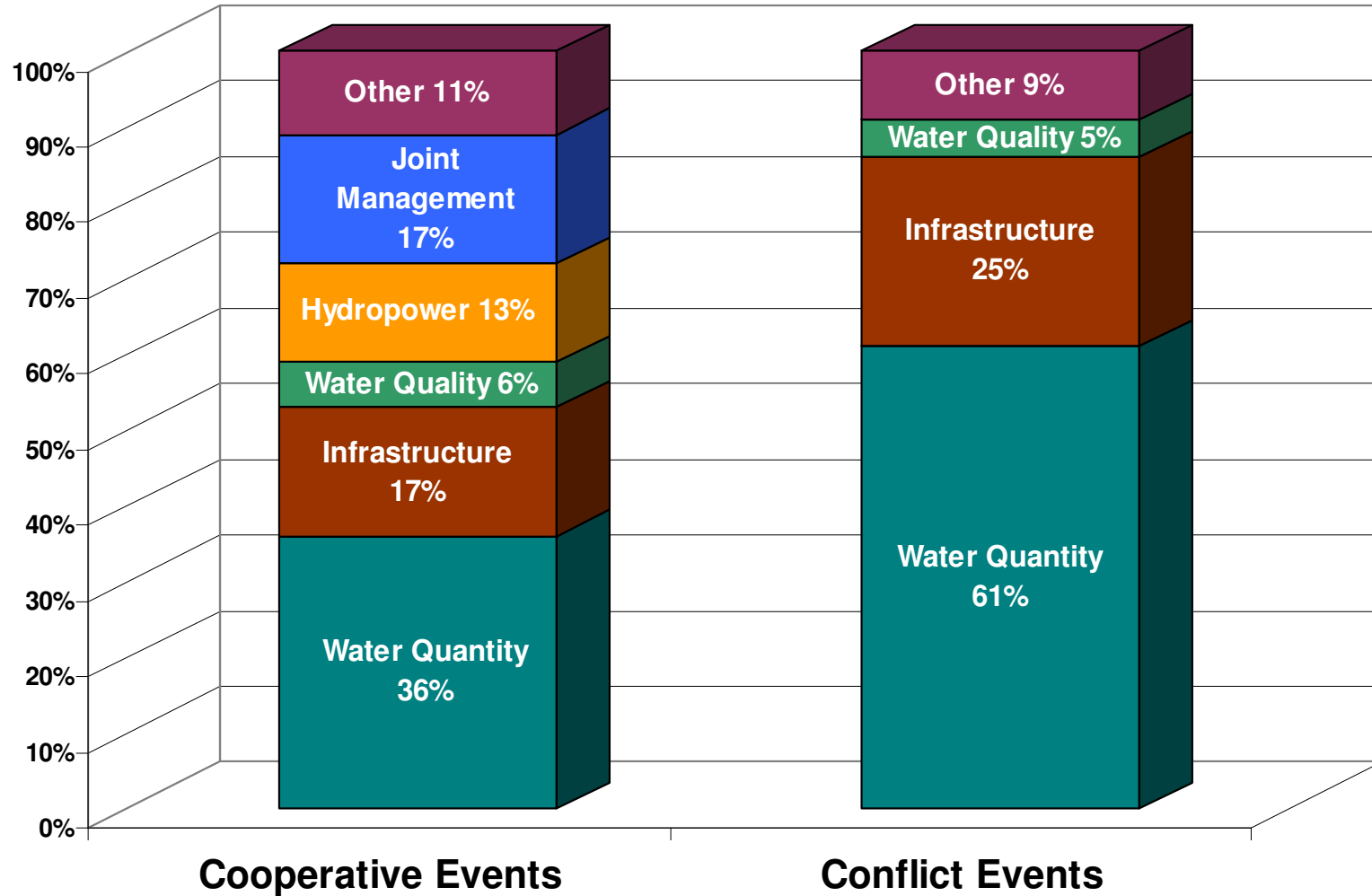


# Water Security and the Role of International Institutions

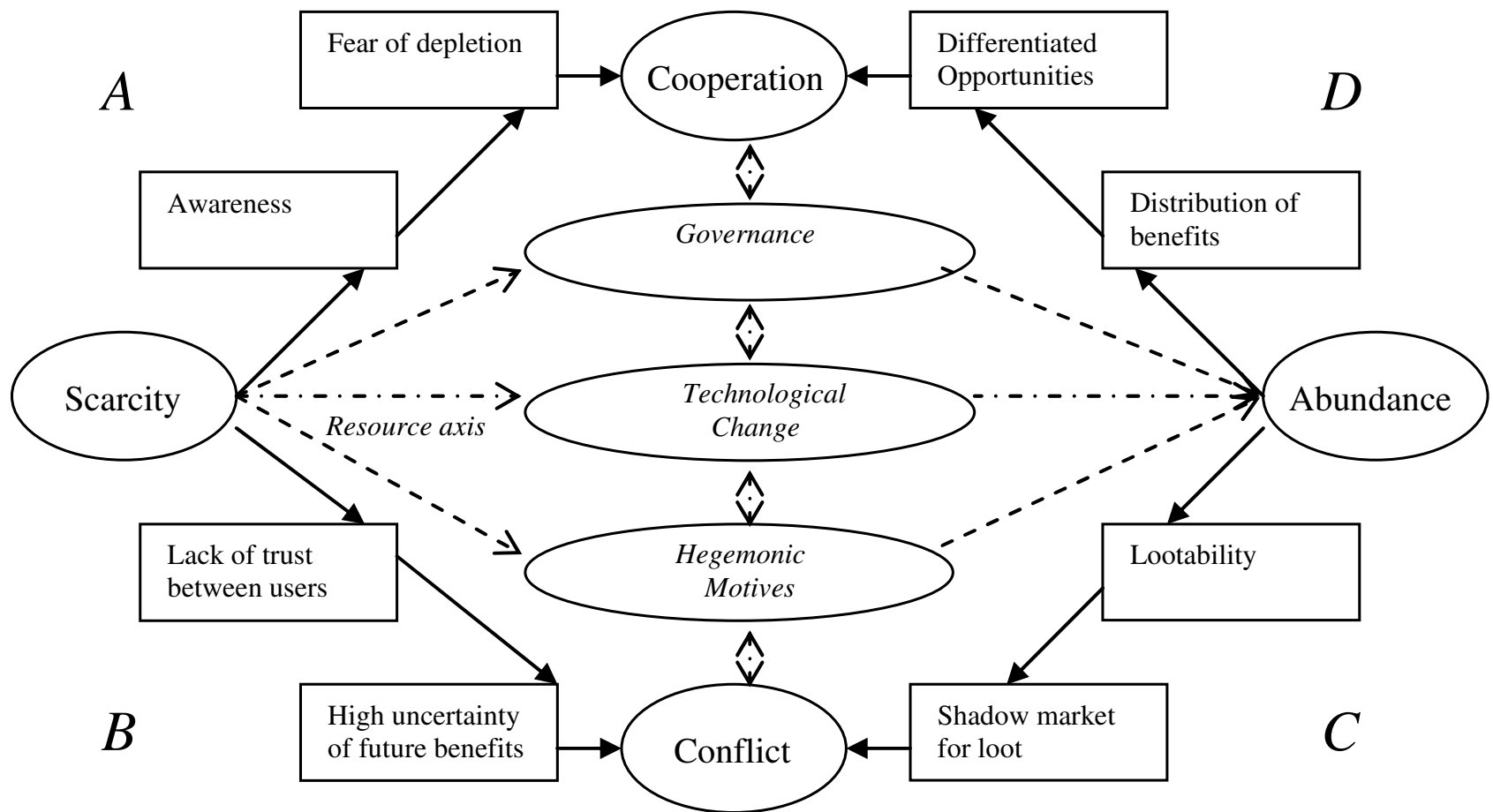
Saleem H. Ali, Ph.D.  
University of Vermont  
[www.saleemali.net](http://www.saleemali.net)

Greening Borders Conference  
University of San Diego, November 19, 2009

# Water Cooperation vs. Conflict 1948 – 1999 (Wolf et al for UNEP, 2007)



# Environmental Security Pathways



# Existing International Instruments and Institutions

- The ILA: The Helsinki Rules (1966); The Seoul Rules (1986); The Berlin Rules (2004)
- The United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-navigable Water Resources (Adopted by the General Assembly in 1997 but not adopted by countries as yet) **The convention counts today 16 contracting states—19 short of the number required for entry into force**
- UNECE: The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (1992)
  - The precautionary principle: action to avoid the release of hazardous substances must not be postponed, despite the lack of a proven causal link between the substances and the trans-boundary impact;
  - The polluter pays principle: the costs of pollution prevention, control and reduction measures must be borne by the polluter; and
  - Water resources must be managed so that the needs of the present generation are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

***But there are dozens of commissions and compacts around particular watersheds***

# Pathways to ecological peace:

Can water security negotiations have derivative positive impacts?

- Development of a joint information base on a common environmental threat;
- Recognition that cooperation is essential to alleviate that threat;
- A cognitive connection and trust-building from initial environmental cooperation;
- Continued interactions over time due to environmental necessity;
- Clarification of misunderstandings and de-escalation of related conflicts, leading to:

*Sustainable cooperation and resultant peace-building*

# A Poetic Conclusion

*Water is far from a simple commodity,  
Water's a sociological oddity,  
Water's a pasture for science to forage in,  
Water's a mark of our dubious origin,  
Water's a link with a distant futurity,  
Water's a symbol of ritual purity,  
Water is politics, water is religion,  
Water is just about anyone's pigeon.  
Water is frightening, water's endearing,  
Water's a lot more than mere engineering.  
Water is tragic, water is comical,  
Water is far from the Pure economical.  
So studies of water, though free of aridity,  
Are apt to produce a good deal of turbidity*

*Kenneth Boulding*