

# The Nile Has Got Bread for Everyone

Ripening the Water Conflict through Sharing Opportunities

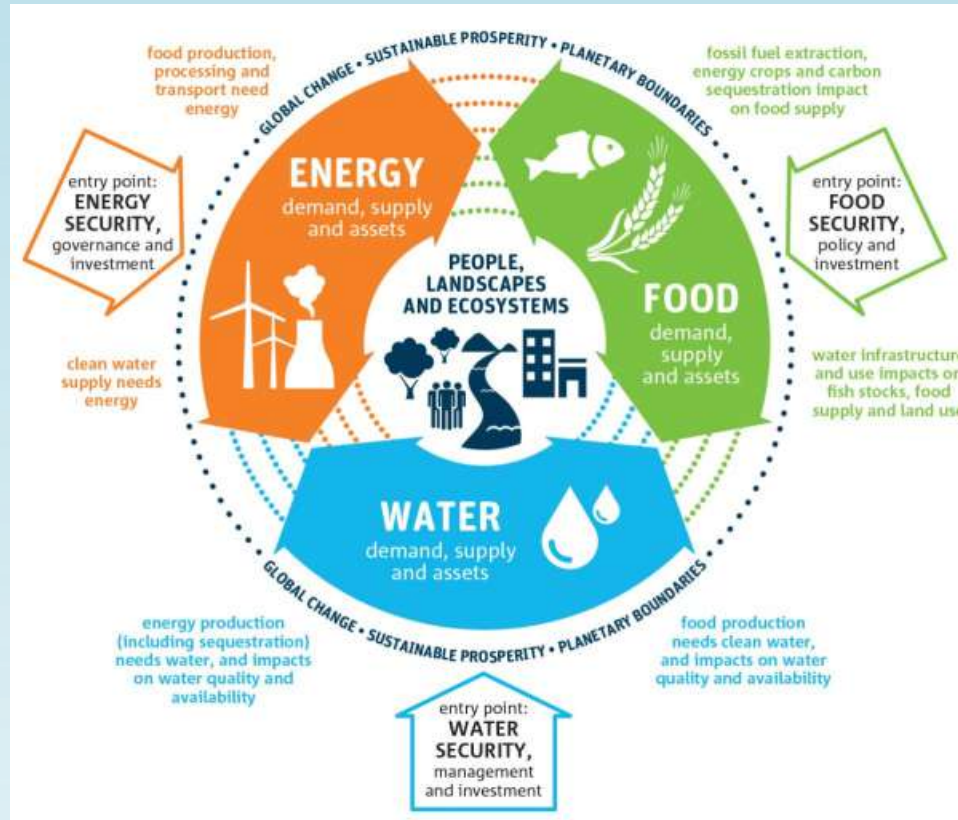
EMILIE BROEK, PROJECT MANAGER OF 'YOUTH FOR THE RHINE' AND  
COORDINATOR OF THE NL IHP-HWRP COMMITTEE AT IHE DELFT



## The Nile River

*“He who rides the sea of the Nile  
must have sails woven of  
patience”*

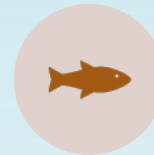
# Water Scarcity and Securitization



By 2025, close to 2 billion people will be living under conditions of water scarcity



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



Almost 276 river basins are transboundary, two-thirds of these lack basin-wide legal frameworks



Through the water-food-energy nexus, water can also become securitized

## Who owns the Nile? It's more complicated than you think

- 2015 ● In a major breakthrough, Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan sign a preliminary deal on the project, agreeing in principle to share the water and not hurt each other's interests.
- 2011 ● Ethiopia starts work on the Grand Renaissance Dam, despite protests from Egypt and Sudan. It is to be the biggest in Africa.
- 2010 ● Egypt and Sudan reject a new deal - agreed by upstream countries including Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya - which proposes more water for upstream countries and strips Egypt of the veto.
- 1929/1959 ● Colonial-era treaties, brokered by Britain, give Egypt and Sudan the lion's share of the water. Egypt is also given veto power over dams in upstream countries. Ethiopia, whose Blue Nile tributary contributes most of the water, is not consulted.

Percentage of the total river flow awarded to Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia in 1959 treaty

66%

EGYPT

Aswan dam

22%

SUDAN

Renaissance dam

0%

SOUTH SUDAN

ETHIOPIA

UGANDA

TANZANIA

RWANDA

BURUNDI

\*12% lost to evaporation



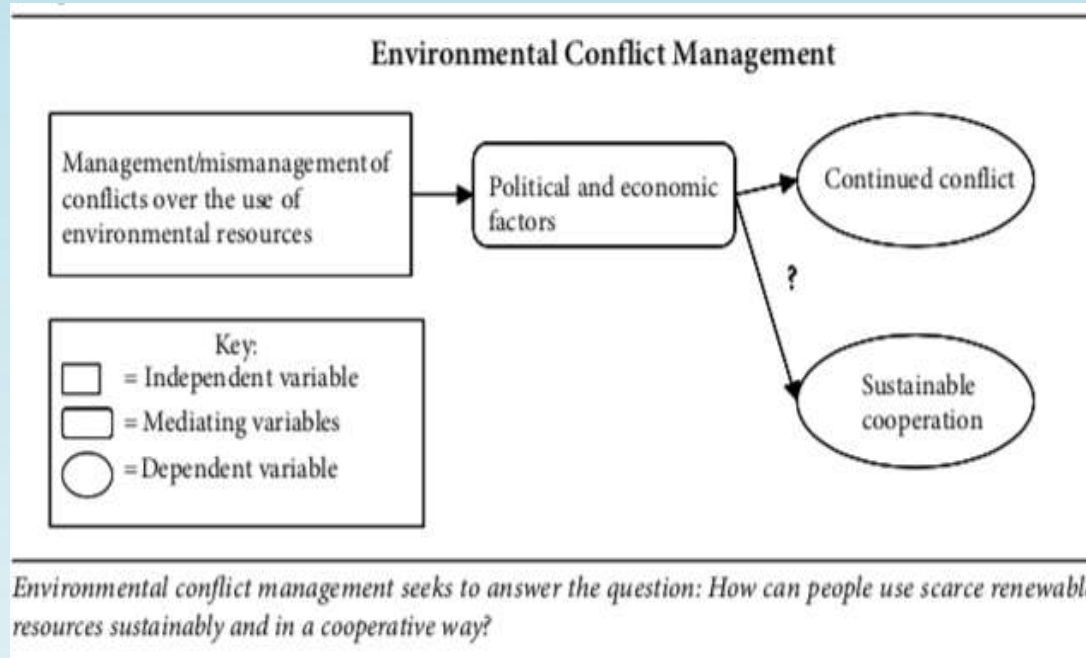
## The Deviant Case of the Nile



Source: Al Jazeera & agencies

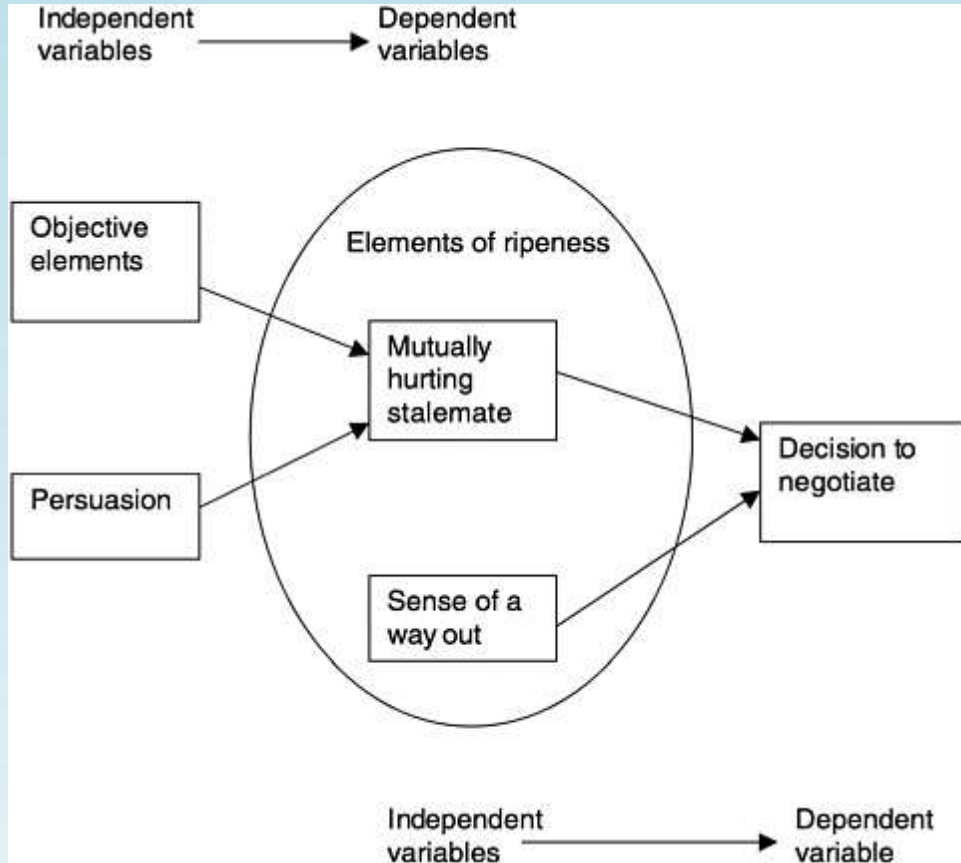


# Triggering Cooperation in Transboundary Waters



- In an environmentally-induced conflict, resource mismanagement and internal factors can exert undue pressures on the parties and cause their stalemate to either escalate into further conflict or lead to sustainable cooperation
- If not properly managed, a conflict can become intractable which reinforces its further escalation
- To ensure cooperation, one strategy is to ripen the water conflict for negotiation

# Research Design and Methodology



- **Dependent Variable-** Negotiation of a transboundary water agreement
- **Independent Variable:** Conflict ripeness
  - MEO Model and Third-Party Mediation
  - Readiness Theory
- **Congruence Analysis and Data Collection**
  - Process-tracing
  - Semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis

# Stalemate on the Verge of Disruption?

## Changing Basin Dynamics and Looming Hurt

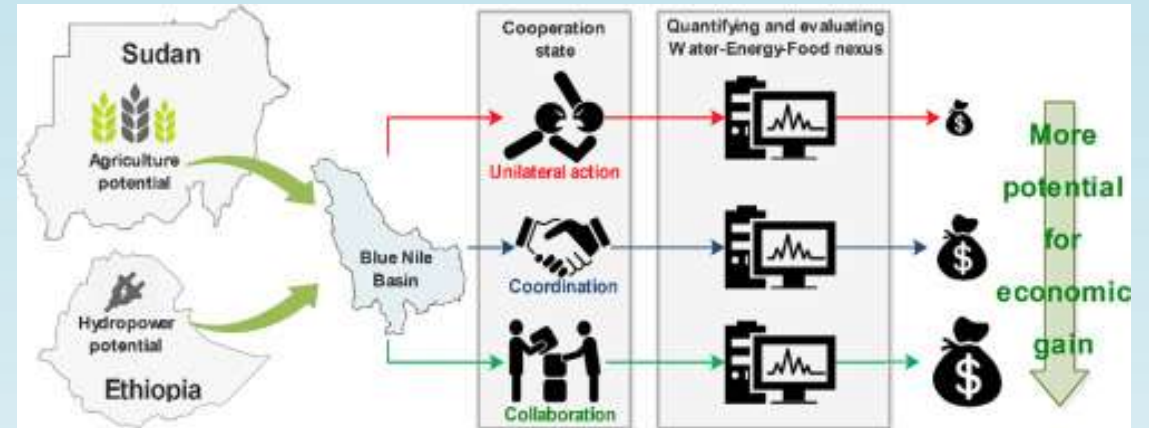
- “...shifted the balance from downstream to upstream”
- “Ethiopia...has increased its political might on the African and political landscape remarkably from ‘zero to hero’”
- “The problem is that climate change, population growth, all the drivers that increase the water demand, are going in the same direction. This shows that there won’t be more water available in the future and more will be needed”



# Ripeness Through Mutually Enticing Opportunities

## Creating a Resource Basin

- An effective way to pull the parties out of their stalemate, is to convert the Nile into a resource basin that can benefit all.
- Rather than focusing on sharing the water of the Nile *equally*, the parties could examine how to exchange its resources *equitably*.
- “If you think about the water, its one relation that exists along the Nile. But there also exists economic cooperation where the states can generate energy for each other”





# Ripeness Through Mutually Enticing Opportunities

## Third-Party Mediation...Effective or Not?

“I think better preparing the states themselves, showing Egypt alternatives to the water from the Nile, encouraging Ethiopia to further strengthen its role as a regional leader...promoting the resource basin in Ethiopia...having an eye on how the agricultural agendas and strategies in Sudan look like for the next ten years... these measures are more important than going there and raising a flag, saying we are here to explain to you the Nile conflict and how to go about it”



# Are the Countries Ready for Negotiation?



- For the conflict to become ripe, the parties must perceive that a light at the end of the tunnel is possible. You must equally examine their internal motivations, politics
- “Food security and agriculture production are super sensitive topics, no one wants to depend on food from a neighboring country. Even if the political relations and ties are excellent, if there is a food shortage due to weather conditions, of course every state will feed their own people before exporting food”

# Conclusions



Today, the Nile is not ripe yet for the creation of a transboundary water agreement, but it is not intractable either.



The changing dynamics on the Nile will increasingly come to pressure the parties to negotiate. If the actors do not act preventively now, factors of climate change, water scarcity and population growth will exacerbate the situation and raise the likelihood of a water conflict



Drawing on the liberalist theory of international relations, because the riparian countries operate in an anarchic world, they will only cooperate if it maximizes their own self-interest (MEOs)—  
Resource Basin and Third-Party Mediation



What is lacking, is the political and individual willingness to cooperate and the light at the end of the tunnel.

“The Nile has got bread for everyone”  
-Haile Selassie

