

International Rivers and Water Resource Governance: Lessons for the Colorado River Basin

Colorado Basin Water Conference
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Government or Governance?

- ▶ **Government** – Sovereign authority over a given territorial space.
 - ▶ **Governance** – cooperative agreement among equal sovereigns, or in the case of no clear sovereign
 - ▶ **Federalism** – United States system of shared Sovereignty between central government (Washington DC) and State governments (CO, UT, WY, NM AZ, CA, NV, etc.)
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Research Problem

- ▶ Problem of shared and overlapping sovereignties (States, Federal Government and Mexico) raises the need for governance in the Colorado River Basin
 - ▶ Are there lessons to be learned from International Trans-boundary River Governance that might help with the process of conflict resolution between the states in the Colorado River Compact and the Federal Government?
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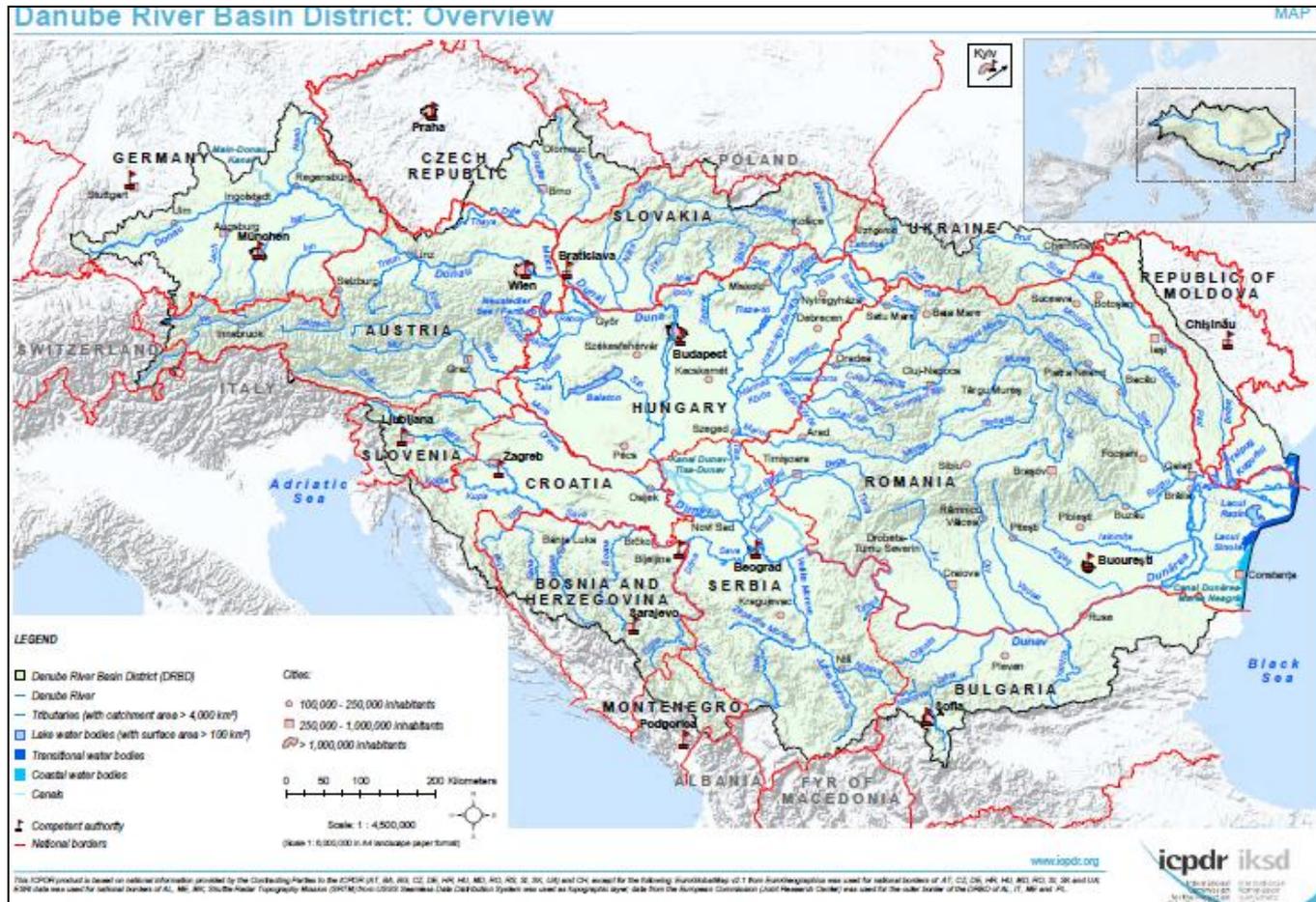
Case Studies in Trans-Boundary River Governance

- 1992 European Water Convention
 - 1994 Danube River Convention
- Ganges–Brahmaputra–Meghna River System

Features of Water Convention

- ▶ Meta treaty to develop cooperation on sub-region basin agreements
- ▶ Links surface water and ground water
- ▶ Holistic approach to manage watershed as ecosystem and social system
- ▶ Stakeholder model encourages the development of joint bodies for management and assessment
- ▶ Provisions exist for mandatory assessment at regular intervals
- ▶ Governmental and non-governmental actors included in decision-making
- ▶ Pollution control guidelines focus on emissions limits and water quality objectives

1994 Convention on Cooperation for Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River

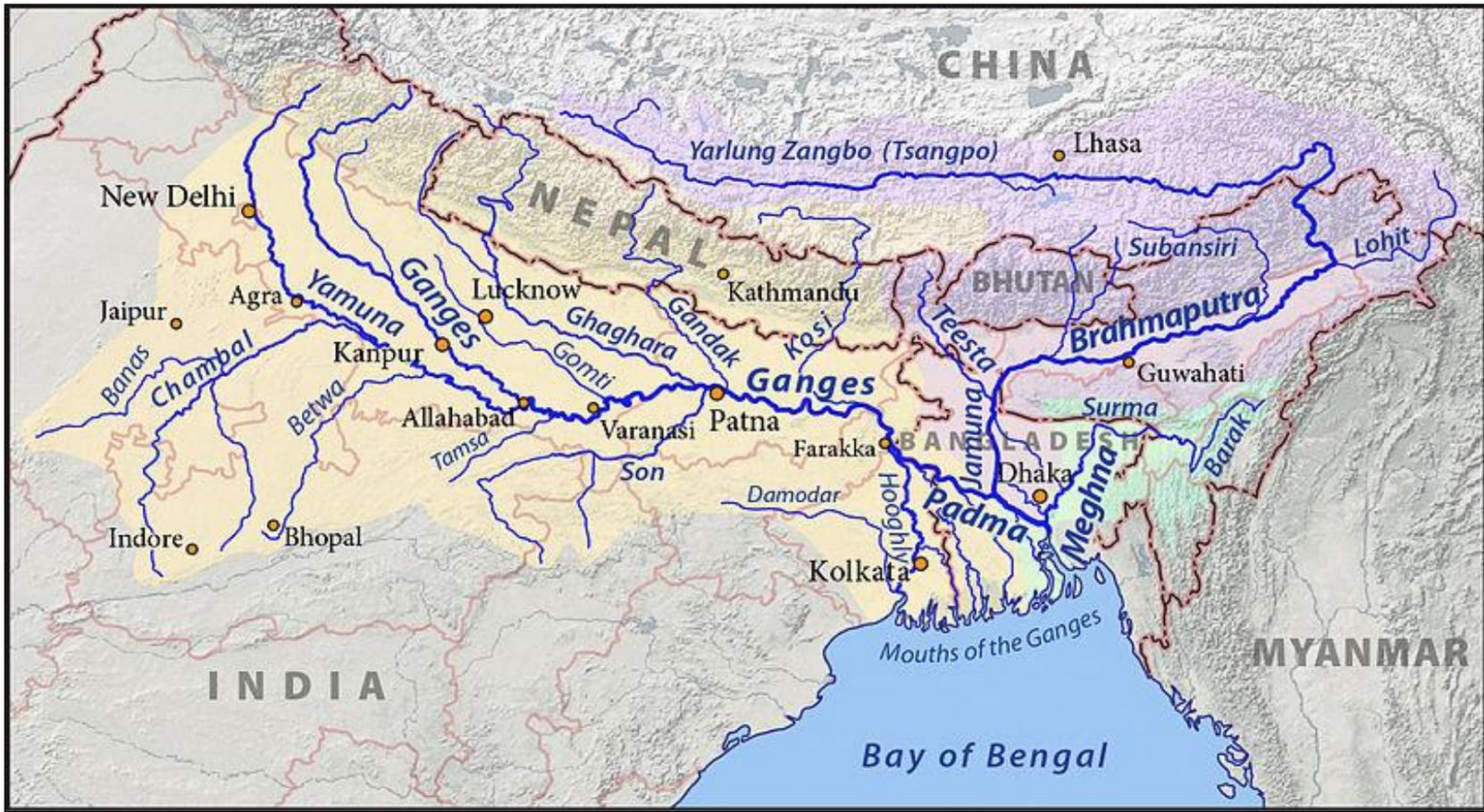


Collects Water from 18 sovereign nations, forming the international boundary for 8 of them. 83 million people live in the basin, several major cities including Vienna, Budapest, and Belgrade on Danube.

Key features of the Convention

- ▶ Significant role of public participation
 - Stakeholder groups in every country
 - Must be consulted in development plan
 - Regional and local officials, industry, agriculture, NGOs and the public
 - Significantly decreased the time of preparation and approval
 - 1st Basin-wide international body to include public and NGOs in planning process
 - Decreased conflict and increased support for outcome of planning and water management
- ▶ Established institutional connection to public participation by framework to develop Water Councils (within each nation, and multilateral)
- ▶ Managing hydropower resources
 - Over 700 dams in basin generate 30K MW of power

Ganges – Brahmaputra – Meghna (GBM) River System



Challenges of Managing the GBM River System

- ▶ System covers 6 sovereign nations and 581 million inhabitants living in the Basin
- ▶ There are a few bilateral treaties for part of the system but no comprehensive treaty covering the entire basin
- ▶ Lessons learned
 - Bi-lateral negotiations without watershed-wide negotiations favor the party with greater power
 - Unequal power relationships without third party involvement creates strong disincentive for cooperation

Lessons for the Colorado River Basin

- ▶ Need to focus management on Watershed as a whole – both ecological and social resources
 - ▶ Public participation is essential for sound management
 - ▶ Successful trans–boundary river treaties need brokerage efforts by a third party (UN, EU) to give incentives for participation and equity
 - US Federal government could play role in CO River Basin efforts bringing states together
 - ▶ Successful multi–issue treaties begin with functional cooperation on some issues and build to others once institutions are established
 - ▶ Successful river agreements require regular assessment/review and transparency
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