

# Challenges and Prospects of Ethio-Egypt Bilateral Relations with Respect to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

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**Submitted:** 22 January 2026    **Accepted:** 28 January 2026    **Published:** 03 February 2026

**Citation:** Teka, D. G. (2026). Challenges and prospects of Ethio-Egypt bilateral relations with respect to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. *J of Soc Sci & Hum Res*, 3(1), 01-10.

## Abstract

*This study investigates challenges and prospects of Ethio-Egypt bilateral relations with respect to the Grand Renaissance Dam. It aims to examine the historical bilateral relation of the states and tries to assess the implication of the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam for bilateral relations of the two countries. It further identifies the challenges and prospects of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam construction process. On the basis of the nature and objective of the problem, this research applied qualitative research methods, using both primary and secondary sources. The research has been mainly based on secondary resources and related literature. Based on using this methodology, the main findings of the study revealed that biased historical writings, Egyptians' perception towards the Nile River, biased media reports, unsound decisions of Egyptian elites for the sake of power, and Egypt's role in blocking finance for the project through persuading international creditors, as well as their persistent campaign to maintain presumed hegemony on Nile water share, were the major challenges affecting the bilateral relation of the two states. Therefore, Egyptian perception that comes from communication and trust and the lack of commitment of leaders are the major challenges that affect the bilateral relation of the two states in relation to the GERD.*

**Keywords:** The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, Challenges, Bilateral, Egypt, Ethiopia, Prospects.

## Introduction

The politics of the Nile have greatly influenced the Ethio-Egyptian relations since a very long time ago. The Nile River has served as the source of tension and mistrust in the two countries' relations. It is rightly outlined that deep distrust, suspicion, misunderstanding, and even political and military confrontations have characterized their relations throughout history (Ibrahim, 2012). As history reveals, Egypt under the leadership of Khedive Ismail Pasha had encroached into northern Ethiopia to control the source of the Blue Nile as a colony in 1875 and 1876. However, Emperor Yohannes IV, the then emperor of Ethiopia, had successfully taken victories on such invasions at Gundet and Gura, respectively.

Habtamu (2011) noted that, from that historical juncture on, the form of the two countries' hostilities converted from direct military attack to serious diplomatic and proxy interventions. The whole effect is that it created a shadow of mutual suspicions,

hostile perceptions, conspiracy theories, and deeply entrenched emotions between the peoples of Egypt and Ethiopia. The point at the heart of such hostilities is Egypt has been overall dependent on the Nile, which emanates, mainly, from Ethiopia. Because of this fact, the foreign policies of Egypt have centered on the objective of securing the continuous consumption of Nile waters [1]. This reality has made the issue of sharing of Nile waters an intolerable phenomenon and compelled Egypt to secure its hegemony over the Nile. The colonial agreements have been the main legal basis for Egypt in an attempt to perpetuate its hegemony over the Nile waters. The 1929 agreement was made between Egypt and Great Britain (which had colonized most of the upper riparian countries), and it prohibited any kind of activities on the Nile River and its branches that may affect the interest of Egypt (Oestigaard, 2012).

The 1929 agreement offered Egypt the upper hand on the Nile waters. The 1959 agreement was also concluded between Egypt

and Sudan for the full utilization of the Nile waters (ibid). Accordingly, the agreement allocated 55.5 and 18.5 billion cubic meters to Egypt and Sudan, respectively (Tedros, 2014). This agreement neither involved upstream countries during the negotiation nor allowed them to use water in any amount. Generally, these segregating colonial agreements put upstream countries out of the game of Nile waters utilization, without giving concern to where the waters originate [2]. Upstream countries benefited minimally from Nile waters. Most importantly, Ethiopia, which is the contributor of 86% of Nile waters, has used very little, if not nothing, thereof. Conversely, Egypt successfully utilized the Nile waters for a long time using such discriminatory colonial agreements as a legal ground. Put differently, it advanced the historical and natural rights that colonial powers gave her over the Nile waters (Yacob, 2012).

Egypt has contributed nothing to the total volume of the Nile, but it has taken the lion's share of the Nile's benefit and is firmly convinced of monopolizing it (ibid). To this end, it has developed a strict commitment to the 1929 and 1959 colonial agreements and its historical status quo. However, in recent times, it has encountered great challenges on the part of upstream countries. Climate change, population growth, and poor water management, among others, are the factors that compelled upstream countries to come together to discuss how to use the Nile for sustainable development of the area (Tedros, 2014). In view of that, the upper riparian countries appear to be highly concerned with the fair and equitable utilization of Nile waters, challenging the firm position of Egypt to unilaterally enjoy as well as administer the river [3-6]. Here comes the clear contention between the need to maintain the status quo by Egypt and the need for cooperation on the river by upstream countries. In 1999, the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) was established by 10 riparian countries (including Eritrea as an observer) with the aim of bringing sustainable development to riparian countries by using the Nile equitably by signing an agreement that includes upstream countries (Yacob, 2012).

Accordingly, riparian countries came up with the Comprehensive Framework Agreement (CFA) in 2009, and the majority of upstream countries signed it, namely Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, and Burundi, while Egypt and Sudan strongly oppose it (Michel, 2012). Following the disagreement of downstream countries and the failure of other upstream countries to sign it, Yacob (2012) noted that countries continue to resort to unilateral measures within their jurisdiction. The most notable example in this respect is the inauguration of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). This new development by upstream countries goes against Egyptians' interest of unilateral utilization of the Nile waters [7]. Egyptian hegemony over the Nile waters was put at risk as the upstream countries began to take measures on Nile waters in their territories.

Since 2011, Ethiopia has launched the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. As a result, the reactions from the two downstream countries (Egypt and Sudan) were totally variegated in a way that Sudan avowed and reaffirmed its support whilst Egypt vociferously opposed the project by alleging that the dam would infringe her historical water share rights. Political tensions and war threat interactions become rampant between Egypt and Ethiopia. Later, the signature of the 2015

tripartite agreement and perpetual water diplomacy replenished their interaction. Hence, hydro-political relations among these states fluctuate from a cooperation scenario at one time to a conflictive situation at another time. That is why this study is aimed at clarifying the challenge between Ethiopia and Egypt in relation to the Renaissance Dam [8, 9].

## Material and Methods

This part presents the description of the study area, research design, selection of research participants, sources of data, methods of data collection, sampling techniques, data recording, transcription and data processing, method of data analysis, and ethical considerations.

### Description of the Study Area

The study covers challenges and prospects of Ethio-Egypt relations with respect to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Ethiopia is in northeast Africa and located at 30 and 14.80 latitude and 330 and 480 longitude in the eastern part of Africa, lying between the Equator and the Tropic of Cancer. It is bounded by Eritrea and Djibouti on the east and southeast by Somalia, on the south by Kenya, on the southwest by South Sudan, and on the northwest by Sudan. Its total area by square kilometers is 110000 (42000 sq mi) with a total population of 108,964,161 (www.Ethiopia; geography, available online). Egypt is in the northeastern corner of Africa between latitudes 21° and 31° north and longitudes 25° and 35° east, with a total area of 1,001,450 km<sup>2</sup> and a total population of 100,364,081. It is bordered in the north by the Mediterranean Sea, in the east by the Gaza Strip, Israel, and the Red Sea, in the south by Sudan, and in the west by Libya. Egypt is predominantly desert and arid and semi-arid rangelands [10]. The distance from Egypt to Ethiopia is 2,207 km (www.Egypt; population, available online).

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is a major infrastructure project on the Blue Nile in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, in northwest Ethiopia, about 50 km from the Sudanese border. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is of great interest to the regions of North, East, and Central Africa, as the Nile River poses a number of national security challenges, albeit different, for individual states [11, 12]. Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam design specifications are a length of 1800 meters and a height of 170 meters, with a total volume of 10 million cubic meters. At 6000 MW, it will be the largest hydroelectric power plant in Africa and the tenth largest dam in the world (The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam fact sheet online).

### Research Design

The study used qualitative research design as the problem of the study fits. Selection of the method is based on the nature and objective of the problem that can help to get best understanding of the research statement and with time considerations. Purposive sampling methods were employed, the ground for choosing this sampling procedure comes from the nature of the issue and the type of data required. The adoption of qualitative research which allows purposive sampling of key informants became appropriate because the relevant information that can provide meaning full information on the issue under study accessed [13]. In depth interview (unstructured) as primary sources of data and the secondary data sources was used for the study.

As stated in the above, the study employed entirely a qualitative approach of research. This approach consists of a set of interpretive practices that make the situation visible. Qualitative research allows a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. It also favored methods like unstructured interviews, focus groups, textual analysis and content analysis. Considering the subject of this study which needs wording and interpretation, it could focus on descriptive approach of qualitative research. Data were obtained mostly from secondary sources such as books, Journal Articles, Reports, Archives and Internet sources could be analyzed using qualitative approach. With respect to the subject of the study it could be difficult to depend primarily on first hand data as a source, since it is at large a desk works [14-16]. Therefore, the researcher believes that it is reasonable to focus on secondary data to meet the intended objectives of the study.

### Selection of Research Participants

In-depth unstructured interviews were conducted among selected experts from relevant Ministries and offices in Ethiopia. These are Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Electricity, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopian foreign policy and strategic studies, Office of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, and Egypt Embassy. In-depth interviews were conducted with those experts concerning challenges and prospects of Ethio-Egypt relation with respect to Grand Ethiopian renaissance dam.

### Sources of the Data

For collecting required data both primary and secondary sources was used to come up with more comprehensive understanding on the questions raised in this proposal. The instruments that used for data collection was interview [17]. Interview is selected because this helps to get some facts related to the issue under the study from top official that are there to implement strategies and policy. In depth interview (unstructured) as primary sources of data and the secondary data sources was used for the study. Based on the nature of interview general questions was prepared and attached in appendix-I.

### Primary Data

In order to strengthen aspects of the data provided by the sec-

ondary source, an interview was used in this study. In depth interview (unstructured) as primary sources of data was used for the study. In depth interviews using open questions were the major instrument of data collection because open ended questions were providing an opportunity to follow up questions from the responses of key informants. The tool that was used to select key informants is purposive sampling technique in which key informants are selected on the basis of certain predefined purposes [18]. The grounds for choosing this sampling procedure comes from the nature of the issue to be studied and the type of data required. The study, as noted elsewhere in this proposal, deals with analyzing Ethio-Egypt relations and challenges, which require more of qualitative investigation on the basis of in-depth interviews. In line with it, the adoption of qualitative research which allows purposive sampling of key informants becomes appropriate because the relevant informants that can provide meaningful information on the issue under study [19]. Accordingly, the following tools of data collection have been used to obtain the required data.

### Interview

Interviews are oral questions that are asked by the interviewer in order to obtain information from the interviewee for a specific purpose. An in-depth interviewing technique is used by the researcher as the main primary data collection tool since it offered the opportunity to seize rich, descriptive data about people's perceptions and attitudes towards the subject in question. Interview processes can be unstructured, semi- structured or structured. For this research, the structure of the interview that was employed was unstructured which was coupled with a series of open-ended questions. This has allowed the researcher to get more information as it requires a response with depth and has length [20]. The researcher prepared asets of interview questions that were used for interviews the Grand renaissance dam offices, Embassy of Egypt, office of boundary and Trans-boundary Rivers, Ministry of Water, irrigation and Electricity, Ethiopian government policy makers and experts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia. In total there were 6 informants that were chosen purposively for the interviews. Accordingly, there are target informants that researcher interviewed in an easily understandable way in a tabular form in the following table.

**Table 1:** Data sources the Study Used

Primary data sources			
I No	Interview		
	Key informants	Organization	Position and Responsibility
1	Key informant one	The Grand renaissance dam offices	Members of national council of GERD
2	Key informant two	Office of boundary and Trans- boundary Rivers	Boundary and trans boundary water resource expert
3	Key informant three	Ministry of Water, irrigation and Electricity	Ministry of water
4	Key informant four	Experts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia	Directorate director of trans boundary and resource Management.
5	Key informant five	Ministry of Water, irrigation and Electricity	Trans boundary expert
6	Key informant five	Embassy of Egypt	Office of human resource

## Secondary Data

The study used a qualitative method of data collection and analysis. Accordingly, secondary sources under the custody of libraries of Hawassa University (libraries of law and social science) were used as references [21]. In addition, various documents and recordings like book publications, speeches, internet resources, electronic media outlets, newspapers, articles, journals, academic works, conference papers, and official and administrative reports covering the Ethio-Egypt relation and challenge were used as references

## Method of Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was the interview. The interview was prepared to collect information from key informants. Six key informants were selected purposively and interviewed. The information collected was regarding challenges and prospects of Ethio- Egypt bilateral relations concerning the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which has been gathered from experts [23-25]. Relevant secondary data was also collected from the custody of the library of Hawassa University and internet sources.

**Table 2:** Target organizations and numbers of interviewee

No	Target organizations	Types of interview	Numbers of interview
1	The Grand renaissance dam offices	Unstructured interview	1
2	Office of boundary and Trans- boundary Rivers	Unstructured interview	1
3	Ministry of Water, irrigation and Electricity	Unstructured interview	1
4	experts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia	Unstructured interview	1
5	Ministry of Water, irrigation and Electricity	Unstructured interview	1
6	Egypt Embassy	Unstructured interview	1

## Data Recording, Transcription and Data Processing

Data collected from primary and secondary sources through interviews of target population and secondary sources were analysed qualitatively. The interview was held on the willingness of key informants and the interview location. The researcher was used tape recorder and note- taking techniques to record the interviews. In order to make the data processing mechanism easy, the data obtained through interviews were transcribed in a written text. The empirical data collected were analysed after reducing, and conceptualizing the information. Data reduction is done at different levels that involve editing, categorizing and summarizing the data [27]. Cautions were taken not to lose significant information whilst reducing the data. After the analysis is made, the data will be interpreted in combination with secondary data, where applicable, so as to produce the intended document or a Master's thesis.3.1.8.1 Method of Data AnalysisThe interviews were conducted with the governmental officials at different level. Data collected were continuously interpreted as the nature of the data necessitates since qualitative research is inherently reflective.

The interview guidelines were designed to attempt to understand the views of the public officials about Ethio-Egypt relations and challenge in relation to the renaissance dam. The instruments

## Sampling Technique

This research has adopted a qualitative approach that has allowed the researcher to apply purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The purposive sampling technique is expected to allow the researcher to interview purposively selected informants who have experiences in the subject matter. This sampling technique has aided the researcher in interviewing informants; six were purposively selected. Snowball sampling was also applied for this research, as it made more information accessible for the researcher. For the interview, a total of six key informants were selected from the Grand Renaissance Dam offices, the Embassy of Egypt, the Office of Boundary and Transboundary Rivers, the Ministry of Water, Ethiopian government policy makers, and experts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia. These experts were chosen because of their expert knowledge of the study area. The interviews were guided by research questions that were organized by the researcher and have been attached as an appendix to the research paper [26].

were used interview guides in order to asses more information from the research participants and respond to the research question. For realization and successful accomplishment of the study, data collected from different primary and secondary sources was recorded, edited, organized, analyzed, interpreted and presented in relation to research questions.3.1.9 Ethical Considerations- This research paper has been taking into account some ethical issues that a researcher need to take into consideration [28-30]. The researcher has been kindly asking for the interviewee's consent to be included in his research, and also vowed to protect the anonymity of some informants on the subject matter whom they considered sensitive for their position. Since some misleading practices are not conventional in undertaking a research, the researcher did not forge or invent findings to meet researcher's or some audience's wishes. The researcher also did not abuse results to the advantage of certain individuals, groups or another. The researcher protects the privacy of the participants and offered this protection to all individuals involved in a study.

## Analysis on Challenges of Grand Renaissance Dam

The construction of the GERD on the Abay River is creates serious tension between Egypt, and Ethiopia. There is a fear in Egypt that the large storage capability of the dam will put control of valuable Nile water in the hands of Ethiopia. The major factor



for downstream concern is potential flow reduction and lack of control of the dam operation (Swain, 2013). Here one of the key informants at Ministry of water, Irrigation and Electricity stated that the main problem is, according to one key informant the inaccurate perceptions that exist at the time [31, 32]. There is limited understanding of how the dam would affect downstream flows. To address these misconceptions a panel of experts (the Nile Tripartite Committee, NTC) has been appointed to further investigate the situation. Accordingly, In September 2011, months after GERD construction announced, the establishment of a trilateral team of experts from Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan was announced to assess the impact of the dam on the Nile flow. The Ethiopian initiated tripartite Technical Commission, mandated to examine the potential impacts of the construction of the Ethiopia dam on downstream countries (Zeray, 2013: 6). It is possible to categorize the challenges in to historical and challenges during construction of the dam for detailed analysis [33].

## **Challenges and Implications of the Dam**

### **Challenges of the Dam**

There are several challenges about the dam, so it is hard to isolate one as the biggest. Most of the challenges about Renaissance have to do with technical issues and perception that comes from communication and trust. , those issues are definitely workable issues given the right attention and flexibility. There were challenges in building a common understanding on the use of equitable water. Ethiopia and Egypt failed to build confidence on one another for a number of decades. Rather, the suspicion between the two countries was rife, which was aggravated by the wrong path Egypt had been following in connection to the Nile Basin (Tesfaye, 2016) [34]. Among the challenges rhetorical records about the Nile by Herodotus and other writers were main challenges which aggravated by the wrong path Egyptian had been followed for centuries and mislead the people and leadership of Egypt. The writings of scholars, sayings of myths, discourses of politicians, leaders, historical agreements of water utilization which only favors for Egypt and later in some amount for Sudan created the wrong psychological perception in downstream countries, about Nile River water. For instance, Herodotus attested this fact stating that —Egypt is the gift of the Nilel.

Nile means everything for Egyptians. Rhetorical records written by Herodotus and other writers have strong impact on the perception of the people. This is because of the fact that Egyptians inherited wrong trends from the past. Written sources were used to mislead the people that the entire Nile Water belongs to Egypt [35, 36]. They propagated that no country has the right to develop any project on the Nile River including Ethiopia through which more than 85 percent of the Nile waters passes (Horn Affairs, 5, 2015). On the other hand, Media were also another challenge which brings strong suspicion between the bilateral relations of the two states. The challenges of the construction of the Dam especially from advocates where they claimed that the downstream societies especially Egypt will be affected and the water level will decrease significantly [37]. Most of the informants admitted that there were challenges especially the pressure from the media and the advocacy groups. Here one of the key informants at ministry of foreign affairs stated that the main challenge for Ethio-Egypt relations with regard to Grand Ethiopian Renaissance dam is misperceptions and mis information.

The drivers of the change were the media and influential citizens (interview, 2019). According to (Tesfaye, 2016), the people heard good news about the relations of the two countries at a certain time and bad news at another time. There were ups and downs in ensuring genuine partnership, confidence and cooperation. This is because of the fact that Ethiopians and Egyptians inherited wrong trends from the past. Previously, Egyptian governments used to mislead the people that the entire Nile Water belongs to Egypt and the Sudan that no other country has the right to use the water [38-41]. The Media misperception and Attitude of Many Egyptian politicians still cling to the old attitudes, it is usual that some media, scholars and politicians have been sticking to the colonial thinking that goes arguing Egypt is the only country that should be utilized the Nile Waters. That monopolistic thinking remained for a centuries and Egypt has been utilizing the Waters almost alone having given a gift of about 18 cubic meters to the Sudan. In the real sense, the Sudan was not equally beneficiary with Egypt based on the colonial treaty [42].

Here one of the key informants at Grand renaissance dam office stated, If the people get enough information that could encounter the propaganda of some of the groups and the media in Egypt that have been disseminating unfounded stories about the impacts of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, there will be better cooperation between the two people (interview, 2019). Most of the challenges about Renaissance have to do with perception that comes from communication and trust. The Ethiopian government has good intentions with this project, but it seems that inside and outside of Ethiopia this is not well understood [43-45]. The Ethiopian government could do a better job of communicating their intentions and actions to the greater international community in a way that reflects what they are actually doing. Because knowing the benefits are clearly may improve misunderstandings between Egypt and Sudan. Clear communication would benefit Ethiopia greatly in this project (Gemechis, 2014). According to (Mahlet, 2016), there were rumors from the media that these two groups will be highly affected by the Dam which was hard to convince them of otherwise.

One of the Key Informants stated that it is easy to convince governments because the discussion will be based on principles and it will be scientific. And so it is easier to come to an understanding with the government and start working jointly towards development. Convincing societies on the other hand is not as easy as convincing a government which can be seen as one of the challenges. In this case, advocacy instrument of Public diplomacy is about giving information through people to people exchange is decisive. It is in general the creation of a public voice for foreign policy by which decisions and events are explained to foreign publics to mobilize their consent or blunt their criticism (Nicholas, 2009). According to one of key informant from ministry of water, Irrigation and electricity Lack of political commitments of leadership on Egypt sides also exacerbated the misunderstanding among the people [46]. Lack of Political Commitment were another challenge closely related to the existing tension is the lack of political will and commitment on both states in reducing such tensions and work towards cooperation. According to this key informant this led the Ethiopia people to judge Egyptians as if they stand against development in Ethiopia.

In the same token, Egyptians to consider Ethiopians as if they have been attempting to block the entire Nile Water and leave Egyptians in drought. Previous Egyptian governments are used to misleading the people that the entire Nile Water belongs to Egypt and Sudan that no other country has the right to use the water. They propagated that no country has the right to develop any project on the Nile River including Ethiopia which contributes more than 85 per cent of the Nile waters [47]. In June 3, 2013, the deposed Egyptian president, Mohammed Mursi, convened a meeting with Egyptian dignitaries to discuss Ethiopia's Renaissance Dam and what Egypt's response should be—We do not want an embassy in Ethiopia, we need a task force in Ethiopia...political, intelligence, to deal in all aspects with the Ethiopian reality, we must have a role in it. ...there must be interference in national affairs... If we don't achieve a result with change, we can with pressure.... the third team is military...!—President Mohamed Morsi quoted in his speech at the Popular Conference on Egypt's Rights to Nile Water: —If our share of Nile water decreases, our blood will be the alternative! (Nouran El- Behairy2013).

Any action that would endanger the waters of the Blue Nile will be faced with a firm reaction on the part of Egypt, even if that action should lead to war! (AnwarSadat, former President of Egypt)In the same token, previous Ethiopian governments were propagating as if Egyptians don't want to see the prosperity and development of Ethiopia [48]. Moreover, they failed to consider the case diplomatically rather they had been propagating as if Egypt has been attempting to jeopardize efforts to develop any project on the Nile River. Using their water resources, the two countries will develop together if there is political commitment and goodwill (Tesfaye, 2016:2).According one key informants Pre-existing agreements: the preexisting agreements in the basin, namely the 1929 and 1959, agreements present multiple challenges. For one thing these agreements do not recognize the right of all riparian states, but only that of Egypt's and Sudan's. In another way these agreements present an impassable hurdle to the use, protection and conservation of the waters of the Nile. The pre-existing water agreements had been a major point of divergence and contention between Ethiopia and Egypt as well as downstream and upstream countries.

Accordingly the 1929 Anglo-Egyptian Agreement , Egypt and Sudan allowed to utilize 48 and 4 billion cubic meters respectively and the flow of the Nile during January 20 to July 15 (dry season) would be reserved for Egypt, Egypt kept the right to monitor the Nile flow in the upstream countries, Egypt assumed the right to undertake Nile river related projects without the consent of upper riparian states, and assumed the right to veto any construction projects that would affect her interests adversely (Swain, 2008: 26).The Objective of the 1959 agreement was to gain full control and utilization of the annual Nile flow between Egypt and Sudan and created the legal foundation for allocating water between the two countries before building the Aswan High Dam (Knobelsdorf, 2011:23). In addition, the stipulated purpose indicates an interest in solidifying future claims to the waters —in order to regulate their benefits and utilize the Nile waters in a manner which secures the present and future requirements of the two countries [49].

## 6 The Future Prospects of Ethio-Egyptian Relations

The bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Egypt should never be confined only to the Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Dam (GERD) because the two countries have a lot of possibilities to explore and a huge potential for cooperation. Ethiopia and Egypt's relations become renewed after much turbulence, mistrust,,alona bellicosebellicose political climate tgrippedve gripped the two African countries for decades. It seems that Egypt has reversed its old policy and enhanced a friendly foreign policy towards Ethiopia. (Ghelawdewos, 201gripped5, p.4).p. 4).Following the coming into power of Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in Egypt, the two cp. 4).ountries"countries' relations scountries'eemin-seemseem to be to bening into a better direction. Discussions on issues of common concern between governments of the two countries have come to be more regular and more frequent com-what theyind to what they hadn in the previous times (MoFA, 2015). By the month of June 2014, both ountries"countries' leaders ccountries'ould met meettogether at the African Union summit in Malabo anmeetd discussdiscussed bigripped rdiscusse- gional, regional,and continental issues issues,thereby showing an important shift in the two cissues,ountries"countries' relations on the Nile issue (Getnet, 2014).

Similarly, the coming into power Ministercountries' Ministerr (Dr) Abiy Ashownas showed diplrelationselation with Egypt. The Premier's visit that aimed to address the Egyptian people about the very notion of the construction of the Dam could help the Egyptian people to balance all the nepropagandaagandahasat have been infoncted to them by some irresponsible officials and media in that country [50]. It is believed that the people in Egypt would know the reality from the first source and will cooperate with Ethiopia for mutual benefit and development.Furthermore, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed made the historical visit to Eritrea tothe relationshiponship between the two countries and reconcile the two nations after more than 20 years of war and desolation. He further anns that the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries and the openembassies and- assies, resumption of direct flights between the two countries. He also said the two counes "we will solve the other little issues as we go along and I will serve as Eritrean foreign minister if the president allows."

Prime Minister Abiy also added that the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea is artificial, and it is the second issue for us (Nyabola, 2018). 4.6.1 Possibility Scenario Northeastern Africa's population growth is expected to more than double by 2050, whichIn conjunction with climate change, increasing water scarcity and food insecurity have produced many daunting Malthusian speculations about inevitable conflicts over Nile water as an essential resource. These speculators include influential personalities such as former UN Secretary-General (1992–96) Boutros Boutros Ghali, who warned that —The next war in our region will be over the waters of the Nile, not politics. Similarly, the late Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat declared, —The only matter that could take Egypt to war again is water!; and finally, both former and current General Secretaries of the UN, Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon, warned in 2008 about the conflict-generating potential of water scarcity (Goitom, 2014:30).The conflict over the Nile also has important symbolic and sentimental aspects. Security and geopolitics aside, the Nile is for the Egyptian people much more than just a river—it holds a special and entrenched role in the

history and identity of the nation. Ethiopians, too, see the river in a symbolic light: their incapacity thus far to utilize the Nile waters epitomizes the nation's political and economic underdevelopment. Hence, as the name implies, the GERD represents a leap out of the dark ages of underdevelopment and national humiliation. For the leaders of both nations, the dispute over the Nile is therefore a political minefield where one slight mistake or misunderstanding might constitute domestic political suicide. In Egypt, politicians and violent public protesters have ferociously been demanding that their government stop Ethiopia from constructing the GERD by any means necessary [51].

In June 2013, after Ethiopia began diverting part of the Nile in dam preparations, Egyptian politicians—unaware of the fact that their debate was being broadcast on live TV— suggested to former President Morsi that Egypt should either conduct a military attack on Ethiopia or sabotage it by funding armed rebels operating in its territories. Morsi eventually bowed to popular pressure and warned Ethiopia that he considered—all options open to protect Egypt's interests in the Nile. More recently, Egyptian presidential candidate Mortadar Mansour reiterated this threat, even going one step further than Morsi to state that he will— order the use of military force against Ethiopia if it continues construction of the GERD.

### Scenarios for Bilateral Relations

According to (Tadesse, 2015) public diplomacy is important to build trust and fraternal relations between the peoples of Ethiopia and Egypt. Public diplomacy is defined as a government's process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies. Public diplomacy has five alternative solutions in constructing trusts between the two countries, particularly, for the mutual utilization of the Nile water. These instruments are listening, advocacy, cultural exchange, citizen exchange, and international broadcasting system (Nicholas, 2009:17). These are the major instruments of public diplomacy that would playing a great roles in creating trusts among the two countries that water is life to Egypt which is exactly the same thing electricity to the life of the Ethiopians (Molla, 2019:30)

### Listening

Listening is about state's attempt to manage the international environment by collecting data about publics and their opinions overseas and using that data to redirect its policy or its wider public diplomacy approach accordingly (Nicholas, 2009). First, the need to listen as well as to send messages is a recurrent theme amongst public diplomacy practitioners and it is a two-way process in public diplomacy practice. Listening leads to a greater understanding of how a country is perceived by those it seeks to influence and with whom it wishes to build, or rebuild, a relationship of trust (Foreign Affairs of Canada, 2006). In this regard according to (Endalkachew, 2016), Ethiopia should listen the idea, interests, and policies what Egyptian has been advocating on the Nile water [52]. On the other hand, Egyptian should listen the idea, interest and policy what Ethiopia has been advocating on the Nile water. Listening needs commitments and understanding while information's are disseminated from different directions (ibid). As here it is stated, listening is important for Ethiopia and Egypt to reframing its policy and point out that gap

which disturb the relations between the two countries as well as it is central to both countries to advocate their ideas, interests and policies on the Nile water (GERD) by referring one to another advocating on the Nile water.

Beyond this, the two countries must create an understanding about the alarming population growth and climate change that may disturb the relation between the two states naturally. Therefore, the two countries should create listening atmosphere to come up with cooperative mutual utilization of the Nile water by avoided unilateral use of the Nile water. If Ethiopia and Egypt have good atmosphere of listening with each other, the threat and insecurity can be avoided which disturb the two countries relations directly or indirectly; common legal framework can be achieved by identifying the gaps what the previous agreements have. In addition to this, rootless misinformation's that are advocating by some Medias and politicians about the GERD project are avoided through public diplomacy instruments of listening. Listening is, therefore, an indispensable step at this stage, as it can provide an invaluable insight into the prevalent attitudes, interests, as well as general beliefs of the wider public (Osipova, 2012) [53].

### Advocacy

Advocacy is about states attempt to manage the international environment by undertaking an international communication activity to actively promote a particular policy, idea or that actor's general interests in the minds of a foreign public. Today this includes embassy press relations (frequently the hard end of policy promotion) and informational work (which can be somewhat softer and less angled to hard and fast policy goals) (Nicholas, 2009). According to Endalkachew), If people know who you are they are not going to hate you and a public diplomacy is a tool of changing the negative attitude of a foreign public upon you. And advocacy should use facts to credibility by others. For instance, the advocacy of Ethiopia on the GERD must be based on truth and transparency (Endalkachew, 2016). This is to mean, if the Egyptian knows the reality what Ethiopia has, what Ethiopia wants and what Ethiopia doing on the Nile water in clear manner, they are not going to hate Ethiopians and they can try to cooperate with Ethiopians without giving their ear to some improper analysis of media and politicians. On the other hand, the Egyptian Should advocates its idea, interest and policy by understanding what Ethiopia has, need and doing on the Nile water (Ibid). In this case, advocacy instrument of public diplomacy is about giving information through people-to-people exchange is decisive. It is in general the creation of a public voice for foreign policy by which decisions and events are explained to foreign publics to mobilize their consent or blunt their criticism (Nicholas, 2009).

### Cultural Exchanges

Cultural exchange is about state's attempt to manage the international environment through making its cultural resources and achievements known overseas and/or facilitating cultural transmission abroad (Nicholas, 2009). Accordingly, Ethiopia and Egypt have been conducting cultural relations in a form of festivals and exhibitions as well as they have cultural agreements. For example, in 2014, Ethiopia was organized a photo expiation in Addis Ababa and Egyptians were the major participant and,



in the meantime, Egyptians were also organized a cultural exhibition and Ethiopian were the major participants. In this regard Ethiopia and Egypt have been exchanging values through cultural activities and cultural exchanges (Mola, 2019:4).

### **Citizen Exchange**

Citizen exchange is about state's attempt to manage the international environment by sending its citizens overseas and reciprocally accepting citizens from overseas for a period of study and/or acculturation. In this regard, Ethiopia and Egypt could, therefore, cooperate in health and education. Egyptian Universities are internationally well-known Universities and Ethiopian students could get train in Egypt and vice-versa (Tesfaye, 2016). Moreover, citizen exchange is central for building relationships with the international community and, as citizen contacts may transcend political difficulties, it is a useful form of diplomacy when relations between countries are problematic and official contacts have been frozen [54]. Citizen diplomacy uses instruments such as academic grants and exchanges, visitor programs, twinning activities, 'business for public diplomacy' initiatives, and sports and cultural activities. In this regard, Ethiopia and Egypt have citizen exchanges in terms of education, religions, traders and Diaspora citizens. For example, there are scholarship exchanges between Ethiopia and Egypt. There are Ethiopian students in Cairo and there are Egyptian students in Addis Ababa. These groups have important tasks for facilitating public diplomacy practices between Ethiopia and Egypt. The Ethiopian students can articulate the facts that existed in Ethiopia on the other hand the Egyptian students can give the facts about their country (ibid.p.123).

### **International Broadcasting**

International broadcasting (IB) is about state's attempt to manage the international environment by using the technologies of radio, television and Internet to engage with foreign publics. International broadcasting by its nature requires a distinct set of resources and skills. While it is possible to see broadcasting as an extension of both advocacy and cultural diplomacy, the special ethical considerations associated with journalism have often set international broadcasters on their own path, and in any case provide a formidable centrifugal force toward some form of independence or autonomy (Nicholas, 2009, p.36). In this regard, the media in both Ethiopia and Egypt play central role in realizing this new phase of relation in which the two people observe a hope of ray and relations. This should play great roles in creating awareness among the two peoples that water is life to Egypt which is exactly the same thing electricity to the life of the Ethiopians. International broadcasting work as practiced by states can overlap with all the other PD functions including listening in the audience research functions, advocacy/information work in editorials or policy broadcasts, cultural diplomacy, exchanges and others broadcasters. As one of the key informants at from foreign ministry outlined that media should promote the reality of the dam, it is necessary to use media in both countries (Ethiopia and Egypt) in a responsible way as regards to the developments taking place in their relations (Interview, 2019). Media to help to create healthy relation among the two countries. Therefore, the role of the public diplomacy through international broadcasting system is to exchange accurate, trustful, and factual information between Ethiopia and Egypt (The Reporter, 2019).

### **Conclusion**

The study revealed that the following are major challenge affecting the bilateral relations of the two countries with regard to the Grand Ethiopian renaissance dam. Accordingly, biased historical writings and individual narrations which misleads Egyptians perception towards the Nile river, biased media reports, unsound decision of Egyptian elites for the sake of power, security challenges and Egypt's role in blocking finance for the project through persuading international creditors as well as their persistent campaign to maintain presumed hegemony on Nile water share were the major challenge affecting the bilateral relation of the two states. Based on this finding the research indicates that the writings of scholars, sayings of myths, discourses of politicians, leaders, historical agreements of water utilization which only favors for Egypt and later in some amount for Sudan created the wrong psychological perception in downstream countries, about Nile River water.

For instance, Herodotus attested this fact stating that —Egypt is the gift of the Nile. Nile means everything for Egyptians. Rhetorical records of sources written by Herodotus and other writers have strong impact on the perception of the people. This is because of the fact that Egyptians inherited wrong trends from the past. They propagated that no country has the right to develop any project on the Nile River including Ethiopia through which more than 85 percent of the Nile waters passes. The main challenge for Ethio-Egypt relations with regard to Grand Ethiopian Renaissance dam were misperceptions and Misinformation. The Media and Advocacy were another challenge which brings strong suspicion between the bilateral relations of the two states. The challenges of the construction of the Dam especially from advocates where they claimed that the downstream societies especially Egypt will be affected and the water level will decrease significantly. Because of these, both countries failed to build confidence on one another. The media has failures in working hard to ease conflicts and strengthen mutuality. The media should play their proper role in creating awareness among the two people that water is life to Egypt as the same time electricity is life to Ethiopia. Therefore, Irresponsible role of media, lack of political commitment and misapprehension towards one another are hindering factor for the bilateral relations between the states.

Generally speaking, there are challenges in building a common understanding on the use of equitable water. Ethiopia and Egypt failed to build confidence on one another for a number of decades. Due to the suspicion between the two countries was rife, which was aggravated by the wrong path Egypt had been following in connection to the Nile Basin. The aforementioned problems coupled with lack of political commitments of leadership on both sides exacerbated the misunderstanding among the people. This led the Ethiopia people to judge Egyptians as if they stand against development in Ethiopia. In the same token, Egyptians to consider Ethiopians as if they have been attempting to block the entire Nile Water and leave Egyptians in drought.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the finding of the research, this thesis recommends the following direction:

- Due the colonial era agreements and Egyptian hegemony the bilateral relation between Ethiopian and Egypt were un-



fair. It is important to effectively replace the colonial era agreements and promote regional stability while addressing the need for energy, development and population growth; first and foremost is by all the riparian states acknowledging that the colonial era agreements were not fair.

- Balancing the previously unjust and unfair utilization of the river by the dominant part and realizing mutual benefit in practice. Suspending the unfair and outdated agreement of 1959 and coming up with inclusive, participatory and just bilateral treaty. The secret that the interest of Egypt to use the water alone having ignored Ethiopia and other riparian countries is a serious concern to ten countries along the basin. These countries need to have fair and equitable water share. They need to benefit together from it as it is so huge to satisfy the need of every nation along the basin. Egypt has been to change her claim-based tradition on historical and natural rights over the Nile waters. Egypt needs to realize that the option of force and intimidation will not yield fruit. It can be convinced that force and intimidation should be replaced by negotiation and balancing the interests of all concerned.
- Both private and public media in Egypt and Ethiopia should work hard to ease conflicts and strengthen mutual ties between the peoples of the two countries. The media should play its proper role in creating awareness among the two peoples that water is life to Egypt which is exactly the same thing electricity to the life of the Ethiopians. They should also work hard to strengthen the people to people relations via consolidating the public diplomacy. The media in both countries should play crucial role in realizing this new phase of relation in which the two people observe a hope of ray and relations beyond the Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Dam.
- Diplomacy based on mutual benefits:-The two countries should work on mutual benefit concerning the use of the water dam and by doing they have to strengthen cultural diplomacy by changing the attitude of the people. Both should increase commitment to cooperation as well as create awareness about why cooperation is needed and disseminate knowledge to reduce misperceptions and fears.
- Abstaining oneself from taking part in acts of blocking technical supports and aids that both parties deserve.
- The GERD has the potential to provide mutual benefits to both Ethiopia and Egypt. Important for the development and regional economic integration which might bring social stability and economic prosperity in the region. The GERD can be a force of economic integration between the two countries by strengthening economic interdependence and interaction. It can strongly cherish common socio-economic benefits through greater integration of markets in terms of power, trade, infrastructure connectivity, tourism development and investment expansion. Egypt and Ethiopia could be economically integrated in this regard
- The GERD provides strategic opportunity for collaboration and shared benefit to further deepen the political, economic, socio-cultural and diplomatic engagement between the two states.
- Both Ethiopia and Egypt leaders should have to know that the GERD can be a force of economic integration between the two countries by strengthening economic interdependence and interaction.

- Both Egypt and Ethiopia need to work closely together to settle the disagreement that arises from the construction of GERD. The government of both states should have to conduct further studies on impacts of the grand renaissance dam. The two countries' experts need to come together to address the issues with their available data on the Nile water use and utilization. They need to develop systems which help working together based on agreed principles.

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