

# **The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Conflict to Conflict Management**

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Relations between Ethiopia and Egypt have been fluctuating between harmony and conflict over the years, with the Nile factor defining the relationship between the two African Nations. The Blue Nile flows from Ethiopia into Egypt and supplies almost 80 per cent of the latter's water needs. There is therefore significant concern in Cairo over the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Blue Nile. Egypt fears that it will cut into its water supply, destroying parts of its precious farmland and squeezing its population of 93 million people who already face water shortages.<sup>1</sup>

Ethiopia, however, insists the project will not cause significant harm to Egypt or Sudan, the two downstream countries.<sup>2</sup> But taking advantage of the serious political instability within Ethiopia, Egypt is trying to put pressure over

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1 "Death of the Nile: Egypt fears Ethiopian dam will cut into its water supply", *The Telegraph*, October 2, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/10/02/death-nile-egypt-fearsethiopian-dam-will-cut-water-supply/>.

2 Ibid.

Ethiopia through various forms of proxies and alliances with neighboring South Sudan and Eritrea.

According to the 1929 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty<sup>3</sup> between Britain and its Egyptian colony, no upstream state was allowed to reduce volume of the Nile water flowing into the Sudan and Egypt. The treaty stated that without the consent of the Egyptian government, no irrigation or hydroelectric works could be established on the tributaries of the Nile, if such works can cause a drop-in water levels harmful to Egypt. This gave Egypt an upper hand on the control and utilisation of the Nile waters.

Thirty years later, Egypt and Sudan negotiated and signed the 1959 bilateral Nile water full utilization treaty, which gave them the right to use 100 per cent of the Nile water resource and continued veto-power over any upstream riparian water projects. Most importantly, the agreement was a bilateral pact between Egypt and the Sudan to act together against any act of the upper riparian states of the Nile.

Neither of these two legal documents involved negotiations with upstream states, which were nevertheless barred from using the water that emanated from their soil in any amount. Egypt's foreign policy has always centered on securing uninterrupted flow and continuous utilization of the Nile waters, which means maintaining the *status quo*. Ethiopia, which has had little benefit from the Nile waters so far, regards the previous treaties as outdated, non-binding and irrelevant, which neglect their needs and rights.

Given this background and the lack of a comprehensive framework agreement, the Ethiopian government demonstrated

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3 Mwangi S. Kimenyi and John M. Mbaku, "The limits of the new "Nile Agreement"", The Brookings Institution, April 28, 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2015/04/28/the-limits-of-the-new-nile-agreement/>.

a very strong commitment to meet the country's rapidly growing energy and water demands by starting the GERD project. Ignoring warnings by international financial institutions and reluctance of the World Bank to support the project, Addis Ababa has decided to construct GERD totally from internal resources and finance the project by selling bonds.<sup>4</sup>

In the pursuit of economic development, Ethiopia has prioritised renewable energy production, emphasising development of its hydropower potential, of which the GERD is a critical part. At the same time, it is constantly engaging with Egypt and the Sudan, trying to reassure them that this project would not impact their water security.

But this goes against Egyptians' historical and natural interest of unilateral utilization of the Nile waters, causing much worry and consternation in Cairo.

The GERD project, which has been on the Ethiopian Government's drawing board since the 1960s, but was officially launched in April 2011 is the largest engineering project ever planned in the country. When fully operational, the project could generate more than 6000 megawatts of electricity. Located at Guba, some 20 to 40 kilometres from the border with Sudan and 750 kilometres from Addis Ababa, it will be able to store about 74 BCM. The 1,780-metre-long, 145-metre-high dam will stretch for 246 kilometres and will have a reservoir measuring 1,874 square kilometres. It is expected to increase Ethiopia's actual power generation by 200 per cent.<sup>5</sup>

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4 H. Chen and A. Swain, "The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam: Evaluating its sustainability standard and geopolitical significance", *Energy Development Frontier*, Volume 3, Number 1, 2014, p.11.

5 Emeline Wuilbercq, "Ethiopia's Nile dam project signals its intention to become an African power", *The Guardian*, July 14, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/jul/14/ethiopia-grand-renaissance-dam-egypt>.

But Egypt asserts that the dam will reduce the flow of water it receives, and considers the dam as a serious threat to its historical and natural rights. Ethiopia, on the other hand, claims that the dam has a lot to contribute to the downstream riparian states and will facilitate energy-led integration in the region. With the GERD project almost 60 per cent complete, the main bone of contention between Egypt and Ethiopia has been the way of filling the reservoir.

Several earlier attempts to build a common understanding on the use of Nile Waters between the two riparian states have failed, with the two nations unable to achieve mutual trust and confidence.

To tackle the problem, the Nile Tripartite Technical Committee comprising Ethiopia, Egypt and the Sudan was formed in 2012 to examine the benefits and dangers of the project. The Agreement on the Declaration of Principles among the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Republic of the Sudan on the GERD Project, on March 24, 2015 in Khartoum asserted that the GERD was mostly meant for power generation, which would contribute to economic development, promotion of trans-boundary cooperation and regional integration through generation of sustainable and reliable clean energy supply.<sup>6</sup>

But given the contradictory viewpoints, the GERD project appears to pose significant threats of conflict between Ethiopia and Egypt. This research attempts to critically assess whether Ethio-Egypt relation has been dominated by conflict or cooperation over the utilization of the Nile waters and critically

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6 The 2015 Agreement on Declaration of Principles between The Arab Republic of Egypt, The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia And the Republic of the Sudan on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Project (GERDP), March 24, 2015, <https://hornaffairs.com/2015/03/25/egypt-ethiopia-sudan-agreement-on-declaration-of-principles-full-text/>.

investigate the previous and current hydro-political challenges and prospect of Ethio-Egypt relations.

### CHALLENGES TO ETHIO-EGYPT RELATIONS

Ethiopia and Egypt's contrary allegiances to previous and currently emerging legal regimes over the utilisation of the Nile, their incompatible foreign and water policy orientations and practices, and the historical mistrust between the two nations have always impacted their relations negatively. Increasing pressure over the Nile Water resources due to population and economic growth, and the environmental crisis affecting the quality as well as volume of the Nile water remains one of the major historical and existential challenges to Ethio-Egypt relations.

#### *Fault Lines of Previous Ethio-Egypt Relations over the Nile*

Historically, Ethiopia and Egypt have been propounding contradictory water regimes over the utilisation, management and development of the Nile water resource. Egypt strongly supports the 1929 colonial and 1959 bilateral treaties to ensure absolute monopoly over the utilisation of the Nile waters. Ethiopia has been supporting the 2010 Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) to challenge the above treaties for an inclusive, equitable, reasonable and fair consumption of the shared resource. The two nations have been unable so far to find common ground to forge binding international treaty governing the use of Nile waters resource or the GERD project. These competing regimes have been posing significant challenges to the political and economic relation between the two countries.<sup>7</sup>

Globally, the continuity of colonial period treaties has been eternal to inter-state relations. In this particular context,

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7 G. Amare, "Nile waters-Hydrological cooperation vs. hydro-politics", in Proceedings of the 8th Nile 2000 Conference, Addis Ababa, Ethiopian Ministry of Water Resources, Addis Ababa, June 26-29, 2000, pp.573-580.

the British clearly understood Egypt's strong dependence on the Nile and sought to secure their interest, mainly in the Nile basin waters in order to ensure the production and export of long staple cotton for its industry at home at the expense of the upstream country.<sup>8</sup> As a result, they planted the idea of prior use or 'historical' or 'natural' right on the use of the shared resources of the Nile water through the 1929 Anglo-Egyptian Agreement, which created enormous differences between them in terms of actual utilisation of the resource.<sup>9</sup> The 1929 colonial agreement between Britain and Egypt was signed to ensure the natural and historical rights to Egypt over the Nile Water resources.

After independence, without considering the interest and consent of other riparian countries including Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan had also concluded the 1959 bilateral agreement over the Nile water resources, which in essence still made Egypt the largest beneficiary of the water resources. The main objective of this agreement was directed mainly to the protection and promotion of the downstream interests of Egypt and Sudan, without giving any attention to the interests of the source states, mainly Ethiopia. Moreover, using this agreement, Egypt and Sudan also gave themselves a veto power over the projects planned and implemented by upstream states.<sup>10</sup> Contrary to Egypt's stand, regardless of regime changes in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa has been loudly and clearly consistent in rejecting the

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8 A. Zewdie, *Water Resources Development in Ethiopia: An Evaluation of Present Experience and Future Planning Concepts*, Ithaca Press, U.K., 1994, p.106.

9 N. Tedla, "In-Depth Analysis: Past Agreements on the Nile in view of the Law of Treaty And the CFA", Addis Standard, October 11, 2017, <http://addisstandard.com/depth-analysis-past-agreements-nile-view-law-treaty-cfa-2/>.

10 J. Allan and A. Nicol, "Report on the EU cooperation and natural resources conflict in the Horn of Africa", 1998, Safer World, London.

1929 and 1959 treaties as illegal, unilateral, unfair and invalid in the language of international law.<sup>11</sup>

The legal validity of Ethiopia's position on these two treaties seems justified under the established rules of international law. First of all, Ethiopia had not been contracting parties to those treaties so that they could not have any binding effect on the country as per the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Ethiopia could not be bound to them since its interests and rights over the Nile Water Resources had been totally ignored in both agreements. Finally, the basic objectives of those treaties are contrary to emerging principles and customs governing the manners of utilisation of trans-boundary water resources which include: fair, reasonable, sustainable, and equitable utilization of the resources among riparian states.

*Fault Lines of the Current Legal and Diplomatic Initiatives*

In a bid to build trust among the Nile Basin countries, the World Bank and the United Nations established the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) in 1999 to encourage sustainable development in the Nile basin countries. It was designed to develop a new water-sharing agreement that would include the upstream countries. To correct the previous unilateral colonial and post-colonial bilateral legal regimes, Ethiopia played an active role in crafting a new legal regime that deals with fair, equitable, reasonable and sustainable utilisation of the Nile water resources. After years of negotiations, the Nile Basin CFA was issued in May 2010.<sup>13</sup> Burundi, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya signed the CFA in 2010, which

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11 Ibid.

12 "The 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties", United Nations, [http://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/1\\_1\\_1969.pdf](http://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/1_1_1969.pdf).

13 N. Tedla, op. cit.

could be a turning point in the history of the Nile Basin legal regimes since these upper riparian countries acted together, disregarding the opposition from the traditional powers on the Nile, mainly Egypt.

Unlike previous agreements, the CFA focuses on water-sharing principles and does not outline specific water allocations per country. Egypt, contested Article 14b of the CFA, which states that the Nile Basin States agree not to significantly affect the water security of any other Nile Basin State.<sup>14</sup> For Egypt, this provision could oblige them to compromise on their share of the Nile waters. It therefore, proposed the phrase “not to adversely affect the water security and current uses and rights of any other Nile Basin State”<sup>15</sup>, a wording that would maintain their current share. In addition, Egypt claimed that decisions concerning the Nile Basin must be made by consensus and not majority vote, which would make it possible for a single country to veto any decision. In practice, this would give Egypt the possibility to block any upstream projects it perceives as threat. However, upper riparian states, particularly Ethiopia rejected Egypt’s proposals for amendment of these terms of CFA, claiming they would reinstate the basic principles of the 1959 agreement, which had been unfair, unilateral and invalid based on the basic principles, norms and customs of international law. Finally, instead of any common consensus, the new CFA had been seriously contested by Egypt, which even left the negotiating table in 2010.<sup>16</sup>

At a time when the stark divides between advocates of the 1959 agreement (Egypt) and proponents of Cooperative

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14 Ibid.

15 “DRC seeks Rwanda’s support for the Nile Basin agreement”, *The New Times*, May 13, 2009, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/8446>.

16 J. Brunnee, and J. S. Toope, “The changing Nile Basin regime: Does law matter?”, *Harvard International Law Journal*, Volume 43, Number 1, 2002, pp. 105-109.



Framework Agreement (Ethiopia) had not been settled, Ethiopia publicly announced its unilateral decision to build the GERD Project over the Blue Nile River in April 2011. For dispute management, in 2011, Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt agreed to initiate a Tripartite National Committee (TNC) composed of 12 members, four from each riparian state, to open a trilateral process to deal with the GERD project, to assess the possible impacts of the dam, exchange technical expertise, foster cooperation and ultimately boost regional development.<sup>17</sup>

In 2012, as per the recommendation of the TNC, the three countries agreed on the terms of reference and rules of procedures for the establishment of an International Panel of Experts (IPoE), which had been composed of two national experts from each of the three countries and four selected international experts. Finally, in 2013 after more than 43 rounds of discussions, the report was released by addressing several technical issues, including down streamers' concerns over the dam safety, and recommending the need for two additional studies: assessment of trans-boundary environmental and socio-economic impacts, and a new hydrological model study.<sup>18</sup>

The reactions of Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia to the release of the IPoE report were nevertheless divergent. In Sudan, it was followed by numerous official declarations of support by the Sudanese government, downplaying negative impacts and praising the benefits of the GERD for Sudan, namely its potential to regulate flows and contribute to expanding irrigated

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17 T. Tekele, "Sudan: Country agrees to tripartite committee over Ethiopia's Nile Dam", *Sudan Tribune*, October 26, 2011, <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudan-agrees-to-tripartite,40531>.

18 Y. Zhang, et.al., "Filling the GERD: evaluating hydro climatic variability and impoundment strategies for Blue Nile riparian countries", *Water International*, Volume 41, Number 4, 2016, pp. 593-610.

agriculture along the Sudanese Blue Nile.<sup>19</sup> Ethiopia has accepted the report and continued its construction on GERD. But the then President Morsi of Egypt opposed the building of GERD and criticised the IPoE report on the dam and related impacts. Various trilateral meetings at the end of 2013 and till later January 2014 were either postponed or failed to reach any constructive agreement due to Egyptian intransigence.

Productive meetings only resumed when a new government was elected in Cairo, and the new President Al-Sissi agreed to reactivate tripartite meetings regarding the GERD and displayed openness to joint approaches. Egypt's relations with Ethiopia must be based on cooperation, negotiation, love, trust, mutual respect and understanding as a means for solving the issue of the Nile waters in general and GERD in particular, he argued. Therefore, diplomats would be fully involved, and the trilateral meetings would be not only technical but also political and legal. The three countries resumed trilateral meetings in August 2014, and subsequently meet on six occasions until the end of December 2015.<sup>20</sup> But despite a level of openness from Egypt to take part in technical talks soon after GERD was announced in 2011, technical cooperation was once again overridden by political considerations.

Nevertheless, the trilateral process did lead to an agreement being signed by the three riparian states, as discussed next. Several rounds of high-level bilateral and trilateral talks at

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19 "Sudan downplays negative impact of Ethiopian dam project", *Sudan Tribune*, May 30, 2013, [http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?iframe&page=imprimable&id\\_article=46754](http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?iframe&page=imprimable&id_article=46754) and "Sudan reiterates support of Ethiopian dam plans", *Sudan Tribune*, June 9, 2013, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article46886>.

20 "Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia reach agreement on Renaissance Dam", *Sudan Tribune*, December 29, 2015, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article57526>.

the beginning of 2015 culminated in a preliminary draft of an agreement on the GERD. The Declaration of Principles for the GERD was signed in Khartoum by the three heads of state on March 23, 2015.<sup>21</sup> It was considered a historical deal, bringing together for the first time the three Eastern Nile countries around guiding principles on cooperative relations. Among its 10 principles, some are general principles of international water law, such as ‘no significant harm’ and ‘equitable and reasonable utilization’; but they also include principles more related to technical issues such as dam security, dam filling, operations policy and exchange of information.<sup>22</sup> In hydro political terms the outcome of these legal instruments cement a new hydro political reality in the Eastern Nile, one that includes the GERD as a fact on the ground recognised by all three Eastern Nile riparian states.<sup>23</sup> This is also a very significant development as it established a different set of norms and processes than had hitherto existed under the NBI negotiations. Moreover, the three countries have successfully reached an agreement at least at the heads-of-state level.

A critical evaluation and analysis of Ethio-Egypt relation over the Nile question after the GERD project indicates both positive and negative developments. The process of bilateral relations between Egypt and Ethiopia over GERD shows that different cooperative norms have been adopted which subsequently brought about key changes in relations. The cooperation among Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan to form a Tripartite Committee (TC) for the establishment of an IPoE to conduct the possible impacts of GERD is a positive step

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21 Op.cit. no. 6.

22 M. A. Salman, “The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam: the road to the declaration of principles and the Khartoum document”, *Water International*, Volume 41, Number 4, 2016, pp. 512-527.

23 Ibid.

to ensure mutual understanding over the project. The fact that the Declaration of Principles for the GERD was signed in Khartoum by the three heads of state could also be seen to justify the political will of these three nations to resolve the Nile politics including GERD through peaceful diplomatic engagement and new normative frameworks. This also contributed to reactivating trilateral relations between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan, which was in a stalemate since Egypt and Sudan sanctioned participation in the NBI in mid-2010.

However, despite these positive developments, the legal doctrines that the two countries have been following remain incompatible. Egypt still adheres to the 1959 legal regimes for its historical and natural rights over the Nile water resource, while Ethiopia has been lobbying for the CFA. Nothing has changed to narrow this gap between the views of the two nations even after GERD, since both the TC and the Declaration of Principles are not international norms governing Egypt and Ethiopia which substitutes the previous controversial legal regimes propounded by them.

To win the diplomatic battle against Ethiopia, Egyptian political leaderships from Anwar Sadat to Hosni Mubarak and from Mohammed Morsi to Abdul Fattah El-Sisi have gone to the extent of employing official propaganda warfare as instrument of their foreign policy against Ethiopia. “No one can touch Egypt’s share of Nile water” and the Nile water share is a “matter of life or death,” thundered President Al-Sisi in a news conference at Sharm el-Sheikh in November 2017. He went on to issue a stern warning and a clear military threat, saying, “We are capable of protecting our national security and water to us is a question of national security. Full stop”.<sup>24</sup> Egypt has

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24 “Egypt’s Sisi Dials Up anti-Ethiopia Dam Rhetoric”, *Nazret*, November 20, 2017, [https://www.nazret.com/2017/11/20/egypts-sisi-dials-up-anti-ethio p ia-dam-rhetoric/](https://www.nazret.com/2017/11/20/egypts-sisi-dials-up-anti-ethio-pia-dam-rhetoric/).

also been accused of sponsoring a series of proxy wars and interventions in the internal affairs of Ethiopia to destabilise and weaken the Ethiopian State.

The implication of having two competing legal agreements, colonial as well as post-colonial legal regimes between Sudan and Egypt on one hand and the New Cooperative Framework Agreement among other riparian countries headed by Ethiopia on the other remains unresolved. This has been affecting amicable diplomatic settlements of the Ethio-Egypt disputes over the Nile water resource utilization, management and development including the GERD.

#### **PROSPECTS OF ETHIO-EGYPT RELATION OVER THE NILE**

There are two competing theories of Hydro-politics to critically analyse and understand the future prospect of relationships between or among riparian states sharing trans-boundary water resource: cooperation and conflict models. According to Aaron Wolf's four-stage cooperation model, there is a low possibility of conflicts among riparian states which share common trans-boundary water resource.<sup>25</sup> On the contrary, according to Jon-Martin Trondalen<sup>26</sup>, who is the creator of the ABC-conflict model, there are various causes for the likelihood of future conflicts among riparian states over their shared trans-boundary water resource.

Applying Wolf's parameters (historic argument, strategic interest argument, a shared interest's argument and institutional

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25 Aaron T. Wolf, *The Transboundary Freshwater Dispute Resolution: Theory, Practice and Annotated References*, United Nations University Press, 2000.

26 Trondalen, Jon-Martin, "International River Systems in International Environmental Conflict Resolution: The role of the United Nations", in Aaron T. Wolf ed., *Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Water Systems*, Edward Elgar Publishing Inc, Cheltenham, 2002, pp. 114-148.

resiliency)<sup>27</sup> to the Nile question or GERD project indicates a high prospect of cooperation over conflict between Ethiopia and Egypt over the issue under discussion. Egypt and Ethiopia do not have any history of wide ranges open, and full-scale violent military confrontations over the Nile water resource, bar Egypt's proxy wars and its interferences in Ethiopia's internal affairs. However, Egypt's hegemonic doctrine of absolute territorial integrity over the Nile water resource to ensure the same volume of water, uninterrupted in quantity and unimpaired in quality, has already been seriously challenged by Ethiopia's diplomatic and practical measures over the Nile Basin. This rift between Ethiopia and Egypt in the past over the utilization of the Nile water resource has not led to any violent armed conflict between the parties. Based on the above historical empirical evidence, conflict between Ethiopia and the Egypt over the Nile water resource will be logically less likely.

Various empirical evidence also partially reflects Wolf's second parameter, strategic interest argument, which questions the plausibility of future conflict between the two states over the Nile, particularly over the GERD Project, Egypt is both a downstream and hegemonic power over the Nile, so it does not qualify one of the premises of Wolf's strategic interest argument. However, the international community is unlikely to allow Egypt to launch a military offensive against Ethiopia considering the extremely volatile nature of the region as well as Ethiopia's growing partnership with the international community on regional, continual and international peace and security concerns, particularly in its fight against international terrorism.

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27 Wolf, Aaron T., "Conflict and Cooperation along International Waterways", in Aaron T. Wolf ed., *Conflict prevention and Resolution in Water Systems*, Edward Elgar Publishing Inc, Cheltenham, 2002, pp. 185-200.

Based on the above empirical evidence supporting Wolf's strategic interest argument, future conflict between Ethiopia and Egypt over the Nile water resource and that of GERD will therefore be unlikely because it does not serve Egypt's strategic interest to formally launch a military offensive against Ethiopia. According to Wolf's third argument, mutual interest argument, water should be seen as a source of cooperation instead of conflict. States tend to realise the benefits of cooperation on water, and a dam can be of benefit for both the upstream state as well as the downstream state.<sup>28</sup> Presently, there are many indications that the situation of GERD could serve the mutual interest of Egypt and Ethiopia in Hydropower trade, sustainable water flow throughout the year which increases Egypt's agricultural productivity as well as hydro-power generation capacity of its dam, and GERD's future contribution in protecting its dams as well as villages from sedimentation and over flooding during the rainy summer season of Ethiopia. Based on the above empirical evidence for Wolf's mutual interest argument, future conflict between Ethiopia and the Egypt over the Nile water resource and that of GERD will have low possibility as it would not serve the mutual interest of the two neighbouring states.

Wolf's fourth argument, institutional resiliency, asserts that treaties tend to be very resilient over longer time periods once states have finally been established.<sup>29</sup> However, the construction of the GERD today has not been part of any treaty or agreement between Ethiopia and Egypt. The recent CFA cannot govern Egypt since it is not contracting parties to it. As a result, Wolf's fourth argument may not fully reflect the prospect of Ethio-Egypt cooperation. But to address misconceptions and to develop

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28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

mutual trust between Egypt and Ethiopia, international panel of experts, a tripartite national committee, has been appointed to examine the pros and cons of the GERD projects. Then there's also been the recent declaration of principles among Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt regarding the Grand Renaissance Dam stipulating the principles of not causing significant harm, equitable and reasonable utilization of the Nile water resource, cooperation, and regional integration among themselves.<sup>30</sup> If all the three states ratify the recent Declaration of Principles, it could open a new chapter on the hydro-political history of the Nile. Consequently, it is significant to keep in mind that the parties have attached great hopes to the recent declaration of the principles. Wolf's fourth argument could therefore be fully brought to bear on this case in defining the future cooperative prospect of Ethio-Egypt relation over the Nile.

In the study of conflict and cooperation regarding common water resources, there is a fairly large literature which focuses on water as a potential conflict creator. Jon Martin Trondalen<sup>31</sup>, posits three parameters representing his arguments for the likelihood of future conflicts among riparian states over common trans-boundary water resources. First of all, unlike Trondalen's first scenario, there are compatible goals between Egypt and Ethiopia regarding various dams already constructed in Ethiopia as well as the ongoing GERD Project. Ethiopia's dams-like the Tekeze Dam, built by Ethiopia on the Tekeze river, a tributary of Nile, have been proved to be less damaging to Egypt since they have been designed predominantly for power generation, not for large-scale irrigation purpose. Also, given the place where GERD has been constructed and the purpose of the dam, which is naturally and predominantly for

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30 Op.cit. no. 6.

31 Op.cit. no. 26.



hydroelectric power generation, cannot significantly reduce the flow of the Nile water resource to Egypt. However, the manner of filling the reservoir of the dam is still contentious. Egypt's plain topography will not allow dams, which can reserve much amount of water, so it needs to exploit the topographic potential in Ethiopia, which is conducive to such hydro-power projects. In addition, Ethiopia has little irrigation potential over the Nile, but its huge hydropower potential could be taken as a positive background to Ethio-Egypt bilateral relation. From the above finding, Trondalen's first scenario to justify the possibility of conflict resulting from incompatible goals of riparian states related to the control over and unsustainable use of international river systems do not sufficiently reflect the future prospect of Ethio-Egypt relation over the Nile. To sum up, unlike Trondalen's argument, almost all our data sets and sources clearly indicate that Ethio-Egypt relations over the Nile and that of the GERD project are more likely to be peaceful and in the interest of hydro-diplomacy rather than violent conflict.

### **FINDING OF THE STUDY**

Based on critical evaluation and analysis of the preceding data, the study reveals that Egypt and Ethiopia had been historically at odds with each other over the Nile waters. For Ethiopia, developing the waters of the Nile is an expression of its green economic development strategy to get rid of poverty, drought, famine, and energy insecurity, considered as Ethiopia's existential threats and imperatives for its claims. Egypt continues to assert colonial era and downstream bilateral treaties as a guide for Nile water utilisation, and claims natural and historical rights over the Nile waters. It is also in a serious diplomatic row with Ethiopia over GERD. It tried to hamper GERD's construction by blocking funding and even threatening military action, but in vain. Sudan's support to GERD is also

seen as a diversion from its traditional alignment with Egypt, and poses a diplomatic setback for Cairo. Ethiopia, meanwhile, has been voicing its claim for a new regime which could ensure its equitable and reasonable share of the shared water resource.

However, initiatives like the IPoE, the development of the TNC, and Ethiopia's continued communications of GERD's benefits to Egypt reflects to ease tensions and Egypt's fears indicates a positive movement towards a peaceful framework of conflict management.

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