



Hydro-communication Efforts of Ethiopia for Equitable and Reasonable Utilization of Nile River Basin (1902-2023)

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ABSTRACT

Many studies have addressed the issue of Nile River Basin from the perspective of international water laws, hydro-politics, cooperation benefits and water resource management, but less is known about hydro-communication efforts of Ethiopia for equitable and reasonable utilization of the river basin. This study, therefore, examined hydro-communication efforts Ethiopia exerted and contributing factors in order to ensure equitable and reasonable utilization of Nile River Basin. The study is important for revealing communication efforts of Ethiopia to utilizing the basin and for constructing body of knowledge to hydro-communication as field of study. The study employed constructivism research perspective and qualitative research approach. Various major and pertinent documents such as international conventions of universal application in general and agreements, press releases, aide-memoire, initiatives, media outlets and remarks on Nile River Basin in particular were used as data source. The study used qualitative content analysis along with historicism as data analysis technique. Two-level games theory was used as lens in doing the analysis. The findings revealed that hydro-communication efforts of Ethiopia have shown remarkable progress from being completely reactive from 1902 to 1990s to being influential since 1999. National level efforts and global realities have collectively been the major factors for the progress. However, Ethiopia has experienced unprecedented pressure from Egypt and its allies especially since 2011. Hence, hydro-communication efforts of Ethiopia should be upgraded to strategic communication level to withstand the pressure and fully ensure equitable and reasonable utilization of the basin.

Keywords: hydro-communication, equitable and reasonable utilization

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1. INTRODUCTION

Hydro-communication, in its general sense, refers to communication with regard to water resources. When it comes to transboundary river basin, hydro-communication refers to a dynamic interactive process of sharing facts, ideas, thoughts and values on a river basin with the purpose of realizing a given mission. The general mission of hydro-communication on transboundary river basin is to ensure sustainable management which includes ensuring equitable and reasonable utilization of a given basin (Rieu-Clarke, 2012) and meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the next generations to meet their own needs from the basin (Camarinha-Matos et al., 2010). However, with no required attention given to hydro-communication, which is sine qua non for cooperation on transboundary river basins, cooperation for sustainable management of transboundary river basin which is complex, difficult and demanding (Atwan, 2018; Furlong, 2006; Yacob, 2007; Zeitoun & Warner, 2006) has become a much talked about issue.

Ensuring cooperation on Nile River Basin has been complex and problematic. Failure of the Nile Basin Initiative, which started in 1999, to reach basin-wide comprehensive agreement among riparian states and failure of the Washington Tripartite Negotiation to come to terms among Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt are indicatives of this. Nile River flows through eleven riparian states such as Ethiopia, Eritrea, Burundi, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan and Egypt before it empties into the Mediterranean Sea (Nile Basin Initiative, 2018). However, the downstream states, most notably Egypt has been enjoying monopoly over it (Waterbury, 2002; Zeitoun & Warner, 2006).

Despite the long-standing hydro-hegemony of Egypt over the Nile, Ethiopia has never stopped seeking for equitable and reasonable utilization of the Nile. Ethiopia has been seeking this because Nile River Basin means a lot to it. For instance, Nile River Basin in Ethiopia is source of daily livelihood for around 37.6 million Ethiopians (Nile Basin Initiative, 2016). Besides, 58% of the hydro power development potential of the basin is located in Ethiopia (Waterbury, 2002) where more than 65% of the population has no access to electricity (Yihdego, 2020). Moreover, the basin covers 32 % of Ethiopia (Yacob, 2007), and 70 % of water resources of Ethiopia which is water stressed country is found in the basin (USAID, 2021). Furthermore, half of the total 3.7

million ha that can be developed for irrigation but only 5-6 percent has been developed in Ethiopia is found in the basin (Awulachew et al., 2009). Equally important, Ethiopia's head waters provide 85% of the Nile water (Yacob, 2007) which implies that Ethiopia is by far the major source of Nile. As a result, Ethiopia has the right to utilize Nile River Basin on one hand, and it (Ethiopia) has no any other viable alternative except ensuring equitable and reasonable utilization of the basin on the other hand. Since ensuring equitable and reasonable utilization of Nile River Basin could bring about remarkable developments in Ethiopia, Nile River Basin is Ethiopia's strategic transformative natural resource that determines the fate of sustainable development of Ethiopia.

Many studies have addressed the issue of Nile River Basin from the perspective of international water laws (Dereje, 2010, 2018), hydro-politics (Abrham, 2004; Yacob, 2007), cooperation benefits (Abrham, 2004; Cascão, 2009; Salman, 2013) and water resource management (FAO, 2011; Whittington et al., 2005), but less is known about hydro-communication efforts on the river basin. Hence, this study intended to assess hydro-communication efforts Ethiopia exerted to ensuring equitable and reasonable utilization of Nile River Basin, associated factors and role of hydro-communication efforts to ensuring sustainable management of the river basin. This is important for theoretical and practical reasons. First, this knowledge can help to construct body of knowledge of hydro-communication as field of study. Second, this knowledge can help Ethiopian experts and politicians taking part in negotiations and discussions over Nile River Basin to be aware of the long way Ethiopia has come and take intervention measures accordingly.

2. METHODOLOGY

Constructivism, which argues that knowledge and meaning is generated and constructed from interactions or communication with others and with experiences through time (Creswell, 2013; Mogashoa, 2014), is taken as a research perspective. Consistent with constructivism, this research is based on two arguments: first argument is that physical or natural reality transcends into social reality through communication (Berger & Luckmann, 1991; Hiebert, 2014). The second argument consistent to constructivism is that looking at the whole of a phenomenon and

maintaining emphasis on processes is much more meaningful than singling out one variable causing the outcome with the aim to create order out of disorder(Keyton, 2018).

This research employs qualitative research approach. Secondary data was used as data source. Various major and pertinent documents such as international conventions of universal application in general and agreements, press releases, media outlets, aide-memoire, initiatives and remarks on Nile River Basin in particular were consulted. Qualitative content analysis, which is defined as any meaning creation effort from big qualitative documents(Patton, 2024) was employed as data analysis technique. Besides, in order to deal with progresses and associated factors as water is not a standalone issue(Furlong, 2006), the study adapted ‘historicism’. Historicism is considered in the sense that events are affected by historical changes happened at specific periods of time and places, and understanding them should be within their historical contexts (Reynolds, 1999). Hence, major global political realities and developments with regard to transboundary water resources at different times along with two-level games theory(Putnam, 2009) were used as lens to doing the analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Major Hydro-communication Instances and Efforts in 1902-2011

In a secular recorded history, hydro-communication effort of Ethiopia on Nile River Basin goes as far back as the 1902 when Emperor Menelik (1889-1913) tried to defend the river basin as national natural resource in the treaty between Great Britain (as colonial power of Sudan) and Ethiopia to regulate the frontier between Sudan and Ethiopia. The river basin was mentioned in Article III which reads as:

His Majesty, the Emperor Menelik II, King of Ethiopia, engages himself towards the Government of His Britannic Majesty not to construct or allow to be constructed, any work across the Blue Nile Lake Tana, or the Sobat which would arrest the flow of their waters into the Nile except in agreement with His Britannic Majesty's Government of the Sudan (Abrham, 2004, p. 64)

The Amharic version of this article reads as:

ጃንሆይ ዳግማዊ ምኒልክ ንጉሠ ነገሥት ዘኢትዮጵያ ከጥቁር ዓባይና ከባህረ ጣና ከሶባት ወንዝ ወደ ነጮ ዓባይ የሚወርደውን ውሃ ከእንግሊዝ መንግስት ጋር አስቀድሞ ሳይስማሙ ወንዝ ከዳር ዳር የሚደፍን ስራ እንዳይሰሩ ወይም ወንዝ የሚደፍን ስራ ለመስራት ለማንም ፈቃድ እንዳይሰጡ በዚህ ውል አድርገዋል(Hailu, 2013, p. 102)

Although Egyptian scholars and politicians still mention this communication instance as binding and Ethiopia could not make use of the river basin without the consent of downstream states, it could not be valid on multiple grounds. First, the Amharic version of the Article reads as ‘...ወንዝ ተዳር እዳር የሚደፍን ስራ... or its literal translation is “...shall not block the waters from bank to bank’ which Ethiopia has never done and is not doing”. Second, any treaty signed before 1919 is not valid unless it is sent to and registered by the United Nations Head Quarter (Hailu, 2013). Third, Ethiopia repudiated the 1902 Treaty on account of British recognition of the Italian “conquest” of Ethiopia(Kendie, 1999). Hence, Ethiopia’s hydro-communication on Nile River Basin made no concession to colonial powers.

Ethiopia wanted to construct a dam on Lake Tana’s outlet to the main ‘Abbay’ River, the main source of Nile in Ethiopia, and to sell the water to the British Government in Sudan or to their cotton corporations there (Yacob, 2007). The study of this project was done with the support of the American J.G. White Engineering Corporation in 1929-1934. However, this move of Ethiopia failed as a result of the opposition Great Britain expressed to United States of America (Hailu, 2013). Moreover, it was during this period that Great Britain (on behalf of Sudan) and Egypt as independent state signed the 1929 bilateral agreement.

Following its independence in 1956, Sudan needed the revision of the 1929 agreement. To this end, Sudan and Egypt started negotiation excluding Ethiopia. Opposing this bilateral move, Ethiopia, as a reaction, wrote a circular aide-memoire to the diplomatic community in Cairo in September, 1957(Hailu, 2013). The excerpt of the aid-memoire reads as below.

...Just as in the case of other natural resources on its territories, Ethiopia has the right and obligations to exploit the water resources of the Empire...for the benefit of the present and future generations of its citizens... in anticipation of the growth in population and its expanding needs... (Whiteman, 1964: 1011-13) cited in (Yacob, 2007, p. 100).

This circular aide-memoire was another major hydro-communication effort of Ethiopia. Then, it was at this period that hydro-communication of Ethiopia to defend national interest concerning Nile River Basin started to take institutional shape.

Either having been frustrated by Egypt and Sudan bilateral negotiation that excluded Ethiopia or having learned that utilizing the resource, as said in the aide-memoire, was the quest of the time,

Ethiopia gave a lengthy statement concerning Abbay (Blue Nile) Master Plan Study in November 1957. Excerpt of the statement reads:

We have already explained that the plans are under construction to utilize our rivers as an essential step in the development of agriculture and industry... Ethiopia may be prepared to share this tremendous God given wealth of hers with friendly nations neighbouring upon her, for the life and welfare of their people.... (Ethiopia Observer, Vol. II, No. 2, 1958: 93 cited in (Yacob, 2007, p. 101).

The sentence “*Ethiopia may be prepared to share this tremendous God given wealth of hers with friendly nations neighboring upon her, for the life and welfare of their people*” indicates how hydro-communication of Ethiopia on Nile River Basin was a move ahead of the time of the notion of equitable and reasonable use of transboundary river basins indicated in the 1966 Helsinki rule and in the 1997 UN Water Convention.

The Abbay (Blue Nile) Master Plan Study was launched aimed at accomplishing three missions: to provide a regulated water supply for a hydroelectric power station to be installed downstream on the Abbay River, to obtain a regulated supply of water for the planned irrigation schemes further downstream in the valley, and to use the results of the basin study as a modality of water sharing in an event of negotiation with downstream nations (Zewde, 2000: 9) cited in (Yacob, 2007). The Master Plan Study was knowledge production or working on information, which is one of the three elements along with institution and infrastructure, necessary for sustainable water management (CIWA, 2015). It could also be taken as the foundation for ideational power on the Nile River Basin.

It is not wrong to say that the aide- memoire, the statement concerning the Master Plan Study and the launching of the Master Plan made Egypt and Sudan anticipate the coming of a third party in the future and included how the third party should be treated in Article five of the 1959 agreement, though not applied yet. Article Five-General Provision-, number 2 reads:

As the riparian states, other than the two Republics, claim a share in the Nile waters, the two Republics have agreed that they shall jointly consider and reach one unified view regarding the said claims. And if the said consideration results in the acceptance of allotting an amount of the Nile water to one or the other of the said states, the accepted amount shall be deducted from the shares of the two Republics in equal parts, as calculated at Aswan (United Nations-Treaty series, 1963).

Egypt constructed the Aswan High Dam which impounds above 160 billion cubic meter water with the financial support gained from Soviet Union in 1960-1970. However, Egypt blocked the loan Ethiopia could secure from Africa Development Bank for the translation of the Master Plan Study into practice in 1964 (Hailu, 2013).

At the back of the Helsinki Rules, Article 5 which reads as “*Each basin State is entitled, within its territory, to a reasonable and equitable share in the beneficial uses of the waters of an international drainage basin*”(International Water law project, 1967), Egypt initiated ‘Hydromet’ in 1967. ‘Hydromet’ was a hydro-communication platform to which Ethiopia became an observing member in 1971. The forum was no more than being containment to the participants and isolation to Ethiopia strategy of Egypt to establish its hydro-hegemony. It should be noted that the Camp David Accord signed between Egypt and Israel in 1978 accentuated that US and Egypt established a close alliance(Zeng et al., 1994) which gave Egypt privilege to receive military and economic assistances annually on one hand and become regional power on the other hand (Kameri-Mbote, 2007).

Then, another incomplete, hydro-communication forum called ‘Undugu’ (“brotherhood” in Swahili language) came into being in 1983. Although its aim was to create cooperation in such common fields such as culture, environment, telecommunication, electric power, trade, and water resource development, it was used utilitarian compliance-producing mechanisms to maintain hydro-hegemony. Ethiopia which chose to take observer status, however, challenged ‘Undugu’ as having no legal standing and no competence to submit a plan of action for the Nile Basin (van der Kley & Reijerkerk, 2009). Likewise, Ethiopia challenged and criticized the basin-wide study made to evaluate the state of affairs following the agreement of the Nile Basin Ministers in 1986 for the need for a basin-wide integrated development. Criticizing this report for being biased as it mainly addressed the needs of additional water supply for the downstream countries, Ethiopia developed a proposal ‘Integrated Development of the Nile Basin’ which got acceptance by the Nile Basin delegation except Egypt and Sudan. This indicated Ethiopia’s strength of hydro-communication. It also showed cooperation of upper riparian states, but unfortunately, it didn’t show progress afterwards (Dereje, 2010). The factors that contributed to the initiation of ‘Hydromet’ and ‘Undugu’ by Egypt were Cold War global realities such as war for perceptions

or introduction of ‘soft’ power(Taylor, 2003), and, the increase of regional hegemony formation (Furlong, 2006)..

Technical Cooperation Committee for Promotion of the Development and Environment Protection of the Nile Basin, (TECCONILE) which was much better hydro-communication platform than its predecessors on Nile River Basin came in 1992 (Dereje, 2010). Immediately after it, the Framework for General Cooperation was signed between the Arab Republic of Egypt and Ethiopia in Cairo on 01 July 1993(Hailu, 2013). It was the first written consensual approach between the two states.

After four years of the Framework for General Cooperation agreement, the 1997 UN Water Course Convention known for principles of equitable and reasonable utilization which is constitutive and not causing significant harm which is interpretative put for vote. In the voting, 106 countries including Kenya and Sudan, 26 countries including Ethiopia, Egypt, Rwanda and Tanzania of the Nile Basin states, three countries (China, Turkey and Burundi), and 31 countries including Eritrea, Zaire (Congo) and Uganda of the Nile River Basin states were in favor, abstention, against and absentees respectively(Rieu-Clarke, 2012). Following the ratification of the convention by Viet Nam on 19 May 2014 as 35th country, the UN Water Course Convention was expected to enter into force in August 2014 after 90 days of the ratification (IISD, 2014). This was the biggest development in international water law so far.

Encouraged by this convention and the ideas and direction of debate obtained from the Nile Conferences which started in 1993 and staged every year on a rotation basis among the basin countries, nine of ten Nile Basin riparian states established the Nile Basin Initiative in 1999. Eritrea participated as an observer. Following its independence in 2011, the Republic of South Sudan has become the eleventh riparian state of the Nile River Basin. The motto of the Nile Basin Initiative is “Sustainable development of the river Nile for the benefit of all”; whereas, the shared vision of the Nile Basin Initiative is “To achieve sustainable socio-economic development through equitable utilization of, and benefit from, the common Nile Basin water resources”. The World Bank in collaboration with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the United Nations Development Program sponsored the establishment of the Nile Basin Initiative. This was a very huge breakthrough hydro-communication for upper riparian states,

most importantly for Ethiopia. This hydro-communication was application of empowered participation in which stakeholders participate in the process and joint analysis as equal partners (Mefalopulos, 2008).

The global environment changes such as relative weakening of bi-polar tension (East-West tension) resulted in the decrease of inter-state conflicts (end of proxy war) and, the treatment of water as economic good combined with decentralized management and full participation of stakeholders following the end of cold war in 1991(Furlong, 2006) were facilitating factors for the 1993 communication effort framed under ‘Framework for General Cooperation between the Arab Republic of Egypt and Ethiopia’ , the 1997 UN Water Course Convention, and the 1999 Nile Basin Initiative.

Despite the progresses made since the establishment of the Nile Basin Initiative, the Arab Republic of Egypt and Sudan failed to sign the Cooperative Framework Agreement because of their disagreement concerning what should be stipulated in Article 14 (b). Upper riparian states need Article 14(b) to read as (b) “Not to significantly affect the water security of any other Nile Basin State”; whereas, Egypt and Sudan needed it to read as (b) “Not to adversely affect the water security and current uses and rights of any other Nile Basin state” (Tadesse, 2016). As a result of this irreconcilable difference, Article 14 (b) is left blank to be taken care of by the Basin Commission when established in the future. The effort of upper riparian states was to leveling the playing field for equitable and reasonable utilization Nile River. The fact that Ethiopia signed the Cooperative Framework Agreement and got other upper riparian states signed it as well reflects the increase of Ethiopia’s bargaining power, the ability to set agenda and rule of the game (Cascão, 2009). The position of Egypt and Sudan, on the other hand, could not be taken as a surprise. Instead, it was consistent with the argument that cooperation between riparian states is difficult when there is already asymmetric gain (Furlong, 2006).

3.2. Major Hydro-communication Instances and Efforts in 2011-2023

2011 marked the launching of the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). The facilitating factors for Ethiopia to launching the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam were availability of Abbay (Blue Nile) Master Plan Study, extended

period of economic development and relative political stability of Ethiopia (International Crisis Group, 2019). Resorting to public finance mobilization strategy to fund the project and geographic power have also played priceless role.

Following the launching of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam construction, Egypt took a lot of wrong moves, but the most notable ones included the live broadcast of a discussion chaired by president Morsi in 2013 with Egyptian politicians drawn from seven political parties to intimidate to wage war on Ethiopia(Horn Affairs, 2013), stipulation of Article 44 of the 2014 constitution to securitizing the basin based on unfounded claim called Egypt's 'historic rights' on Nile, taking the matter to the Arab League time and again and appealing to the UN Security Council in July 2021..

Sticking to its principle of seeking equitable and reasonable utilization of the Nile River Basin, Ethiopia responded to all the wrong moves of Egypt accordingly. In other words, Ethiopia exerted hydro-communication efforts. For instance, what Ethiopia did on 17 February 2020 was intriguing as a major hydro-communication on Nile River Basin. When the Washington Tripartite Negotiation, which took place following the request of Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi made to Trump, then sitting president of US, to mediate the conflict over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam while Ethiopia wanted to keep the negotiations on a tripartite level(Widakuswara, 2019), was coming to be more of a problem than solution, Ethiopia held a consultative meeting with chief negotiators, stakeholders, technical experts and prominent Ethiopians presided by the Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed in the Prime Minister Office.

As disclosed by the Office of the Prime Minister, the meeting discussed the upcoming negotiations on the dam (borkena, 2020). Ethiopia reacted to the call of US administration to sign drafted agreement by saying 'more time is needed for domestic consultations. Put simply, by emphasizing the need for domestic consultations, Ethiopia technically declined to sign the drafted agreement. This move was consistent with two-level games theory which argues that when there are issues different states make dialogue on and interact, the states simultaneously engage in two-level interactions, domestic and international, and in the former, state demand and interest is formed, and in the latter, effort is exerted to get national interest win a space(Putnam, 2009). This move of Ethiopia was also congruent with the notion that communication of

stakeholders on transboundary river basin helps decision-makers to make functional, logical and rational decisions at the heart of the delicate cooperation between governments in transboundary water management issues(Willner, 2006). Furthermore, it is very consistent with the assertion that development projects and programs related to water require the participation and engagement of multiple stakeholders across sectors and all levels, and communication secures the participation, empowerment, and commitment of stakeholders(UN Water, 2013).

The Washington Tripartite Negotiation ridiculously went astray mainly because it was not based on any fundamental water management principle at the beginning, and the involvement of U.S. in the tripartite negotiation has increasingly shifted its role from being observer and advisor which was originally agreed up on to agreement drafter and commander, which were not part of its mandate. For instance, a statement titled “Statement by the Secretary of the Treasury on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam” released on 28 February 2020 by the U.S. Department of the Treasury in its last part said “*final testing and filling should not take place without an agreement.*” Ethiopia responded to the released statement as “*as the owner of the GERD, Ethiopia will commence filling the GERD in parallel with the construction of the dam, in accordance with the principles of equitable and reasonable utilization and not causing significant harm*” (Mehari, 2020).

Few days after the release of the statement by the U.S. Treasury Department, Egypt took the matter to the Pan-Arab bloc to win support for its position i.e. objecting the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam due to concerns it may significantly reduce its "traditional share" of the Nile waters. Then, supporting "Egypt's water rights on the Nile", the resolution of the Pan-Arab bloc made on 05 March 2020 accused Ethiopia of having taken "obstinate stance" on Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam(Addis, 2020). Ethiopia stoutly responded to this resolution through releasing statement, excerpt of which says that Ethiopia rejects the 'Resolution' in its entirety as the 'resolution' gives blind support to a member state without taking into consideration key facts at the center of the GERD talks(ENA, 2020).

Another case of hydro-communication effort to consolidate Ethiopia’s practical move was what was done by the end of July 2020. Accompanied by subsequent demonstrations organized by the diaspora in foreign countries and citizens in Ethiopia, Ethiopians around the globe held rallies

chanting slogans, “It is My Dam” and “One Voice for Our Dam”(Elias, 2021) when celebrating the first round dam filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). These rallies were also to propagating Ethiopia’s just cause with regard to utilizing the Nile River Basin to people around the world. Availability of instantaneous communication such as social media contributed a lot here. This is in line with the argument that while the state actors play commonly a key role in conducting hydro-diplomacy, civil society actors can significantly encourage diplomatic processes through their interaction(Keskinen & Rautavaara, 2014).

On 23 October 2020 while Trump, then sitting president of U.S., was announcing the opening of relations between Sudan and Israel, he, all of a sudden, gave a belligerent threat to Ethiopia concerning the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The excerpt of what Trump said was the following:

...I had a deal done and they broke the deal that they can't do that... and they will end up blowing up the dam and I said... “blow up that dam” ... we have cut off all payments and everything else to Ethiopia(Al Jazeera English, 2020).

The cut off payments which could affect up to nearly \$130 million in U.S. foreign assistance to Ethiopia was reported by Foreign Policy on 27 August 2020(Gramer, 2020).

Different bodies reacted to Trump’s belligerent threat. For instance, Minister of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gedu Andargachew reportedly said “*The incitement of war between Ethiopia and Egypt from a sitting US president neither reflects the longstanding partnership and strategic alliance between Ethiopia and the United States nor is acceptable in International Law governing interstate relations*”(Addis & Tih, 2020). Prime Minister Office of Ethiopia, on its part, expressed:

Occasional statements of belligerent threats to have Ethiopia succumb to unfair terms still abound. These threats and affronts to Ethiopian sovereignty are misguided, unproductive, and clear violations of international law. Ethiopia will not cave in to aggressions of any kind, nor do we give recognition to a right that is based on colonial treaties(ALJAZEERA, 2020)

When the second-round dam filling of GERD was approaching, Arab League held extraordinary meeting of Arab Ministers over the dam crisis in Doha on 15 June 2021 and released a resolution backing Egypt and Sudan. The resolution mentioned that Egypt and Sudan’s water security is an integral part of Arab national security. It also mentioned that the Arab League rejects any

measure that would undermine the water share of Egypt and Sudan, in reference to Ethiopia's planned second filling in July in the absence of an agreement between the three countries on the filling and operations of the dam. The resolution made call on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to intervene in the crisis. Moreover, in a press conference following the meeting Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit said that the Arab countries will press for the UNSC to hold an urgent session on the dispute. In response to the Arab League released resolution, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia released a statement expressing its "dismay" by the resolution and describing the Arab League as "misguided". Mentioning that Ethiopia "categorically rejects the futile attempt by the League of Arab States to dictate terms regarding the filling of GERD, the ministry said that because of the league's egregious support to the baseless claims of Egypt and Sudan regarding GERD, the Arab League has already squandered its opportunity to play a constructive role(El-Din M., 2021).

Following the appeal made by Egypt and Sudan, few days after the resolution of Arab League, the United Nations Security Council demanded Ethiopia to brief the council with regard to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, and then Minister of Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Electricity of Ethiopia, Sileshi Bekele presented a nineteen minutes speech defending Ethiopia's right and national interest on the basin in general and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) in particular. Although this speech contained many major themes, it touched up on five fundamental points pertinent to this discussion. One of the points strongly mentioned was that the Security Council is not a legitimate place for GERD. Strong explanation about GERD as the contribution of each and every citizen of Ethiopia was the other point discussed in the speech. The fact that GERD will be important to get millions of Ethiopians from the devastating impoverishment and sufferings was also presented. Moreover, argument indicating that Egypt and Sudan have far better water infrastructure compared to Ethiopia was presented. Furthermore, strong comment that the council will face challenges if it consents to the path proffered by Egypt and Sudan was forwarded. From the whole discussion made, it was learned that the Security Council staged two diametrically opposite philosophies: 'African Solutions to African Problems' and 'Water for Cooperation' advocated by Ethiopia vis-à-vis Solution from Global Powers for African Problems and Cooperation for water advocated by Egypt.

Even in the wake of the second and third phase dam filling and electricity generation of first and second turbines on 20 February 2022 and August 2022 respectively, the council of Arab Foreign Ministers passed a ‘resolution on 10 March 2023’ “backing Egypt’s water rights on the Nile” and threatened that it decided to take the matter to its meeting with European foreign ministers in June. Ethiopia, as usual and accordingly, reacted to this (Ethiopian Monitor, 2023). Ethiopia reacted to this by mentioning three important points. First, Ethiopia reiterated that the Nile River and all the riparian countries are located in Africa and the African Union-led process was taking care of it. Second, Ethiopia condemned that this body was serving as the spokesperson of one state, disregarding basic principles of international law. Third, Ethiopia stressed and warned that such attempts to politicize the issue of GERD were not based on facts or supported by law, and they neither advanced friendly relations nor supported the efforts to arrive at amicable solutions(Ethiopian Monitor, 2023). This new reactive phase strategy of Ethiopia was equivalent to what is labeled as contesting the existing hydro-hegemony and status quo and enhancing the creation of level playing field(Cascão, 2009) for equitable and reasonable utilization of the Nile River Basin.

Following the talk held in Cairo on 13 July 2023 between President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Ethiopia Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed who aimed to reach an agreement on the ‘filling and annual operation of the Grand Renaissance Dam’ within four months, it was agreed that the tripartite negotiation, which was off for some time, should resume(AP, 2023). Consequently, four round tripartite negotiations, two in Cairo and two in Addis Ababa, held, but agreement could not be reached(Sahlu, 2023). The latest tripartite negotiation was held December 17-19, 2023. There has been no tripartite negotiation going on since this time. However, there is a strong hope that the parties will soon come to the table and resume negotiation. This strong hope is held based on the longstanding fact concerning interaction over transboundary river basins on one hand and experience gained from the tripartite negotiation on the other hand. The long standing fact concerning interaction over transboundary river basins is that conflict and cooperation can co-exist (Zeitoun & Warner, 2006) as neither continuum nor mutually exclusive to each other. Negotiation while undertaking dam construction, which was witnessed by the 2015 Tripartite Agreement, is the experience gained.

4. CONCLUSION

Recorded secular history showed that Ethiopia fought for more than 120 years, 1902-2023, to reach a stage to start utilizing Nile River Basin through constructing mega project on it. Ethiopia's hydro-communication efforts on Nile River Basin in those years were congruent with the international water law and aimed at, consecutively, defending the basin from colonial powers, resisting, though not successful at that time, the formation and continuation of Egypt's hydro-hegemony and reacting to multiple wrong moves made by Egypt and its multiple allies to halt Ethiopia's progress to utilizing the basin. Hydro-communication efforts of Ethiopia registered remarkable progress. Facilitating factors for these were two types: national and global. The national level facilitating factors were consistent position of Ethiopian governments, produced knowledge on the basin, geographic power and public funding. The global level facilitating factors were the developments happened with regard to utilization of transboundary river basins. These developments include the UN Watercourse Convention and the need for participation of stakeholders along with decentralized management for transboundary river basin management. Availability of instantaneous communication that includes social media has also played immeasurable enabling role in voicing the right of Ethiopia with regard to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Hydro-communication effort of Ethiopia has transformed from being completely reactive in 1902 to 1990s to being influential since 1999. Similarly, bargaining and ideational powers of Ethiopia were growing. As discussions and negotiations on transboundary river basin are never ending process in general, and Ethiopia continues facing huge pressure in particular, hydro-communication efforts of Ethiopia should be upgraded to strategic communication level to withstand the pressure and completely ensure equitable and reasonable utilization of the Nile River Basin.

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