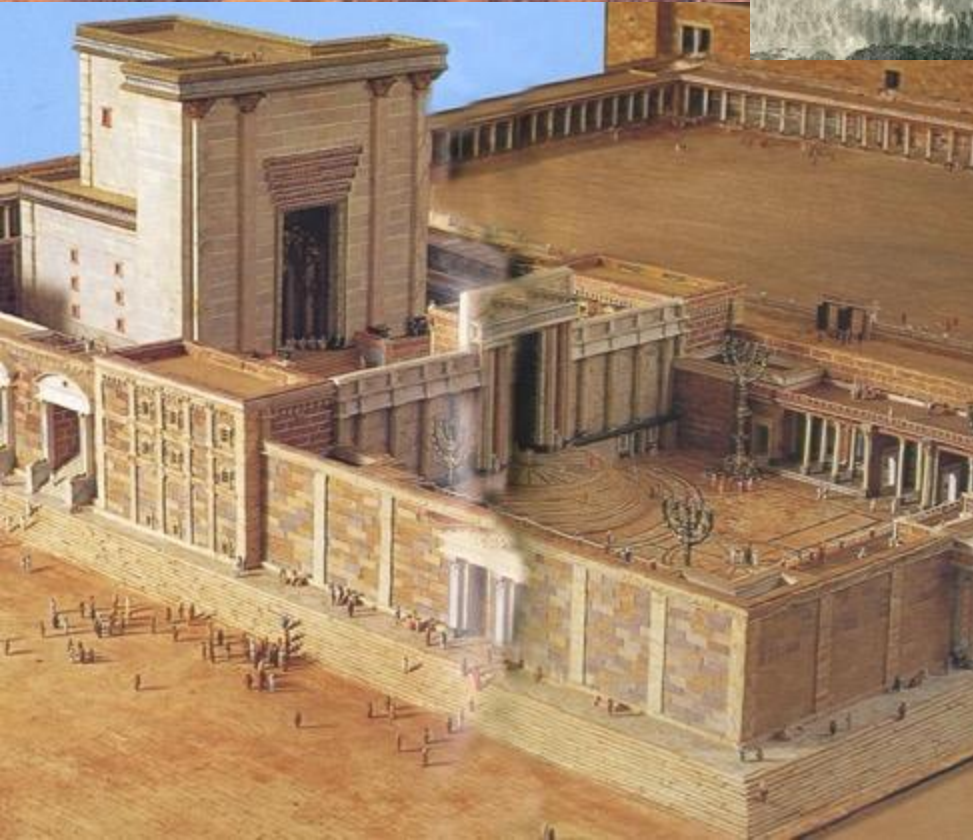
Friends, Family

Safety and Security

Physiological Needs (survival)

Air, Shelter, Water, Food

WiFi





Vishnu's 4 totems

- *mace* – physical strength
- *lotus flower* – glory of existence
- *discus* – mind chakra
- *conch* – AUM: primeval sound of all creation



Four Sights:

- Aged: *annika* – impermanence
- Sick: *dukha* – suffering/disconnection
- Dead: *annata* – tenuous link between being and non-being
- Ascetic: spiritual path

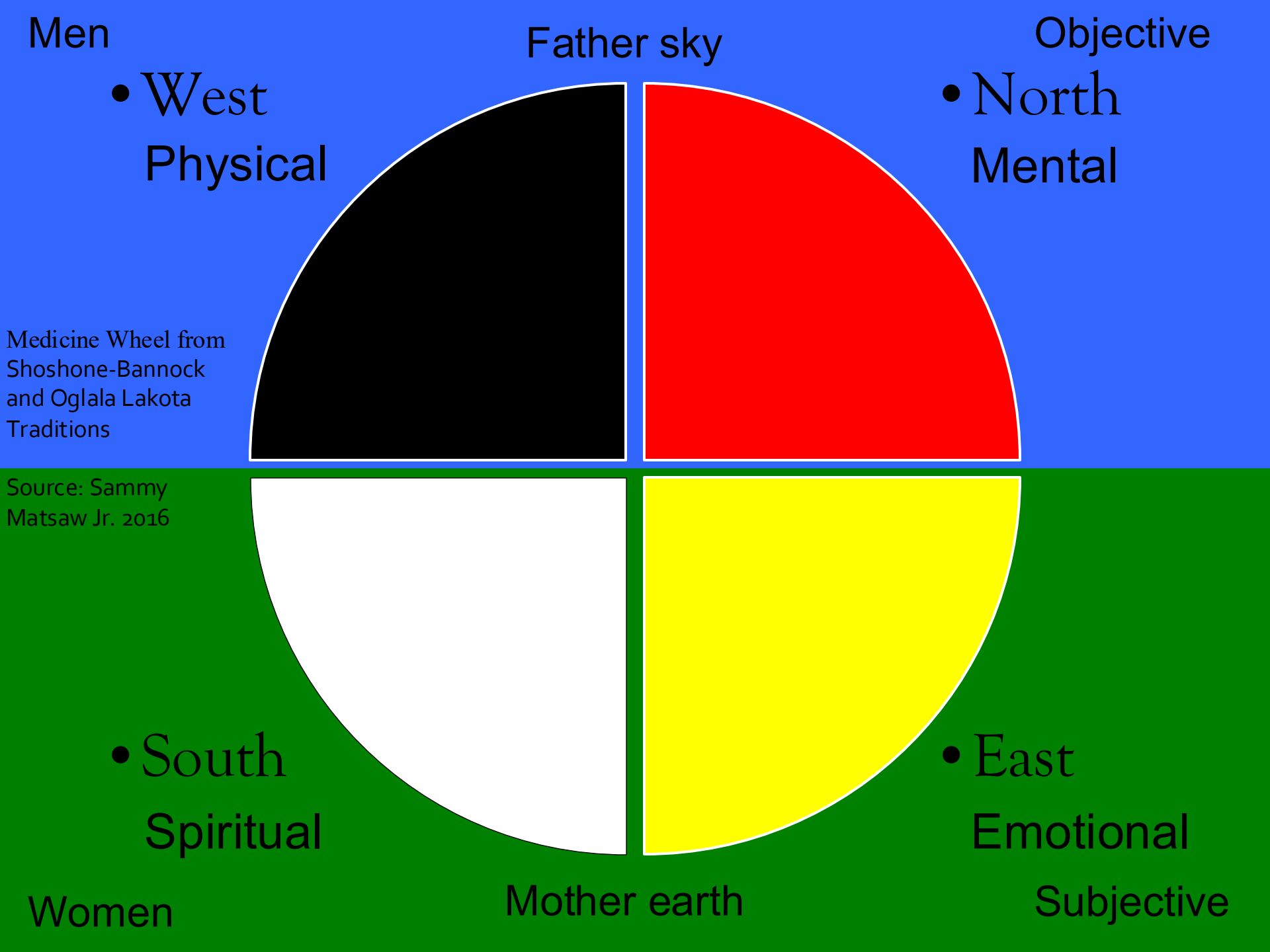


ເທວະທຸດທັງ 4



4 Elements of the 4 Corners and 4 Quarters





Men

• West
Physical

Father sky

Objective

• North
Mental

Medicine Wheel from
Shoshone-Bannock
and Oglala Lakota
Traditions

Source: Sammy
Matsaw Jr. 2016

• South
Spiritual

Women

Mother earth

• East
Emotional
Subjective

Four Worlds Framework in Islam & Latin American Shamanic Totems

NEEDS FOR:

- Intrapersonal
- Interpersonal
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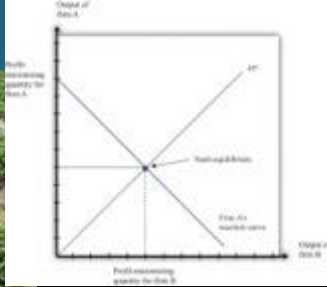


Spiritual	Marifah (attune- ment)	Eagle
Mental	Hakika (truth)	Humming -bird
Emotional	Tarikhah (prayer of the heart)	Jaguar
Physical	Sharia (law)	Serpent

Water??

“The issue is never the issue.”

Four Worlds in Water:



Mental



Physical

Spiritual



Emotional



Four Worlds Framework: Four Needs and Four Claims

NEEDS FOR:

- Intrapersonal
- Interpersonal
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- Nations



Spiritual	Harmony
Mental	Values
Emotional	Interests
Physical	Positions

CLAIMS:

Expressions of
needs in
negotiations



The Spirit of Dialogue

*Lessons
from Faith Traditions in
Transforming Conflict*

Aaron T. Wolf



Island Press, Fall 2017
Code 4SPIRIT for 20% discount

Lesson 4

The Spirit of Dialogue: Connecting with the “Other”

- “*If you get stuck on a problem, make it bigger:*”
Elevating the conversation
- “If you get stuck on a problem, make is smaller:”
Nuancing the conversation
- “If you get stuck on a problem, reframe for shared values.”
Or’s -> and’s
- “If you get stuck on a problem, focus on actions.”
Consent & consensus

Single most important skill for all four: LISTEN!

- Hydromet (1961), entirely technical, eventually led to:
- Undugu (1983), and,
- Tecconile (1993) – annual academic meeting, and finally to:
- Nile Basin Initiative

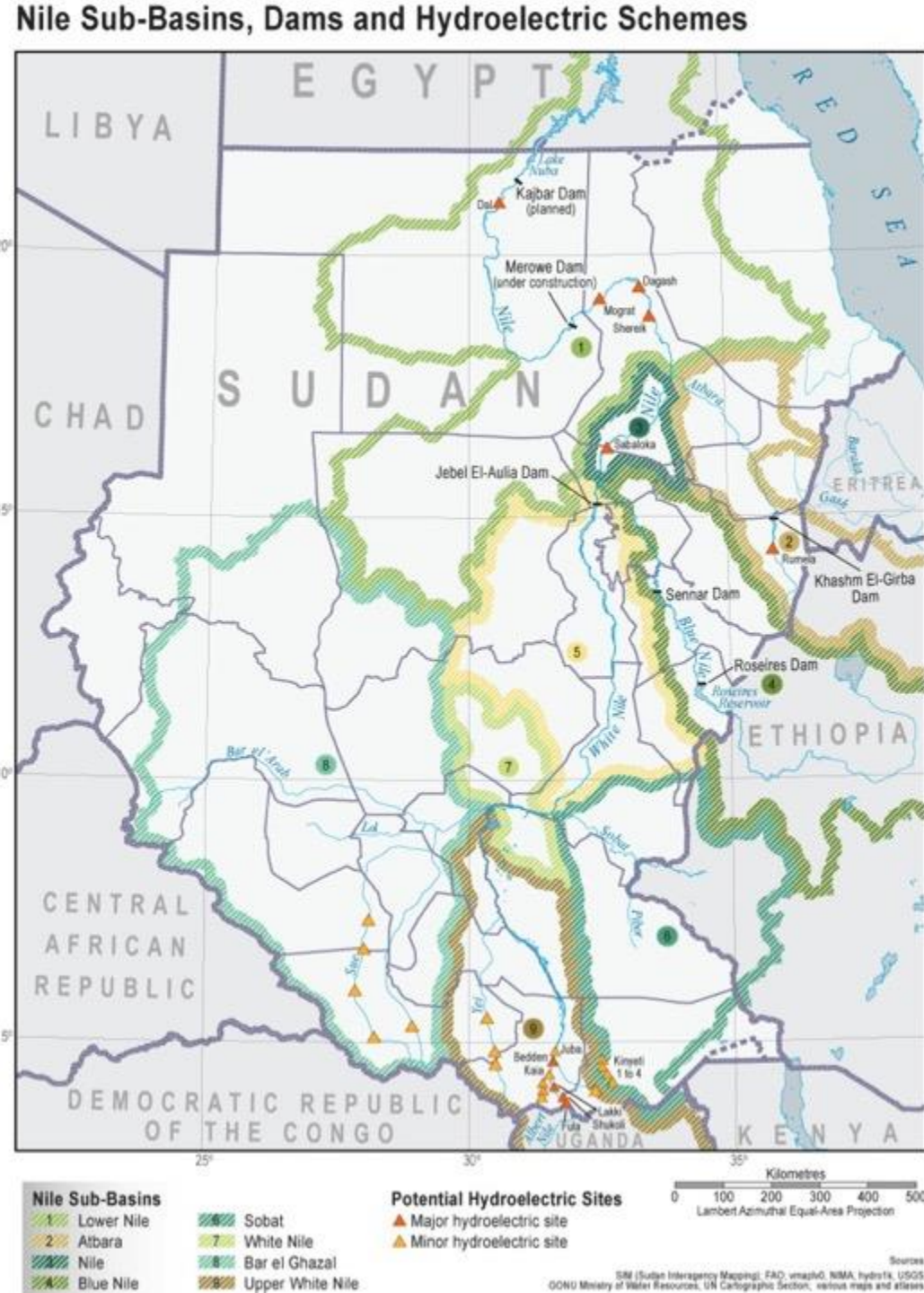






Dams and Hydroelectric Schemes

Source: UNEP/DEWA/GRID-Europe 2006



Source: NBI RPTP 2011



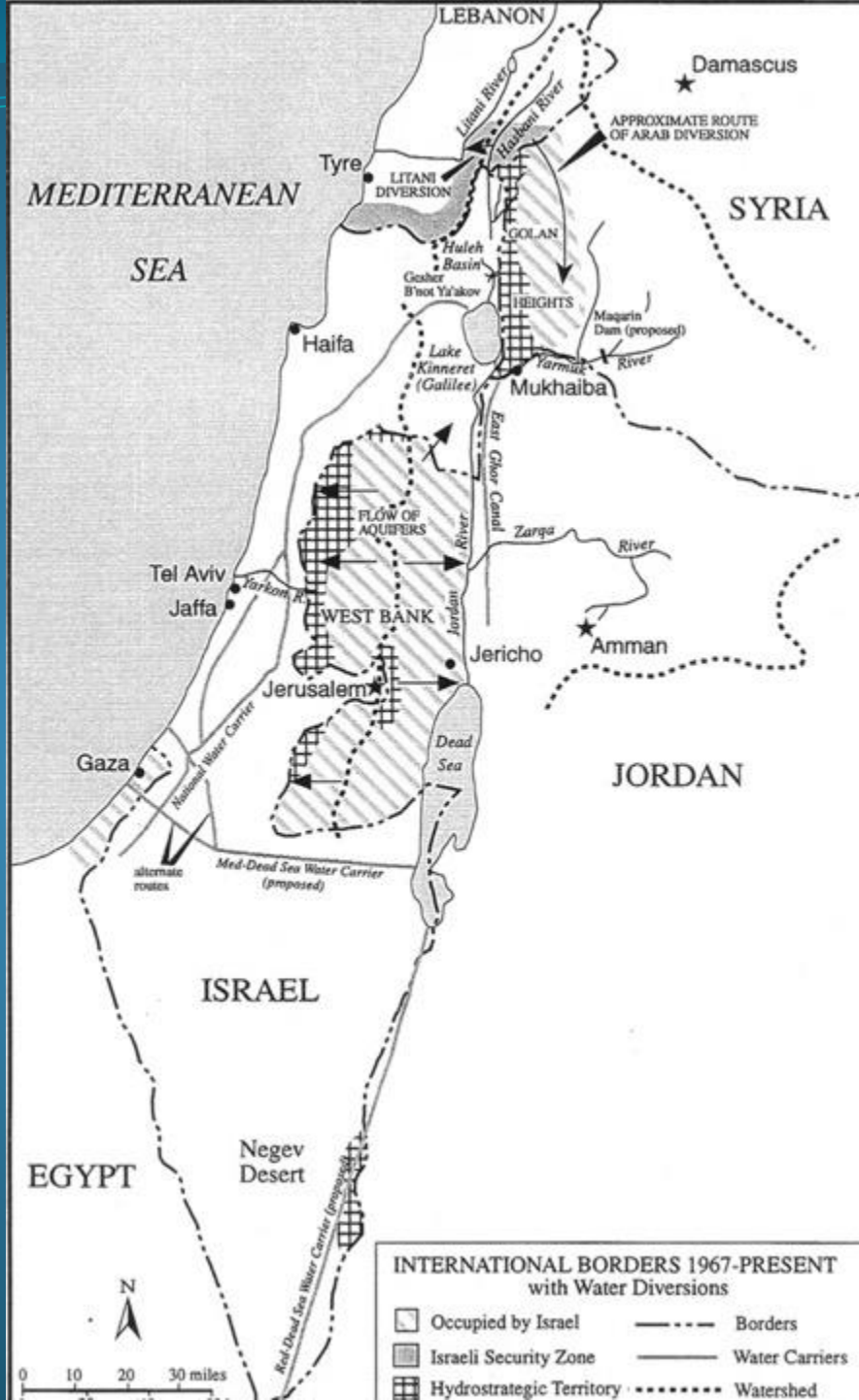
Lesson 5:

The Spirit of Dialogue:

Connecting with the “Other”

- “If you get stuck on a problem, make it bigger:”
Elevating the conversation
- “*If you get stuck on a problem, make it smaller:*”
Nuancing the conversation
- “If you get stuck on a problem, reframe for shared values.”
Or’s -> and’s
- “If you get stuck on a problem, focus on actions.”
Consent & consensus

Single most important skill for all four: LISTEN!







Lesson 4:

The Spirit of Dialogue: Connecting with the “Other”

- “If you get stuck on a problem, make it bigger:”
Elevating the conversation
- “If you get stuck on a problem, make it smaller:”
Nuancing the conversation
- *“If you get stuck on a problem, reframe for shared values.”*
Or’s -> and’s
- “If you get stuck on a problem, focus on actions.”
Consent & consensus

Single most important skill for all four: LISTEN!



Lesson 6:

The Spirit of Dialogue: Connecting with the “Other”

- “If you get stuck on a problem, make it bigger:”
Elevating the conversation
- “If you get stuck on a problem, make it smaller:”
Nuancing the conversation
- “If you get stuck on a problem, reframe it.”
Or’s -> and’s
- “*If you get stuck on a problem, focus on actions.*”
Consent & consensus

Single most important skill for all four: LISTEN!



Nuancing includes asking the right question: Not, “How do I get more data?” but, “What is the LEAST amount of data needed for a reasonably good decision?”



Four Worlds Framework: Four Needs and Four Claims

NEEDS FOR:

- Intrapersonal
- Interpersonal
- Groups
- Nations



Spiritual	Harmony
Mental	Values
Emotional	Interests
Physical	Positions

CLAIMS:
Expressions
of needs in
negotiations



“If you get stuck on a problem,
make it bigger.”

- *Elevating the conversation*

“If you get stuck on a problem,
make it smaller.”

- *Nuancing the conversation*

“If you get stuck on a problem,
reframe for shared values.”

- *Or's -> and's*

“If you get stuck on a problem,
focus on actions.”

- *Consent & consensus*

Single most important skill for all
four: LISTEN!

LESSON 7:

Don't forget the spirit –
and fun! – of water:

Elevating the
conversation

Elevating the Conversation (cont.)



Egyptian Coptic Church tapped to play the role of mediator in Nile River dispute - Al-Monitor: the Pulse of the Middle East

Egyptian Coptic Church tapped to play the role of mediator in Nile River dispute

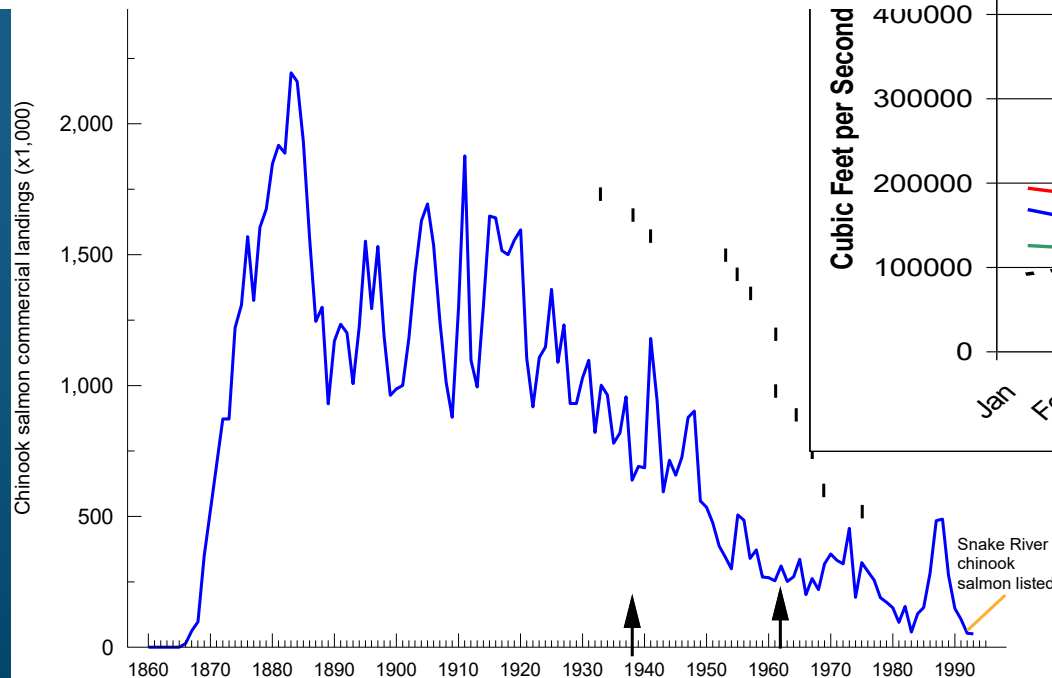
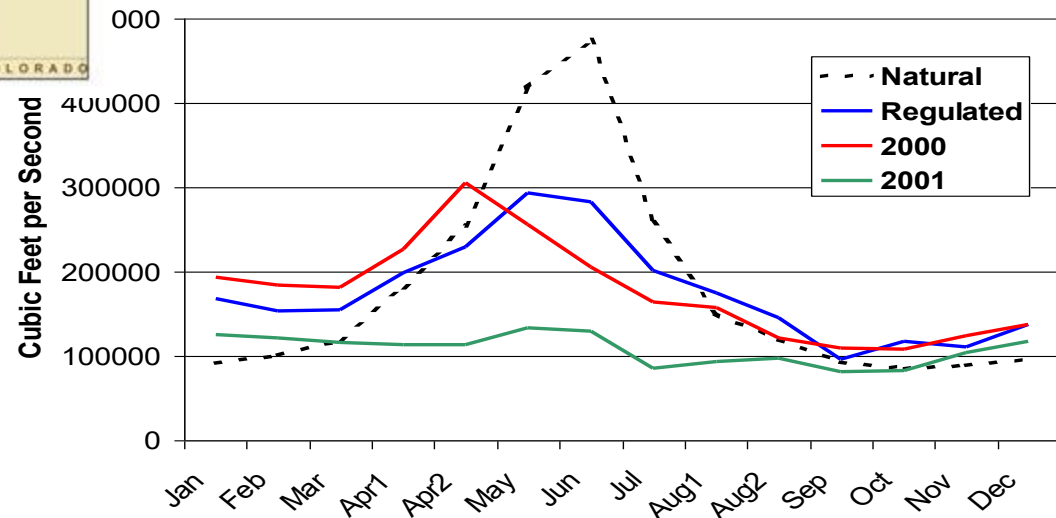


Coptic Pope Tawadros II (R), head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, shakes hands with former army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi upon Sisi's arrival for a visit the night before Easter, in Cairo, April 19, 2014. Sisi was elected president a month later. (photo by REUTERS)

Universities Consortium for Columbia Basin Governance



2000 & 2001 Flows at The Dalles -- compared to average





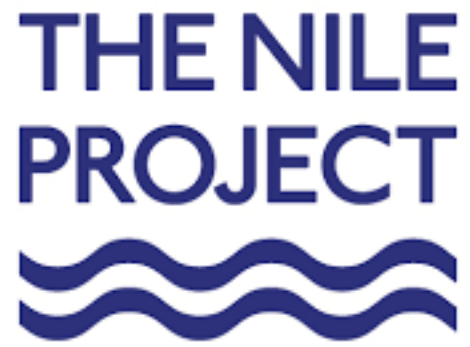
River Festivals



River Festivals



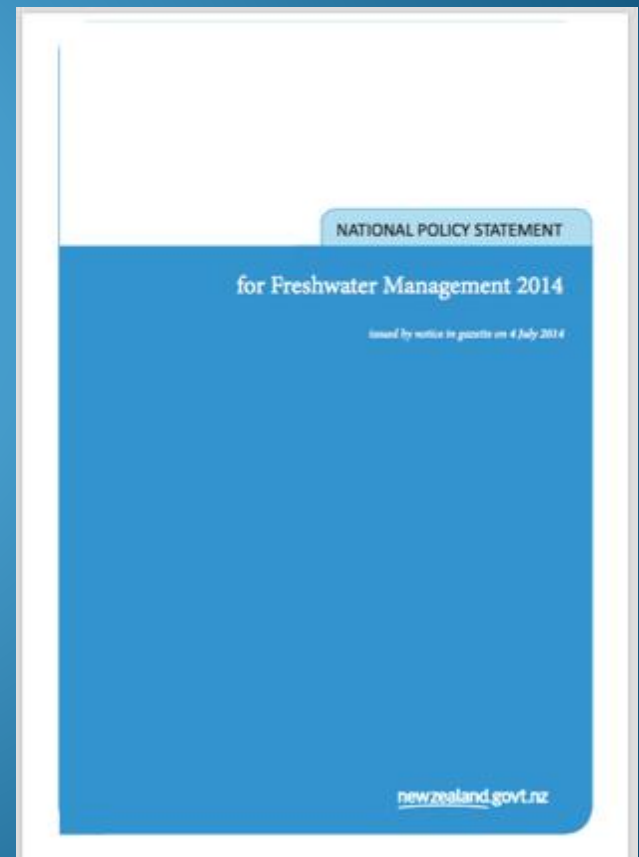
THE NILE PROJECT



New Directions: Spiritual Aspect of Water

All things in the natural world have *mauri* (life force) and *wairua* (a spiritual dimension). Respect for the spiritual integrity of the environment and the *atua* (God) that created it will ensure that the *taonga* (treasure) can be protected and passed on to succeeding generations.

*NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT
for Freshwater Management 2014*



Thank you!

