
THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE DILEMMA OF COOPERATION AND COMPLEX RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE UPPER AND LOWER NILE RIPARIAN STATES AFTER 2011

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There is a perceived global deficit of fresh water due to rapid population growth and increasing widespread poverty. This will inevitably lead to more complicated cooperation dilemmas between downstream and upstream Nile Basin states. Egypt and Sudan have been pushing for the Nile's water to be globally controlled by the UN Security Council from 2020–2021, after fruitless discussions; so the conflict in the Nile Basin may have far-reaching global implications and seems elusive. Due to suspicion and mistrust among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Blue Nile, the states are unable to prioritize mutual cooperation efforts. Third-country intervention has worsened the ongoing great divide over the GERD.

Thus, the main purpose of the present article is to assess, from a global perspective, how upstream and downstream Nile Basin states, in particular Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, cross the threshold of cooperation dilemma and concern and how excessive third-party intervention exacerbates the complex relations between these states. The study conducted an in-depth documentary analysis of secondary sources by using a qualitative research method and examining various documentary sources.

Keywords: *cooperation of dilemma, complexity relation, oscillates, proxy interventions, shifting allegiance, water-stresses.*

Introduction

Growing population and urbanization have increased the pressure to meet the water, energy, and food needs of larger populations with higher expectations around the globe. As a result, both rich and emerging countries appear to be racing against time to meet the demands of communities with growing inequalities. Globally, there is perceived a fresh water scarcity parallel to population growth and modernized urbanization, (Cecilia and Victor 2018). Population growth and competing demands for water have accelerated tensions and threats among users in the modern global world. On a worldwide scale, rivers have been a source of both an improved cooperation and conflict between trans-boundary countries. Some of the disputes have led to open conflict, and have defied resolution for a long time. Cooperation has also resulted in the establishment of joint mechanisms for the management of shared equitable and recoverable resources (Richard 1998).

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According to the theory of water wars, water is a fundamental natural resource in the global world and the growing human, economic, social and environmental needs inevitably lead to competition for this resource. Consequently, when water becomes scarce, states may choose to respond to this pressure by seeking a solution outside their borders. Therefore, the water scarcity and its poor distribution increase the possibility of conflict in the transboundary basins (Dinar 2008). In addition to scarcity, a number of other factors can increase tensions between riparian states. Water war theory has unambiguously demonstrated that water wars are neither prevalent, nor inevitable and that water scarcity and political instability together make a combustible combination.

Actually, cooperation between riparian states is far more common than water-related accidents. Theoretical arguments also encourage cooperation over competition for shared water resources, rather than conflict (Gábor 2020). Only a downstream regional hegemon against a weaker upstream riparian would be justified in waging military action over water. Only a few river basins in the world, including the Nile River, have the potential to support such a situation. The cooperation school has greatly expanded the empirical research base of water conflict theorists by focusing on legal and institutional frameworks that promote riparian stability (Wolf 2009). These theoretical arguments suggest that the interdependence of riparian states and the low likelihood of success through violence provide tremendous incentives for states to collaborate on even the most difficult water-related challenges.

Stefanos *et al.* (2001) discussed upstream and downstream cooperation in Central Asia where a number of hydropower stations produced water for energy, while downstream the cotton monoculture was served by extensive supply and drainage networks and large pumping stations. Water security in the newly constituted downstream states became synonymous with sufficient irrigation volume for agricultural production after colonial independence in 1991, while water security in the upstream states was considered as increased hydropower capacity. Similarly, the absence of significant power imbalances in the basin tends to encourage the development of valid mechanisms for water management through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, even among numerous riparian states, as is the case along the Danube (which is the second-largest river basin in Europe) where Germany and Austria form the upper basin and use it for power generation, while other middle and lower basin states use water for power generation and irrigation purposes (Wolfgang 2006).

In addition, different levels and patterns of national development within a basin can become the key sources of dilemma or cooperation between upstream and downstream states in contemporary global world. Rapidly increasing water consumption by developing riparian states ultimately leads to increased competition for water supplies. The economic value of the shared water resources in question also influences the dynamics of riparian relationships. Dry downstream countries that depend on the headwaters of major transboundary rivers such as the Nile for Egypt and the Tigris-Euphrates for Iraq are particularly vulnerable to manipulation of river flows or water quality upstream (Gábor 2020).

The Nile, which is shared by eleven countries, is widely considered as the longest river the world and it drains about 11 per cent of Africa (Bart 2016). Globally, the use of the Nile water has been a source of anxiety and complicated relationship between upstream and downstream riparians for decades. However, Ethiopia and Egypt have long had strong material and spiritual ties. Both countries are interdependent but separated by the Nile (Richard 2000). The history of the Nile hydro politics has dominated

bilateral and trilateral interactions in the Eastern Nile, limiting opportunities for cooperation compared to other areas of the world. Because of these distinctions, which have not changed much since the inception of the GERD and the subsequent signing of the Declaration of Principles of Agreement (Tawfik 2019), Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan have faced a dilemma of cooperation and complexity over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) for many years.

The conflict over the Nile, on the other hand, is not only about a limited resource; the riparian countries find it more a symptom of an underlying split than anything else. The Nile divides black sub-Saharan Africa from the Arab Maghreb, as well as Christian, Muslim, and indigenous Africans (Hassen 2014).

With the above in mind, the main purpose of the present article is to assess, from a global perspective, how upstream and downstream Nile Basin states, particularly Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, cross the threshold of cooperation dilemmas and concerns and to what extent excessive third-party intervention exacerbates the complex relationships between these states.

Research Method

In order to study, the post-2011 dilemma of cooperation and complex relationships between upstream and downstream Nile Basin countries, in particular between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Blue Nile, the study conducted an in-depth documentary analysis of secondary resources and used a qualitative study approach by examining various documentary sources, conceptual literature, and various governmental and non-governmental organizations' annual survey reports related to the subject of the research.

The data were mainly obtained from secondary sources, including monographs, journals, periodicals, newspapers, blogs, reports, agendas, and unpublished written materials. Purposive sampling was used since the research was qualitative and the purpose was to examine the dilemma of cooperation between upstream and downstream Nile Basin states. The data were collected from documents, categorized according to the research objective, and then examined using thematic analysis. The data were categorized and organized on the bases of thematic similarity.

Hydro-Political-Historical Tensions of the Nile

Despite their historical tensions, Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia have a history of clashing interests on the Blue Nile. In 1874 and 1876, Egypt's Ismail Khedive Pasha attempted to invade northern Ethiopia and colonize the sources of the Blue Nile from its headwaters at the battlefields of Gunda Gundi and Gurea, respectively. These invasions resulted in total military misfortune for the Egyptian forces under Emperor Yohhanes IV of Ethiopia. Since then, neither Egyptian agriculture nor Egyptians have attempted to attack or dominate Ethiopia militarily (Bahiru 2002).

On several occasions, Egyptian government officials have made warlike speeches to Ethiopia. Former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat said, 'only water has the ability to push Egypt back into war with Ethiopia' (Tariku 2014). Sadat's position was jeopardized by the high probability of a water war with Ethiopia. Since 2013, when the former President of Egypt, Mohammed Morsi, warred with Ethiopia, the Egyptian senior government officials have always predicted to Ethiopia that Ethiopia should stop the construction of the GERD. One Egyptian politician even recommended sending Special Forces to demolish the dam, while another urged Egypt to support the rebel groups

fighting the Ethiopian government. If Egypt is a gift of the Nile, then the Nile is a gift of Egypt. If it drops even just a little, we will have to rely on our blood. Summing up, President Morsi said that Egypt was assuming absolute hegemony over the Nile (Geoffrey 2017; Hassen 2014).

After the failure of the tripartite talks on the agreement on the GERD filling schedule on June 19, 2020, the Egyptian authorities asked the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to intervene and ‘oblige the three states to comply with their obligations under international law in order to reach a fair and balanced solution to the GERD situation.’ Egypt’s frequent references to international law are part of a strategy to protect its ‘natural and historical rights,’ which were established and reaffirmed by the 1929 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and the 1959 Egypt-Sudan Agreement. However, many other parties involved reject these treaties as outdated and encroaching (John 2020). Ethiopia has been threatened with war if it refuses to sign the pact.

In order to maintain the status quo, Egypt has historically developed a monopoly, and it has shown dilemmatic cooperation when it comes to the GERD on the Blue Nile. Egypt has traditionally claimed hegemony over the Nile River, despite the fact that it is a common property resource shared by all Nile Basin countries, including Ethiopia (Tariku 2014). One of Egypt’s current and historical concerns, as it has been throughout history, is that the growing capabilities of the upstream states such as Ethiopia, and the fear of the hegemonic development of the Blue Nile’s source will reduce the regular amount of water flowing into Egypt. Although Egypt continues to use its diplomatic clout to hinder international funding for Ethiopian projects, financial assistance from individual Western countries has increased significantly in recent years. Egypt has successfully blocked the African Development Bank from financially supporting Ethiopia’s proposed water development projects (Ashok 2002).

The Cooperation Dilemma: Upper and Lower Nile States

The dilemma of global hydro-political cooperation can be solved if some basin states mutually cooperate on shared watercourses, while others do not allow it, for various reasons. The GERD was initially met with mixed reactions from downstream states. While Sudan affirms and reaffirms its support for the GERD’s construction, Sudan’s President, Omer Hassan Al-Bashir, expressed his support for the dam project and stated that Sudan was willing to send experts and technicians to assist the construction of the GERD in order to avert flood damage (Sudan Tribune 2013), Egypt initially opposed the dam claiming that it could reduce its water supply and later stated that it would not oppose the dam as long as it did not affect Egypt’s interests (Egypt Independent 2013), which is equivalent to opposing the dam out of respect for Egypt’s interests as defined by Egyptian policymakers.

Unfortunately for Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia signed a bilateral agreement in 1991 that established a joint technical committee to share data and explore mutually beneficial initiatives, as well as a commitment to the idea of equitable and acceptable use of the Nile’s resources. Sudan sided again Egypt once again in 1996, opposing the Ethiopian proposal for formal cooperation and water sharing among all basin members. Sudan, on the other hand, went against Egypt’s advice in 2012 and expressed support for Ethiopia’s GERD (Geoffrey 2017). Sudan’s shifting allegiance between Egypt and Ethiopia shows that it does not act consistently in the interests of either upstream or downstream riparian state, but rather oscillates between the two as it is caught in the middle.

For a great many years, Egypt has tried to use its economic and military power to prevent other countries in the upstream Horn of Africa from restricting the flow of water before it reaches Egypt, and to maintain its hegemony by fomenting conflict between riparian countries (Richard 1998; Hassen 2014).

The main form and manifestation of the dilemma requires serious diplomatic and, at times, proxy interventions in the internal affairs of the state particularly between Ethiopia and Egypt. The complexity between the two countries is, of course, largely the result of their different hydro-topographical positions as suppliers and recipients. At the grassroots level, relations between Egyptians and Ethiopians, in particular, have been marred by mutual suspicion, hostile attitudes, conspiracy theories, and deeply embedded emotions directly tied to their location on the Nile (Geoffrey 2017; Tariku 2014).

Egypt's involvement in Ethiopian politics did not end there. Egypt has a long and storied relationship with Muslim Somalia, having provided military training and weapons to Somalia during the fighting between Ethiopia and Somalia the 1960s and 1970s. In 1978, Egypt was accused of supplying millions of dollars on Russian military equipment to Ethiopia's neighbor, Somalia. The relations deteriorated to the point when Egyptian President Sadat threatened to bomb any Ethiopian projects near the Blue Nile, while Ethiopia's former President Mengistu promised to reduce the flow of the Nile (Swain 2008).

Ethiopia complained about Egyptian activities in supporting the separatist war in Eritrea before 1991 and the bloody border war in 1998–2000 after Eritrea's independence (Reta 2000). When Ethiopia was struggling to reintegrate Eritrea into its empire in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Egypt established a modest paramilitary training camp on its own territory for the Eritreans who opposed the Ethiopian domination. Egypt also encouraged the Eritrean rebels to use Radio Cairo in an effort to disrupt Haile Selassie's authority. At the time, Egypt wanted to weaken Haile Selassie's pro-American and pro-Israeli government. Egypt, on the other hand, considered this plan as a good way of distracting Ethiopia's attention away from the progress of the Nile water project (Ademnur 2010). Similarly, Egyptian Mubarak's dictatorship was notorious for its blunt refusal to negotiate with Ethiopia over the Nile waters (Tariku 2014; Hassen 2014).

Furthermore, the officials in Cairo became increasingly concerned with sabotage soon after construction began in 2011, and President Morsi even considered bombing the GERD. Ethiopia accused Egypt on several occasions of funding the cyber-attacks to sabotage the project. Egypt financially and logistically supported Ethiopia's Ethnic Cession Party and ethnically motivated parties in their internal ethnic proxy war. Egypt tries to influence and impose its will on Ethiopia in the following ways: interference in internal politics and instability, including support for anti-government protests, cyber-attacks, support for Ethiopian neighboring countries, like South Sudan and North Sudan, and a renewed ban on loans from the International Financial Institution, and support for the Ethiopian government's opposition (The Economist 2020; Hassen 2014). Egypt's relations with Ethiopia have traditionally been characterized by a lack of cooperation and mutual suspicions, especially before Mubarak's presidency.

Egypt was purportedly encouraging the protests by training and funding the rebel Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Authorities in Cairo have provided support to the OLF, which has been accused of coordinating a series of attacks in Ethiopia. Egypt has shown its support for the OLF in a number of ways (William 2016; The Guardian, 2016). Since 2016, a related wave of anti-government protests has erupted in Ethiopia, particularly in Ethiopia's Oromia and Amhara regional states, with the late Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn claiming, in demagoguery reminiscent of the past, that some Egyptian institu-

tions were conspiring with terrorist groups to destabilize Ethiopia (EMoFA 2017). However, Egypt has experienced recurrent political and economic turmoil since the fall of Mubarak. Egypt has been preoccupied with domestic affairs, and as a result, Ethiopia had little time to engage in hardline GERD conspiracy politics (Agenagn 2020).

As to the GERD, despite the fact that an independent panel of experts from Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan agreed that the hydropower dam would not significantly reduce the flow of water to Egypt, the Egyptian pro-government media is drumming up a war of words over differences over the use of the Nile's waters. Despite the fact that Egypt lacks military alternatives due to distance, which will severely limit its ability to deploy its entire military force (Costantinos 2019). In response, the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy has warned that if the conflict with Egypt over the dam project becomes necessary, his country is prepared to send millions of people to fight, but that the only way to break the current deadlock is through diplomacy (Aljazeera 2019).

If Egypt wants to remove the GERD dam through a military alternative, it will have to use inefficient and ineffective methods. For the Egyptian military alternative, distance is a huge stumbling block. Egyptian planes taking off from Egyptian airfields are outside Ethiopia's combat range. If access to Sudanese airfields is granted, part of the Egyptian air force will be within range, but Sudan will face swift retaliation from Ethiopia (Costantinos 2019).

However, the relations between Ethiopia and Egypt have notably improved since 1991 in such spheres as education, agriculture, culture, and investment. The Egyptian investments in Ethiopia between 2010 and 2018 totaled more than \$750 million, with around \$10 million in the Tigray region. Meanwhile, the issue of Egyptian investor in Ethiopia comes at a time when relations between two countries are strained due to the Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam (GERD) crisis. Cairo is concerned about the impact of the crisis on its water supply, which is used by more than 90 per cent of Egyptians (Rasha 2020).

The ongoing cooperation dilemma that has exacerbated concerns about the GERD dates back to 2011, when Ethiopia started the construction of the GERD. Downstream countries – Egypt and Sudan – have expressed concern that the GERD threatens their own water supplies. The GERD project poses a serious threat to Ethiopia's diplomatic relations with downstream countries (Philipp 2018). Power asymmetry, information asymmetry, and location asymmetry are all key sources of asymmetry between countries that act as barriers to cooperation over transboundary water resources (Richard 1998). Ethiopia claims that the dam is necessary for the purpose of economic growth. Ethiopia consistently argues that the GERD is vital to its goal of eradicating and alleviating absolute poverty in Ethiopia, but downstream countries like Egypt and Sudan have expressed concern that the GERD threatens their own water supplies, especially in times of drought.

Egypt is very concerned that Ethiopia, which has a population of 110 million people and produces about 86 per cent of the water coming out of the Ethiopian highlands, will in the future be able to control the flow of the river and the annual Nile outflow, while in reality Ethiopia has only used about 1 per cent of the Nile outflow. The eleven sovereign riparian states that share the Nile include Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda (Costantinos 2019).

Under the auspices of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), a Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) was drafted. Based on the Agreement on the Nile River Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA), the last reached on Article 14(b), not to jeopardize

the water security of any other Nile Basin State, which states that all Nile basin states signed this agreement, except for Egypt and Sudan. Nevertheless, Egypt proposed not to jeopardize water security, current uses, or natural rights of any other Nile Basin State (CFA 2010). One of the most important cooperation dilemmas among these states is natural and historical right versus equitable water use without harming lower riparian states. Egypt and Sudan stopped participating in the NBI in 2010. Although Khartoum resumed participation in 2013, Egypt remains absent from its decision-making processes (Philipp 2018). The CFA was opened for signature by all basin States on May 14, 2010 in Entebbe (Uganda) which hosted the ceremony. Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda are the first five countries to sign the CFA and other Nile Basin countries are continuing to sign.

The Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) is based on the premise of equitable and reasonable use of the Nile water resources. As a result of this process, Ethiopia announced the start of construction of the GERD in 2011, which will have a massive optimistic impact on the entire Nile Basin (Zerihun 2014). Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan signed a Declaration of Principles Agreement (DPA) on the GERD in March 2015, pledging to use water resources in a fair and reasonable manner (DPA 2015). Unfortunately, the dilemma of cooperation between the three countries remains on some aspects of the dam's operation, such as the filling and operation of the GERD during droughts, as well as on a dispute settlement procedure and the formulation of binding law thus, preventing the parties from reaching an agreement. Even under the auspices of the African Union, negotiations on the unresolved issues have made little progress.

Based on the Declaration of Principles Agreement on the Nile between Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan (March 2015), both Egypt and Sudan have largely recognized and accepted the development and main objectives of the GERD for power generation to alleviate absolute poverty and contribute to Ethiopia's economic development through the generation of sustainable and reliable clean energy for national and regional supply.

Negotiations on the neglected GERD issues have made little progress, even under the auspices of the African Union. The GERD is now more than 85 per cent complete and generating energy (VOA 2022). For Egypt, the Nile is a 'matter of life and death,' but the Ethiopians have shown a strong commitment to completing the dam without internal or external interference, even if it means dying.

In line with Egypt's national interests, the dam project has been a source of cooperation dilemma. Ethiopia's logic is simple: the Nile is a shared natural river, and Ethiopia has the rights to use the river for its own benefit. Ethiopia says the project will not reduce the amount of water flowing downstream to Egypt and Sudan.

Third Party Intervention and its Extended Cooperation Dilemma

Egypt is known for trying to sow discord between Ethiopia and its neighbors. Egypt also attempts at putting Ethiopia's neighbors on the defensive. Egypt would also try to sever ties between Ethiopia, Djibouti, and neighboring Somalia. Egypt also tries to mislead global civil society organizations about why Ethiopia needs the water project. Egypt's aim is to render Ethiopia powerless in international politics (Agenagn 2020).

Economic and geopolitical interests have driven the Western support for Egypt rather than the security and stability of the Nile River Basin states (Cascao 2011). The United States has secretly approved its annual military aid supply to Egypt amounting to \$ 1.3 billion (Anthony 2013; Edward and Vivian 2022).

The US intervention over the dam has augmented tensions between Egypt and Ethiopia. For the US skeptics, the increasing tensions between two long-time American friends, Egypt and Ethiopia, over a massive project on a tributary of the Nile, represent the US administration's biggest diplomatic failure in Africa (BBC 2020).

This was demonstrated by former US President Donald Trump, who threatened Ethiopia and decided to cut \$77–100 million in aid to Ethiopia. The decision to cut off some Ethiopian funding was prompted by Washington's concern over Ethiopia's unilateral decision to begin the construction of the GERD before an agreement was reached, as Ethiopia was accused of negotiating in bad faith after it decided to proceed with filling the dam before addressing Egypt's and Sudan's concerns about the flow of water to their countries (Farouk 2020; Patricia 2020).

The dam has been a flashpoint in the region since its construction started in 2011 and for decades before that. A conflict is brewing on the Nile and the United States is bringing it to a head. A war is brewing on the Nile, and Trump's administration made matters even worse. The USA makes efforts to act as a mediator in such disputes. However, Trump's administration has ordered a \$130 million cut in Ethiopia's aid budget since 2020, intervening in support of Egypt and escalating tensions (Stephen 2020). The US has threatened and punished Ethiopia with aid cuts.

The US aid cuts to Ethiopia will not help the current negotiations, but instead will them more difficult. The United States has not taken the same tough stance on Egypt, which will affect its perceived role as a neutral mediator. The move could exacerbate tensions and disrupt ongoing negotiations with Egypt and Sudan over the filling and operation of the dam (Tigist 2019).

In line with this, the US administration did not antagonize Egypt for maintaining long-standing diplomatic relations with Israel when Egypt was lobbying other Arab League member states to recognize Israel. Its focus on achieving Arab-Israeli reconciliation also influenced its strategy towards Sudan, which included agreeing to normalize relations with Israel and also guaranteeing that Sudan would be removed from the US list of countries harboring terrorism, allowing the country to receive much-needed economic aid.

‘This was a very hazardous scenario because Egypt will be unable to continue this way,’ as Trump told reporters at the White House. ‘The dam is going to be demolished. They'll blow up that dam, I've said it before, and I'll say it again,’ Trump concluded about the GERD (BBC 2020). The GERD project is a symbol of the success of the Ethiopian state. It is a nationalistic project that aims to make Ethiopia energy self-sufficient country and an energy exporter. Ethiopia has pushed for the GERD project in order to alleviate absolute poverty and to export energy to neighboring countries without significantly harming other states in the Nile Basin. The USA tried to mediate an agreement to address concerns over the dam, but talks broke down after Ethiopia accused Trump of favoring Egypt in 2020, and the President tried to keep the USA and Egypt's interests in mind while ignoring and undermining Ethiopia's national interests.

Almost a decade-long negotiation failed, Egypt took the case to the UN Security Council as a global threat to peace and security. On June 19, 2020, the Egyptian Foreign Minister described the GERD to the UNSC as ‘an imminent threat to international peace and security’ and urged Ethiopia to stop the unilateral action of filling the dam before reaching a binding agreement. Meanwhile, the Ethiopians have announced their intention to fill the dam at any time (Al-Ahram 2020). Egypt has been trying to persuade Ethiopia to sign a legally binding agreement on the operation of the dam. Egypt and Sudan are

pushing for the dam to be placed under control of the UN Security Council (Al-Ahram 2020). Egypt is concerned that the GERD will reduce Egypt's access to the Nile water to such an extent that Egypt's agricultural sector and its population will be affected.

In addition, following the meeting requested by Egypt and Sudan, the League of Arab States (LAS) issued a resolution on 15 June 2021, calling for the UN Security Council to investigate the matter and for Ethiopia to refrain from filling the GERD dam without first reaching an agreement with the affected nations. The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, said, 'The solution to this crisis clearly lies within the Nile Basin countries.' In line with this, Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that it 'totally rejects' the LAS decision. The GERD draft was circulated by Tunisia at the UNSC because Tunisia was a non-permanent member of both the United Nations Security Council and the Arab League (UNSC Report, 2021).

Tunisia circulated up to the fourth revised draft of the statement on Ethiopia will not fill the GERD dam unless an agreement is reached first but there was not enough support for the text to be adopted by the UNSC. During the Council meeting, several members stated that these kinds of disagreements are better resolved regionally and through dialogue between the parties involved. Kenya urged the parties to 'recommit to negotiating in good faith within the AU-led process,' while Niger urged 'all parties to prioritize reaching a regional and African solution to the GERD issue' (*Ibid.*). This placed the GERD on the Security Council's agenda, which some Council members found objectionable. During the lengthy discussion process, the overall tone of the message was also significantly lowered. The tripartite talks in the Security Council resumed in order to continue the AU-led discussions with a view to reaching a mutually acceptable and enforceable agreement on the filling and operation of the GERD.

Due to the fact that Ethiopia's demonstrated bad faith in the American negotiations on the GERD, the USA continued to inflict damage on Ethiopia through the 'Ethiopia Stabilization, Peace, and Democracy Act' (H.R.6600), which suspended the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) free trade agreement with Ethiopia, including the suspension of US security and financial assistance to the Ethiopian government and the blocking of loans to Ethiopia from global financial institutions including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Similarly, Egypt knocked on the door of the EU's Brussels Office. The EU promised to support Egyptian efforts to enhance water security in the Nile in order to alleviate Egypt's water shortages. The EU and Egypt attach great importance to reaching an agreement quickly and the GERD is a top priority for the EU (Maria 2022). Egypt continues to seek solutions outside the Nile Basin countries such as the LAS, the United States, and EU member states. The US and the EU have played a role in the talks, but their efforts have been unsuccessful.

What are the Basic Problems of the Nile Basin Countries?

Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan have disagreed for years over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam for years. While there has long been a controversy over distribution and management of the Nile's water, the rivalry, particularly between Egypt and Ethiopia, exploded in 2011 when Ethiopia began construction of the Blue Nile Dam. Ethiopia, whose highlands provide more than 86 per cent of the water flowing into the Nile River, has long maintained that it has the right to use its natural resources to alleviate widespread poverty and improve the living standards of its people (Alemu 1996).

Egypt has declared the completion of the dam an existential threat, citing concerns about its impact on the country's water supply. However, with the GERD almost complete, Egypt has shifted its focus to securing a political consensus on a timeframe for filling the reservoir and how the GERD will be managed, particularly during droughts. Egypt has softened its 'not even a drop of water' stance but still demands that Ethiopia to agree to strict conditions to limit its water use which are far more stringent than international water laws and equitable water sharing norms allow; reduce the power generation capacity of the dam; abandon the four to six year time frame for filling the dam reservoir and instead fill it in 12 to 21 years (Mwangi and John 2015). The speed at which Ethiopia fills the dam will determine how much Egypt is affected and in Cairo's view, it is the slower the better. The process will take several years. Sudan, further upstream than Egypt, is also concerned about water shortages.

Ethiopia, on the other hand, prefers the freedom to choose how to deal with droughts. Egypt wants the reservoir to be filled over a much longer period of time, fearing a drought during the filling period (John 2020). Ethiopia, on the other hand, argues that the dam will support regional hydropower integration by providing affordable electricity and serving as a primary mechanism for Nile management, including drought mitigation and water salinity reduction. In addition, Ethiopia generally claims that the GERD will have little impact on the flow of the Nile, while Egypt, which relies almost exclusively on the Nile for its domestic and economic needs, regards the dam as a major threat.

The reaction of the downstream states to the GERD is mixed.. While Sudan confirms its support for the GERD and enthusiastically welcomes its construction (Sudan Tribune 2013), Egypt strongly opposes the project, arguing that it would 'reduce Egypt's water share,' but has since stated that it will not oppose it 'as long as it does not jeopardize Egypt's interests' (Egypt Independent 2013). Egypt has opposed both the CFA and the construction of the GERD (Zerihun 2014).

Sudan is caught between the conflicting ambitions of Egypt and Ethiopia. Khartoum was initially opposed to the construction of the GERD, but has now warmed to it, noting its ability to improve domestic growth prospects. Nevertheless, Khartoum remains concerned that the GERD operation could jeopardize the safety of Sudan's own dams and make the government's own development programs much more difficult to manage (John 2020). Sudan has more than once taken a more supportive stance towards Egypt (Egypt Today 2021). The GERD negotiations are in flux, and a resolution of the conflict seems elusive. Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan each have their own set of interests. Egypt and Sudan share the goal of maintaining their drought-related water threats, so they disagree on the construction of the dam.

Conclusion

On the global scale, the population growth and increasingly widespread poverty result in water scarcity, which will inevitably pose complex cooperation dilemmas to the states. The Nile GERD project has been on the global agenda of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on several occasions. The present paper aimed at a fair examination of the GERD cooperation dilemma on the Blue Nile River and its controversial issues in order to promote a deeper understanding of what are the possible solutions for Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt.

In the case of the Nile River, mistrust and suspicion between the Upper and Lower Nile Basin states indicate that they have crossed the line into cooperation dilemmas and fears as a result of the prevailing old-fashioned arrangements. The only way out for both

parties is to build trust through mutual cooperation based on a win-win solution while avoiding the old status quo and obsolete terms, such as 'historical rights' or 'natural' or 'hegemonic power' and 'veto power' in the middle of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt.

However, it will take years for a lasting peace based on a win-win formula to replace the hostility between the Upper and Lower Nile riparian state. While the recent collapse of the talks is a diplomatic travesty, it should be remembered that warring regimes without democratic mandates may overreact to real or imagined external threats in order to gain domestic legitimacy, because a conflict in the Nile Basin has global ramifications.

As a result, diplomacy and mutual cooperation are the only options for resolving the GERD and Nile water issues. Based on the 2015 Declaration of Principles Agreement on the GERD between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, Ethiopia will have a successful mutual trust of cooperation and collaboration with the Upper and Lower Nile Basin states after the construction of the GERD is completed. Ethiopia must recognize and respect Egypt's almost total dependence on the Nile River's waters. Egypt must not use sympathy for its water scarcity as a weapon to derail the efforts of other riparian countries to reach a balanced, fair, and equitable arrangement.

If the Egyptian government keeps on defending the 1959 Egyptian-Sudanese agreement and the 1929 Anglo-Egyptian treaty that granted Egypt water rights, all parties will be unable to cooperate and negotiate. They became then unable to break these old-fashioned agreements, which caused complications of cooperation and hostility between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, because the water-use rights in these agreements limited them to using Egypt and Sudan, but not Ethiopia.

Egypt has also increased its request for assistance from the global community, especially the USA, on the Nile issue, but Ethiopia has shown bad faith because of the US position. If situation is not resolved and a settlement is not reached, the USA has already threatened to stop development aid and the AGO free trade opportunity for Ethiopia. Thus, the third state's intervention brings the upstream and downstream Nile basin states into a complex relationship with the vortex.

Based on the study's findings, the best option seems to be improved cooperation between the upstream and downstream riparian states of the Nile, Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt. Third-party intervention is less likely to succeed in resolving the Nile cooperation dilemma than mutually beneficial cooperation. In this context, Egypt should refrain from knocking on the doors of Arab states, including the Secretary General of the Arab League, the United States, the United Nations, and the European Union, and instead prioritize its diplomatic efforts to improve relations with the Nile riparian states and the African Union. While third-party intervention in the internal affairs of Upper or Lower Nile states appears ineffective in achieving mutual cooperation, it does preserve the economic and geopolitical interests of the states involved.

Cooperation dilemmas and fears between upstream and downstream Nile Basin states over the GERD can help their leaders negotiate and adopt tripartite agreements, very similar to the 2015 Declaration of Principles Agreement (DPA), that reflect the citizens' interests, particularly in terms of economic development and poverty alleviation. For example, if Ethiopians and Egyptians collaborate on a regular basis and engage in more bottom-up, participatory, and inclusive approaches to conflict resolution, they are more likely to understand and acknowledge the challenges they face, particularly in terms of water security, climate change, food production, and poverty alleviation. Citizens and governments

should be involved in resolving Nile water issues, which are currently a source of disagreement between upstream and downstream Nile River countries.

Egypt must avoid ‘waving a white flag’ by pursuing a regional policy aimed at putting pressure on Ethiopia and instead pursue ‘a genuine and practical policy of mutual benefit and cooperation.’ The principle of collaborative efforts between the Nile Basin countries is based on sovereign equality, territorial integrity, mutual benefit, and good faith in order to achieve the optimal use, adequate protection, and conservation of the Nile Basin and to promote joint efforts to achieve social and economic development. Egypt should not underestimate the influence of other upstream countries, like Ethiopia, but rather consider them as equal partners and seek benefits for better and mutually understandable cooperation, similar to the global river basin of the Danube in Europe.

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