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**HYDRO-SECURITIZATION IN THE NILE RIVER BASIN:
A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE GERD DISPUTE
AMONG EGYPT, SUDAN, AND ETHIOPIA**

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APPROVAL

This thesis titled ANALYZING HYDRO-SECURITIZATION IN THE NILE RIVER BASIN: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE GERD DISPUTE AMONG EGYPT, SUDAN, AND ETHIOPIA submitted by RAHMET ELFIKHİ, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Energy and Sustainable Development is approved by

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In addition, I acknowledge that any claim of irregularity that may arise in relation to this work will result in a disciplinary action in accordance with the university legislation.

RAHMET ELFIKHİ

29.07.2024

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HYDRO-SECURITIZATION IN THE NILE RIVER BASIN: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE GERD DISPUTE AMONG EGYPT, SUDAN, AND ETHIOPIA

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the water conflict in the Nile River Basin, focusing on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and its implications for riparian states. While extensive research has explored the Nile's water conflicts and the impact of the GERD, the application of securitization theory in this context remains underexplored. This study employs Buzan et al.'s (1998) securitization theory, enhanced by Mirumachi and Allan's (2007) dual conflict approach and Reyes's (2011) legitimization strategies from critical discourse analysis, to analyze the discourse surrounding the GERD. The research addresses a gap in understanding how non-Western countries handle water scarcity and disputes, specifically investigating the timing and motivations behind the securitization of water resources and its impact on the GERD conflict. Analysis of the rhetoric from Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan regarding the GERD, from the onset of official negotiations in 2013 through October 2023, reveals that water securitization is a non-linear process influenced by contextual triggers such as water scarcity, food security, political changes, and geopolitical rivalry. Catastrophic events, political shifts and geopolitical rivalry affecting power asymmetry have significantly impacted the securitization process. The findings support Daoudi's (2009) assertion that power asymmetries influence upstream and downstream interactions, emphasizing that bargaining power and evolving interests are crucial in shaping these dynamics. The study challenges Buzan et al.'s (1998) theory by demonstrating that high-ranking national officials, rather than local actors, are the primary drivers of securitization. Despite notable de-securitization efforts, the GERD dispute persists, with Egypt and Sudan increasingly securitizing the issue. The study also supports Mirumachi & Allan (2007) by showing that conflict and cooperation are distinct yet coexisting phenomena. Moreover, it challenges the notion that non-Western regimes avoid water securitization, revealing that such regimes use securitization to manage domestic dissent and legitimize exceptional measures.

Keywords: The Egyptian-Ethiopia water Conflict, The Ethiopian dam (GERD), Securitization of water discourse, Water security

NİL NEHRİ HAVZASINDA HİDRO-GÜVENLİKLEŞTİRME: MISIR, SUDAN VE ETİYOPYA ARASINDAKİ GERD ANLAŞMAZLIĞININ ELEŞTİREL SÖYLEM ANALİZİ

ÖZET

Bu tez, Nil Nehri Havzasındaki su çatışmasını, özellikle Büyük Etiyopya Rönesans Barajı (GERD) ve bu barajın kıyıdaş devletler üzerindeki etkilerini incelemektedir. Nil'in su çatışmaları ve GERD'in etkileri üzerine kapsamlı araştırmalar yapılmış olmasına rağmen, bu bağlamda güvenlik teorisinin uygulanması yeterince ele alınmamıştır. Bu çalışma, Buzan ve arkadaşlarının (1998) güvenlik teorisini, Mirumachi ve Allan'ın (2007) ikili çatışma yaklaşımını ve Reyes'in (2011) eleştirel söylem analizinden türetilmiş meşrulaştırma stratejilerini kullanarak GERD etrafındaki söylemi analiz etmektedir. Araştırma, Batı dışı ülkelerin su kıtlığı ve anlaşmazlıklarla nasıl başa çıktığını anlamadaki bir boşluğu doldurmakta ve su kaynaklarının güvenlik altına alınmasının zamanlamasını ve motivasyonlarını incelemektedir. 2013 yılından Ekim 2023'e kadar Etiyopya, Mısır ve Sudan'ın GERD ile ilgili söylemleri analiz edildiğinde, su güvenlik altına almanın bağlamsal tetikleyicilerden etkilenen doğrusal olmayan bir süreç olduğu ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu tetikleyiciler arasında su kıtlığı, gıda güvenliği, siyasi değişiklikler ve jeopolitik rekabet bulunmaktadır. Felaket olayları, siyasi değişimler ve güç asimetrisini etkileyen jeopolitik rekabet, güvenlik altına alma sürecini önemli ölçüde etkilemiştir. Bulgular, Daoudi'nin (2009) güç asimetrisinin etkileşimleri şekillendirdiğini destekleyerek, pazarlık gücü ve zamanla gelişen çıkarların bu dinamiklerde kritik rol oynadığını vurgulamaktadır. Çalışma, güvenlik teorisinin yüksek rütbeli ulusal yetkililer tarafından yönlendirildiğini göstererek, yerel aktörlerin bu süreci yönlendirmediğini ortaya koymaktadır. GERD anlaşmazlığı devam etmekte ve Mısır ile Sudan konuyu giderek daha fazla güvenlik altına almaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Mısır-Etiyopya su çatışması, Etiyopya Barajı (GERD), Su söyleminin güvenikleştirilmesi, Su güvenliği

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AU: African Union

CFA: Cooperative Framework Agreement

CGGC: China Gezhouba Group Co., Ltd

DoP: Declaration of Principles on GERD

EEP: The Ethiopian Electric Power

ENDF: Ethiopian National Defense Forces

GERD Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

GERDP: Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Project

IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

IPOE: International Panel of Experts

NBI: Nile Basin Initiative

NISRG: National Independent Scientific Research Study Group

NWRP: National Water Resources Plan

OWP: Organization For World Peace

SIS: State Information Service

TNC: Technical National Committee

UN: United Nations

WFP: World Food Programme

WMO: World Meteorological Organization





To My Dearest Family

1. INTRODUCTION

Water and climate change are intricately linked because of the significant impact of climate change on the quantity and quality of water available on Earth. Climate change causes extreme weather phenomena, such as floods, drought, rising sea levels, rising temperatures, and consequently, the evaporation of sea and river water, changing the rate and timing of rainfall and shrinking ice mass more severely and frequently. These extreme weather events increase "seasonal variability" and cause unpredictability in available water supplies, exacerbating water scarcity and decreasing water quality (UN-Water, 2021).

Climate change increases water challenges by threatening our limited supplies of fresh water. Although approximately 70% of the Earth's surface is covered by water, the percentage of usable fresh water is only 0.5% (WMO, 2021). Studies have shown that climate change has caused terrestrial water reserves, including soil moisture and glaciers, to decline by 1 cm per year over the past two decades, exacerbating the water scarcity crisis (WMO, 2021). Nearly half of the world's population experiences severe water scarcity for at least a few months yearly (IPCC, 2023). A rise in temperatures of 2 degrees Celsius annually will significantly increase the risk of water shortages worldwide (UN, 2020), and two-thirds of the world's land will see a decline in terrestrial water storage by 2070 (Pokhrel et al., 2021). Studies show that climate change directly affects freshwater supplies in rivers as it changes the flow of river water, affecting its supply and quality. This is due to floods, drought, and changes in riverbank rates, timings, and rainfall locations. Higher temperatures also contribute to increased evaporation of river water, reducing its supply. Moreover, the quality of river water is affected by climate change, as rising temperatures, floods, and rising sea levels pollute river water and increase its salinity (Gudmundsson, 2021).

Although African countries contribute the least to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to the expected impacts of climate change. It has one of the most volatile river systems in the world. For example, the African Zambezi River witnesses water flow fluctuations ten times more than its European counterpart. Climate change will worsen this situation (International Rivers, n.d.-b). According to WMO (2020), the current melting rates of African mountain glaciers are higher than the global average. If such higher rates continue, the glaciers will completely melt by 2040, endangering regional water security. For instance, due to climate change, the African Kenyan glacier will completely melt within ten years, making it the first glacier to disappear because of global climate change (WMO, 2020). Recent statistics show a decline in the internal shares of per capita global renewable water resources by nearly 20% between 2000 and 2008. Among global regions, countries located in sub-Saharan Africa (41%) and Northern Africa (26%) showed the lowest percentages in the world (FAO, 2022).¹

The Nile, the longest river in the world, is one of the most susceptible to climate change (Smith et al., 2024). Rising sea levels, high temperatures, irregular rainfall, and increasing evaporation rates cause a decrease in the Nile River's freshwater supply. Studies have shown that a drop in sea level of just one meter or less below the level of the Nile River, as the sea water level rises, will cause freshwater supplies from the river to diminish by a range from 19% to 32%, considering that the rate of annual decrease of the Nile River water levels ranges between 3 and 5 mm (Arkeh, 2023b).

The Nile River is 6,650 kilometers long, running through 11 riparian countries, including Egypt, Eritrea, Burundi, Tanzania, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of

¹ Renewable water resources refer to rechargeable water resources due to the hydrological cycle unless overexploited. They comprise groundwater aquifers and surface water such as lakes and rivers. They note that internal renewable water resources include the annual flow of rivers and groundwater generated from within-country precipitation (endogenous precipitation) (Duke, 2019)

Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. The population of the Nile's 11 riparian countries is estimated to be more than 400 million, with over half of these inhabitants relying on the Nile for daily water supply (The Organization for World Peace, 2022). However, it needs to provide more water required for the residents of these countries (Smith et al., 2024). Moreover, the Nile's population will double by 2050, significantly increasing pressure on its water flow to meet their needs (UN, n.d.).

Although only 10% of the Nile's residents currently suffer from water scarcity, this figure is expected to increase to 35% by 2040 (OWP, 2022). Hall (2024) shows that the region will witness a decrease in available freshwater resources by 75% by 2050 if temperatures rise by 4 degrees Celsius. By 2050, the area will face economic losses due to water scarcity resulting from climate change at a rate ranging from 6% to 14% of the total gross domestic product (GDP) (World Bank Group, 2017). These facts explain why some countries in the region view the water issue as a matter of life and death and as one of the most important geopolitical issues, making it an integral part of their national security.

Water scarcity can spark violent conflicts, cold disputes, and tensions over water ownership, water shares, and consumption rates, especially in international basins shared by more than one country (Wolf et al., 2003; Furlong and Gleditsch, 2003a, b, and Toset et al., 2000). The Environmental Justice Atlas listed 795 global water conflicts (EJAtlas, 2023). The Global Water Database examined 629 water conflicts, many of which cause severe challenges in the Middle East and North Africa (WRI, 2020). However, with the increasing effects of climate change, rapid growth, unsustainable management of water resources, and regional instability, these challenges will become more urgent (Daoudy, 2007; Gleditsch et al., 2006).

According to Yihdego et al. (2017) and Wolf et al. (2003), conflict over water issues arises in international basins if one of the riparian countries develops a project that

affects the flow of water, such as building a dam without coordination with other countries or in the absence of joint committees or treaties. Daoudy (2004) further argues that the event of a historical dispute or dispute over other issues between countries increases the possibility of water conflicts among riparian states in international river basins. Gleick (1993) proclaims that a country's reliance on water resources to produce hydroelectric energy to cover the state's electricity needs or for sustainable development and in case one of the riparian states relies on part of its water supplies from outside the country's borders increases the possibility of an armed conflict. Moreover, Homer-Dixon and Thomas (1991) argue that water disputes could arise if the downstream country suffers from water scarcity to the level that policymakers tend to use military force to capture the water resource. The conflict is further enhanced if the riparian countries suffer from economic crises, a non-diversified economy, a growing population, and increasing levels of drought (Gleick, 1993; Daoudy, 2007; Gleditsch et al., 2006).

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), which Ethiopia initiated without consultation with Egypt and Sudan, is a perfect example of all these situations. The challenges in the Nile Basin region have reached the point of armed conflict between the three adjacent riparian countries: Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan. According to the World Bank (2022), the interaction of climate pressures and risks with regional and international pressures on the Nile River and the risk of GERD leads to the outbreak of conflicts and, perhaps, wars between riparian countries. In 1985, Boutros Ghali, the Egyptian diplomat who served as the sixth Secretary-General of the United Nations from 1992 to 1996, warned that the next war in the region "will revolve around water, not politics." (Middle East Monitor, 2023). Gleick (1993) argues that the Middle East is among the most war-prone areas where the water turned from a "low politics" to a "high politics" issue.

The Nile is a 6,650 km-long north-flowing river in northeastern Africa with a drainage basin covering eleven countries such as the Democratic Republic of

Congo, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan, Sudan, and Egypt (Figure 1). It is the primary water source of Egypt, Sudan, and South Sudan, and it is an essential economic river that supports agriculture and fishing. The Nile has two major tributaries: the headwater stream of White Nile and the downstream Blue Nile, where the GERD was built. The GERD's reservoir has a capacity equal to 74 km^3 , which is roughly 1.5 times larger than the mean annual flow of the Blue Nile, which constitutes 57% of the Nile River's total runoff (Mordos et al., 2020). It is roughly equal to the average annual outflow of the Nile River to the Aswan High Dam, Egypt's biggest dam on the Nile (Abdelhady et al., 2015).

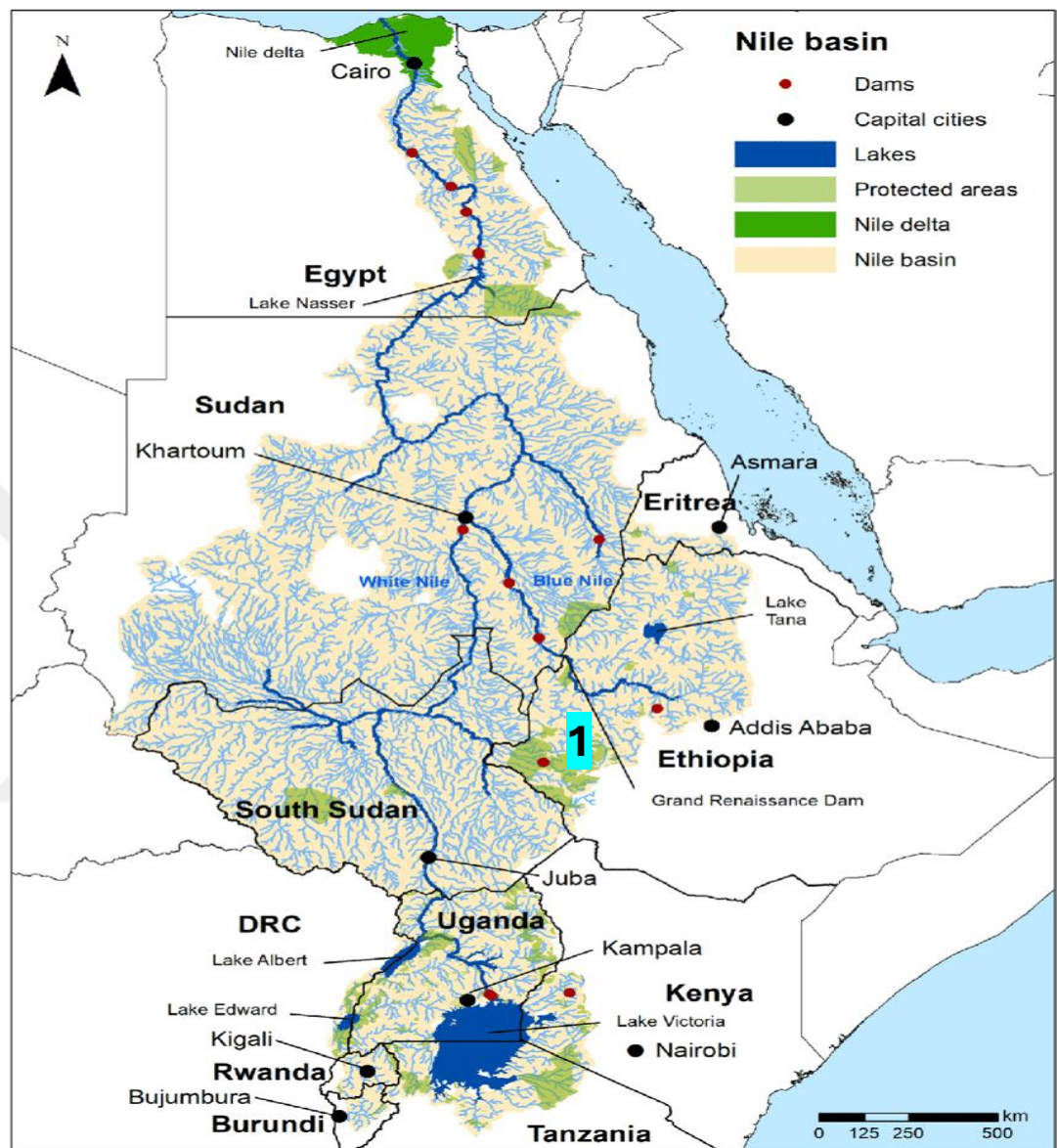


Figure 1.1. The Nile River drainage basin and the GERD. Note: 1. GERD. Reference: Allan et al. (2019)

An examination of the adverse effects of decreased water availability showed that the expected decrease in the flow of Nile water to the Aswan Dam was from 55 to 45 billion cubic meters (USAID, 2018). This will cause a reduction in the percentage of irrigated land by approximately 22%, a reduction in agricultural employment by 9%, and a decrease in total food production in Egypt by 5.7% by 2050. This percentage is considered catastrophic, as it exceeds the expected decline rate for the

rest of the world's countries by 4.4% (USAID, 2018). This shows that the GERD increases pressure on riparian countries, which may cause the outbreak of an armed conflict between Egypt and Ethiopia. Because of these reasons, the riparian countries have securitized the GERD issue since 2011, when Ethiopia announced the construction of the GERD on the banks of the Nile.

The fight over the Nile water has a long history. Nevertheless, tensions between Egypt and Ethiopia peaked in 2011, immediately after Ethiopia announced the construction of the GERD on the banks of the Nile with a capacity of about 6,000 megawatts.² However, the Egyptian authorities' preoccupation with their internal security in the event of the Egyptian Revolution and the subsequent state of political instability in Egypt during the period of the dam's announcement delayed the interaction process with the dam issue. Despite the three conflicting parties entering formal negotiations regarding the dam in 2013 and despite numerous attempts at cooperation and reaching an agreement in 2015 regarding GERD, they failed to solve the conflict. Tensions increased between the parties with Ethiopia's insistence on completing the dam's construction despite studies confirming the adverse economic, political, and hydrological effects on Egypt and Sudan. With the continuous failure of the negotiations, countries tend to adopt a geopolitical context of securitization, yet at other times, they tend to de-securitize the GERD dispute.

The main reason behind the GERD conflict is the divergent yet conflicting positions of the three countries. Ethiopia confirms that the Renaissance Dam is a national development project that aims to produce hydroelectric energy to meet local needs and export it at reasonable prices to countries in the region. Unlike Ethiopia, which sees the Renaissance Dam as an existential necessity, Egypt considers the Ethiopian Dam as an existential threat. Egypt believes that the Ethiopian dam will affect its

² The capacity of the GERD is equivalent to twice that of Egypt's electrical energy production capacity and three times that of Sudan.

historical share of the Nile water (55 billion cubic meters annually), which it relies on to meet about 95% of its needs.

The Egyptian government has repeatedly indicated that potential damage to its water share due to the dam will increase unemployment levels, threaten food security, and harm the Egyptian economy. Moreover, Egypt believes that the Ethiopian dam has other adverse effects on the flow of Nile water and, thus, on the hydroelectric power supply from the Aswan Dam. Egypt also framed the Renaissance Dam as a matter of national security because of its repercussions on agriculture and its relationship to levels of unemployment, food security, and the national economy, in addition to Egyptian dominance over the Nile Basin. Sudan did not initially oppose the construction of the Ethiopian dam. On the contrary, Sudan fully supported Ethiopia in building the Renaissance Dam. Sudan believed that the Renaissance Dam had many benefits, not only for Ethiopia but for Sudan and the region's countries as well. Sudan thought the dam would significantly improve the ability to predict and calculate the Nile River's water flow. This will reduce the frequency of floods that Sudan frequently faces. In addition, Sudan believed that the dam would provide it with a third agricultural season. Sudan also thought that the dam would enable it to solve the national electricity crisis by importing electricity from Ethiopia at reasonable prices. However, Sudan's position has witnessed a noticeable and essential shift since mid-2020, after the popular Sudanese movement that ousted Al-Bashir's government. Sudanese statements opposing the Ethiopian dam began circulating, stressing that Sudan would suffer more than Egypt if the dam reduced the two countries' historical water shares. Sudan also stated that filling the dam without reaching an agreement constitutes an existential threat to the downstream countries because of its adverse effects on the standard of living, the local economy, and the environment. The government stated that the dam would threaten Sudanese national security. This indicates that the conflict is not just a conflict over water resources but rather a conflict to maintain water, energy, and food security.

Moreover, it is a conflict over identity and ensuring social, political, and economic stability. It is also a geopolitical dispute over political influence and regional hegemony, as the Nile is the lifeline of the countries of the region, and the one who controls the Nile River is the one who controls the fate of the entire area. The diverging interests between the three countries caused the negotiations to reach an impasse, and the conflict has escalated from 2013 until today. The securitization moves of the conflicting parties raise the question about the possibility of turning the GERD dispute into an armed conflict, endangering the peace and security of the region.

The primary purpose of this thesis is to understand how the conflicting parties constructed the securitization discourse regarding GERD and then assess the future of the conflict. It aims to uncover the contextual triggers for the securitization and de-securitization of the GERD discourse and to investigate the local, regional, and geopolitical contextual factors that affect the discourse regarding GERD. The impact of securitization on the nature of this conflict will also be analyzed.

This thesis tries to answer three main research questions, which are crucial in understanding the GERD conflict's evolution, triggers, and future trajectory and exploring potential scenarios for its resolution or escalation. How has the intricate and multifaceted GERD dispute evolved among Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia? What are the pivotal contextual triggers for the securitization/de-securitization of the GERD discourse, and when and how did they profoundly affect the nature of cooperation and conflict in the region? How will the dynamic and influential geopolitical, environmental, and diplomatic contexts shape the future trajectory of the GERD conflict, offering potential scenarios for its resolution or escalation?

This study employs a qualitative method. It focuses theoretically on the discourse regarding GERD and the implications of the discourse on the nature of the conflict and its future. Studying the discourse enables us to identify the main actors involved in the securitization process, how the securitization discourse is constructed, reproduced, disseminated, and transformed, and how it progresses from one stage

to another based on many variables, most notably shifts in the internal political scene, local tensions, and changes in the regional and international geopolitical situation. As these contextual factors contribute to spreading or changing a particular discourse, the narratives and narrations that are affected by them differ, as well as how they influence and create them. To analyze the securitization of the water discourse regarding the GERD, the securitization theory (Wæver, 1995; Buzan et al., 1998) and critical discourse theory (Van Dijk 1998, Fairclough 1995, Wodak 2002, Wodak 2009). (Please see Chapter 4 for details). Although there are many actors involved in building the securitization discourse, this thesis will focus only on the main actors, including the high-level officials of the presidency, the prime minister, and the ministries of foreign affairs, irrigation, water, energy, and electricity who participated in the 11 years of dam negotiations. Their statements and press releases are analyzed for discourse.

Although the issue of securitization has been discussed in several studies in literature, scholars have differing views about the impact of securitization on water conflicts (see Chapter II for details of the literature review). Some Scholars think that securitization is harmful as it creates a zero-sum game and calls instead for de-securitization (Leb & Wouters, 2013; Daoudy, 2007; Waever, 1995; J. Fröhlich, 2012) whereas others argue that securitization is a good option for the weaker party in the conflict to save its rights as it creates a win-win situation (Fischhendler & Nathan, 2013; Fischhendler, 2015). Still, others, such as (Waever, 1995), oppose the concept of securitization as they argue that countries that tend to securitize adopted an "isolationist" policy, preventing them from cooperating with other countries. He also believed cooperation was the most viable option for resolving water disputes. However, de-securitization does not necessarily mean cooperation. According to Mirumachi and Allan (2007), both securitization and cooperation are divided into degrees that differ in intensity and impact. They claimed that securitization may coexist with cooperation.

While some scholars argue that cooperation and de-securitization will help countries end a water dispute, other researchers have found that cooperation is sometimes the most viable option for solving conflicts as it may even deteriorate them. As Daoudy and Keller (2021b) explained in their study, the presence of some manifestations of cooperation, such as negotiations and agreements, does not necessarily mean the possibility of resolving the conflict. Furthermore, Cascão and Zeitoun (2010) conclude that some forms of cooperation may have a negative impact, contrary to what some people believe, that all forms of cooperation will inevitably lead to resolving the conflict or to joint and sustainable management of water resources. For example, upstream countries may negotiate on the condition that their preferential position is not harmed. They may also show inflexibility in sharing data with other parties to the conflict, moving away from sharing data between parties, or meeting all countries' interests when negotiating.

Although the issues related to the Nile River Basin's overall water conflict and the GERD's effects on riparian countries were discussed thoroughly in the literature, the securitization theory still needs to be applied to this issue. This thesis will fill this research gap by using the securitization theory in the speeches of officials of the three conflicting governments of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan. Moreover, it will analyze all parties to the conflict instead of focusing only on Egypt and Ethiopia and ignoring the effects of the Sudanese position on the nature of the conflict. The thesis also investigates the impact of domestic, regional, and international geopolitical contextual factors on the nature of this conflict, as they have been ignored in previous studies. It will examine how such contextual factors lead to phases of securitization and de-securitization of discourse regarding the GERD dispute. Further, this thesis will explain the possibility of cooperation and conflict co-occurring with varying intensity using the theoretical framework of Mirumachi and Allan (2007) and Daoudy and Keller (2021b). With these research features, this thesis significantly contributes to the existing literature. The thesis will seek to

bridge the existing research gap regarding how non-western dictatorships tackle challenges stemming from water scarcity and disputes concerning water resources.

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The second chapter is a review of the literature. The existing literature is reviewed in six sections. The Third chapter presents the methodology used in the thesis. It will be divided into two main sections such as the theoretical framework and the materials used in the thesis. The fourth chapter provides contextual details related to the water resources available in the Nile Basin and how GERD constitutes an essential source of prolonged conflict. It also addresses the water scarcity crisis in the Nile Basin and the adverse effects caused by climate change on the nature of the Nile waters. It reviews the data and facts about available water resources and their uses in Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia. The writer then analyzes the strategic importance of the Nile waters for Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia, represented in five crucial aspects. These aspects include the following: Maintaining water security, food security, energy security, sustainable economic development, eliminating poverty and confronting unemployment, and maintaining Egypt's geopolitical influence in the region vis-à-vis Ethiopia. This is in addition to the Nile waters' role in shaping the national identities and national unity of the Nile Basin countries. The fifth chapter includes contextual details related to the legal framework governing the relationship between the Nile Basin countries and its impact on their cooperation and disagreement, especially Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia. It explains the nature of historical negotiations and bilateral and regional agreements regarding the Division, distribution, and use of the Nile waters and how they contributed to the deep roots of the conflict over water. The chapter also explains the reasons for the failure of all attempts at cooperation between the Nile Basin countries before and after the construction of the Ethiopian Dam. The second part of this chapter also explains the contextual details related to the nature of bilateral relations and issues of disagreement between the three countries. Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia because of their substantial impact on the future of the tripartite negotiations regarding the dam and the positions of the

different countries during the negotiation phase. Chapter Six provides a critical analysis of the securitization of discourse, how it is constructed, its importance, the contextual conditions in which it arises, and how local, regional, and international tensions are reflected in the water discourse with its various narratives related to water scarcity and sustainable economic development. The researcher critically analyzes the different narratives regarding GERD constituted by each country. In this chapter, the researcher also discusses the securitization of water discourse in its distinct types, the reasons behind the main actors' choice to use each type based on the surrounding local, regional, and international contextual factors, and how the discourse interacts with these contextual conditions, influencing and being affected by them. In the end, the author explains the impact of the securitization and De-Securitization process on the future of the conflict. Finally, the Conclusion chapter presents the study's concluding remarks. In this part, the researcher summarizes the conclusions from the research and gives some solutions and guidance to the Nile Basin countries to resolve the conflict and overcome this crisis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the previous studies on the water conflict between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia, focusing on the GERD conflict. The studies on water conflicts in the Nile Basin can be grouped into six groups. The first group of studies dealt with the hydro-politics of the Nile Basin. Zeitouna and Warner (2006) frame the concept of hydro hegemony, which is based on two key features: "power" and "varying intensities of conflict." They believe that the hydro hegemon in international river basins uses strategies such as "resource capture," "integration," and "containment" and tactics to apply those strategies such as "coercive pressure," "military force," "securitization," and "sanctioned discourse" to seize the water resource. All these strategies and tactics were used in the past by the hydro-hegemon Egypt. Cascão (2008) argues that the control of the hydro-hegemon is not always firmly established but rather is subject to challenge and resistance by riparian states through a set of strategies. Ethiopia used a counter-hegemony strategy to resist the hegemony of Egypt, including "reactive diplomacy," "active diplomacy," "cooperation," "mobilizing international funding," "the construction of expertise-based knowledge, a claim for legal principles," and "discourse alternatives." In the case of GERD, the rise of Ethiopia as a new hydro-hegemon and the fall of the traditional hydro-hegemon -Egypt- created conflict between the two countries.

The second group of literature is concerned with the role of the intervention of international actors in the GERD dispute. Researchers have conflicting ideas regarding the impact of the intervention of a third party on the conflict. Lawson (2017) believed that the intervention of other riparian countries in the GERD conflict between Ethiopia and Sudan increases the complexity of the conflict and the possibility of it becoming a military conflict. On the other hand, Mohyeldeen (2021) argues that resolving the water conflict between Ethiopia and Sudan, or at least preventing it from becoming a military conflict, requires firm intervention by

a third party, namely the state of Sudan. Other researchers favored the intervention of a third party other than riparian countries or non-governmental or inter-governmental organizations to resolve the conflict. For instance, Mehari (2020) believes that the intervention of the African Union in the conflict would help the conflicting parties to seek preventive diplomacy and produce a continental declaration based on the United Nations Convention on Water Resources. In this way, they will avoid engaging in an armed conflict on the Nile water.

The third group of literature focuses on the impact of the GERD on the hydro politics, geopolitics, and security of the Nile basin. While some scholars argued that the GERD would continue to be a source of conflict, other scholars underscored that the GERD would be an impetus for cooperation in the Nile Basin. Gebreluel (2014), Cascão and Nicol (2016), Roach (2021), Bulgamaa (2019), Abdelhady et al. (2015b), and Abdulrahman (2018) argue that GERD is an impetus for regional cooperation and a catalyst for transboundary management and coordination of Nile water between riparian countries. However, Yihdego et al. (2017) argued that the harmful effects of the dam on Egypt and Sudan would exacerbate the conflict. Endaylalu (2024) further underscored that the conflict between Ethiopia and Egypt is not just a dispute over the dam or water but rather a geopolitical dispute between the two parties. However, these studies usually ignored the State of Sudan, although it is one of the most critical countries active in the GERD negotiations from 2013 until the end of 2023, and its impact on the nature of the conflict. They have also neglected to study some essential contextual factors and their effect on the power relations between the conflicting countries, affecting the nature of the conflict, such as the outbreak of war with a neighboring country or a regional war, the support of regional countries or international powers for one of the parties to the conflict, and the timing of important decisions affecting the nature of the conflict.

The fourth group of literature is concerned with the social, economic, and environmental impact of GERD on downstream states. In fact, there is disagreement

in the literature about the environmental, economic, and social impacts of GERD on the Nile Basin countries. Some researchers, such as Siddig et al. (2020), Khadam et al. (2016), and Gebreluel (2014), assume that the GERD would have only positive impacts. Yet, others such as Ahmed and Elsanabary (2015) and Elnour (2019) believe that GERD would have not only adverse but catastrophic effects on the region and such as Ahmed and Elsanabary (2015), Mordos et al. (2020b), Omran and Negm (2018), and Kahsay et al. (2015) assert that GERD would have both negative and positive impacts on riparian countries.

The fifth group of literature is concerned with examining the reasons behind the escalation of the GERD dispute. In contrast, the sixth group of literature investigates the most possible and viable solutions to the GERD conflict.

2.1 Hydro-politics of the Nile Basin

The hydro-politics in the Nile Basin has a long history of Egyptian hydro-hegemony even though eleven countries share the river. The conflict over water has occurred mainly between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia over the past decades due to Egypt and Sudan's dominance over the Nile waters. The Nile Basin countries tried to sign many agreements that guarantee the equitable distribution and use of water for all basin countries. However, they were all rejected by Egypt and Sudan, which insisted on retaining their historical share in the waters guaranteed to them by the 1959 agreement, unlike Ethiopia, which always sought significantly to cancel this agreement (Andualem et al., 2021).

Zeitoun and Warner (2006) emphasize that asymmetric power relations between Egypt and Ethiopia represent the cornerstone of analyzing hydro-political relations in the Nile basin. They argue that the main reason why the water conflicts fueled by water scarcity in the Nile basin in recent years have not turned into a violent war is

the asymmetry of power, or in other words, the imbalance of power between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia. The researchers framed the concept of hydro hegemony, which is based on two main features, "power" and "varying intensities of conflict." They believe that the hydro hegemon in any international river basin uses some strategies and tactics to seize the water resource. They proposed seven strategies, some or all of which may be used by the dominant and more robust states, such as Egypt, including "resource capture," "integration," and "containment." They claim that the Egyptian hydro hegemon tends to use some tactics to implement these strategies, such as "treaties," "knowledge building," "coercive pressure," "military force," "incentives," "securitization," and "sanctioned discourse," exploiting the imbalance of power securitization between the riparian countries considering a chaotic international system to control water resources to his advantage. However, they argue that the coercive resources (such as political capital and ability to mobilize funds) available to the hydro-hegemons like Egypt are much greater than those available to a weak state like Ethiopia. The researchers conclude that the water hegemon can control the nature of the conflict, whether by imposing a positive or negative form of water hegemony. They have not overlooked the chaotic nature of the international system, the international context characterized by partisanship, international political trends, the absence of internationally recognized water laws, and their negative impact on the nature of water conflicts.

On the other hand, Cascão (2008) argues that the control of the hydro hegemon is not always firmly established. However, it is subject to challenge and resistance by riparian states through strategies to resist forms of hegemony in international river basins. He believes that power relations are neither established nor fixed but rather subject to change by resistant states that do not surrender to the *status quo* imposed by the dominant state. According to him, combating hegemony depends on three complementary features: (1) Challenging the *status quo* that imposes the water hegemon, (2) Dismantling the logic of the hegemon and undermining its legitimacy, and (3) Creating new opportunities and other alternatives to the current situation.

For instance, Ethiopia tended to sign agreements and strengthen relations with other riparian countries, taking advantage of the waning Egyptian power in the last two centuries. On the other hand, the counter-hegemony strategy is divided into two stages. The first stage is characterized as a "reactive" stage in which the weaker countries resist the pressures imposed by the hegemon. The second stage is called the "active" stage, in which resistance and challenge are active and not merely a reaction to the hegemon, and in which the resisting party creates an alternative strategy to combat the act of hegemony. Cascão (2008) explored the strategies used by Ethiopia to resist the dominant state in the Nile River Basin, Egypt, which included the strategy such as "reactive diplomacy," "active diplomacy," "cooperation," "mobilizing international funding," "construction of expertise-based knowledge," "claim for legal principles," and "discourse alternatives." The researcher concludes that Ethiopia, the weakest country on the Nile River, was able to challenge Egypt by using previously proposed resistance strategies until bilateral and multilateral cooperation became preferable to the unilateral strategies and steps on which the hydro hegemon relied.

Furthermore, Cascão and Zeitoun (2010) argued that analyzing power asymmetries associated with the critical hydro politics approach needs to be refined and improved for several reasons. They believe this approach cannot be generalized to all regions, such as North Africa (where border disputes and regional competition affect it more than the power asymmetry factor), and to all water conflicts, especially conflicts that are less controversial and politicized. In addition, researchers believe that the analysis of power asymmetry made a mistake in separating the four pillars of power. Various forms of power, both overt (like economic and military strength, geographical location, and riparian status) and covert (including bargaining power in negotiations and the ability to shape perceptions and mindsets through ideas), play significant roles. As they are interconnected with each other. They argue that the riparian state's geographical location affects bargaining and negotiating power. Likewise, when a state loses military capabilities and material strength, its ability to

bargain and use intellectual power naturally decreases. They suggest that when analyzing water conflicts, the researcher must consider that weaknesses and strengths in one dimension of the power pillars will negatively or positively affect the other elements.

Moreover, Cascão and Zeitoun (2010) believe that there is an important political dimension that theorists of power asymmetry analysis of the critical approach to hydropolitics have overlooked. This dimension, which encapsulates both local and transboundary contexts of water conflicts, was explained through six interconnected and harmonious factors because they have a prominent impact on the nature of water conflicts that cannot be ignored in any way. First, The severe and unexpected consequences of climate change, the resulting decrease in water quantities, and extended periods of drought. Second, the outbreak of war in a conflict zone results in a change in regional power relations, or in the balance of power. Third, support from regional countries/international powers is needed for one of the parties to the conflict. Fourth, the political timing of negotiations and decisions related to or affecting the water conflict, directly or indirectly. Fifth, changes in the local political scene include changes in the president, government, or negotiators. Sixth, a change in political circumstances, such as signing a peace treaty between the two conflicting countries or during elections or military coups. All these factors greatly influence the water conflict, characterized by asymmetrical power. The researchers finally concluded that some forms of cooperation may have a negative impact, contrary to what some people believe, that all forms of collaboration will inevitably lead to resolving the conflict or to joint and sustainable management of water resources. For example, dominant countries may resort to negotiation on the condition that their preferential position is not harmed, or they may show inflexibility in sharing data with other parties to the conflict, moving away from the idea of sharing between parties or negotiating based on interests.

In their analysis of the Egyptian-Ethiopian water conflict, Aljefri et al. (2019) used hypergamy theory, which was designed to deal with misconceptions in resolving disputes to gain a set of strategic insights into the conflicts and know all the available and potential solutions to deal with those conflicts. The researchers analyzed the history of the conflict, the political options available to each party, and the political decisions and preferences the parties had made before Ethiopia's announcement to build the dam from April 2011 until August 2014. The researchers concluded that the reason behind the conflict was the agreements that did not adopt the principle of justice in the division of water among riparian countries, such as the 1959 Agreement. The researchers also argued that Egypt's military, economic, and political strength until 2011 enabled it to neutralize the negotiations in its favor and maintain water dominance in the Nile River. However, financial and geopolitical changes enabled Ethiopia to use a *fait accompli* policy and the element of surprise in its strategic planning to build the dam, opening the path of cooperation between the conflicting parties. According to them, Ethiopia took advantage of Egypt's political turmoil in 2011 to combat Egyptian hegemony over the waters.

Using the counter-hydro hegemony approach, Endaylalu (2019) tried to explore the methods that Ethiopia resorted to combat Egyptian hegemony over the Nile waters by analyzing the content of interviews the researcher conducted with experts in the field of water and with Ethiopian diplomats. The researcher concluded that Ethiopia relied mainly on two strategies to combat Egyptian hegemony as "war of position" and "war of movement" strategies. The strategy of positional warfare depends on signing the 2009 CFA agreement between the rest of the countries bordering the Nile River. Although it does not have much legal value due to the lack of ratification by enough members, the researcher claims it still plays a vital role in breaking and reducing Egypt's hegemony over the Nile River. On the other hand, the movement's war strategy included building the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam to force Egypt to respond to the fair management of the Nile waters and forcibly share the benefits with the riparian countries.

Some researchers, such as Andualem et al. (2021), argued that despite many resistance strategies used by Ethiopia against Egypt, the decision to build the GERD was the most effective and game-changer in the Hydro politics of the Nile basin. Based on the idea that power relations are in a constant state of change and not static, Nasr and Neef (2016) focused on exploring the hegemonic strategies used by Egypt and the counter-hegemonic strategies used by Ethiopia to establish hegemony or confront it in the Ethiopian case. However, the researchers argue that we should not focus on the water element only in the Ethiopian-Egyptian water dispute, as analyzing the power asymmetry that results in a dominant hydro state requires that the researcher not ignore the energy and food elements. They believe that the connection between water, food, and energy should not be separated, directly affecting the parties' position in the conflict, positively or negatively. Imposing this reality on Egypt is the only solution to avoid conflict, as the history of international water treaties regarding the Nile waters has proven that they are not a measure of cooperation between riparian countries.

2.2 The Reasons Behind the GERD Conflict

Whittington et al. (2014) focused on the reasons behind the escalation of the GERD conflict tension and how to resolve it. He argues that the real reason behind this escalating tension is the Egyptian side's misunderstanding of the nature of the risks that GERD could pose to Egypt. The researcher claims that the GERD will not harm Egyptian and Sudanese water shares; therefore, there is no real threat posed by the GERD to the Egyptian side. Thus, he assumes this tension escalated due to how the Egyptian state perceived the GERD and related Ethiopian will to control water resources. Mehari (2020) instead argues that the conflicting parties' adherence to individual national interests without thinking about the interests of other parties pushes them toward the conflict over the Nile's waters.

Some other researchers, such as Whittington et al. (2014) and Yihdego et al. (2017), claim that GERD is not the reason for the water distress problem that Egypt is suffering from. According to Whittington et al. (2014), the main reasons behind Egypt's water scarcity problem are not the GERD but the inefficient water management and usage policies, especially in the irrigation field, and the increasing rate of water waste all over the Egyptian sectors. According to Yihdego et al. (2017), Ethiopia has recently increased its influence in the Horn of Africa. Unlike Egypt, which overlooked this region, Ethiopia's actions have challenged Egyptian dominance, particularly in water resources, and reduced Egypt's influence. Consequently, Egypt has become weak and cannot negotiate over water in the desired and necessary manner. Therefore, they argue that the solutions that enhance and maintain Egyptian water security can be limited to three things (1) developing water-saving irrigation methods, (2) restoring groundwater storage and extracting scheduled water desalinating seawater, and (3) linking the Nile water system with the waters of the Congo River. However, the high costs of all these solutions prevent Egypt, which is in difficult economic conditions, from considering them.

2.3 The Impact of the GERD on the Hydro-politics, Geopolitics, and Security of the Region

Gebreluel (2014), Cascão and Nicol (2016), Roach (2021), and Abdulrahman (2018) claim that GERD is an impetus for regional cooperation and a catalyst for transboundary management and coordination of Nile water between riparian countries. In addition, Roach (2021) declares that the dam represents a shift from Egyptian and Sudanese water dominance towards regional cooperation that will advance the interests of all parties in the long term. Likewise, Gebreluel (2014) believes that the GERD opens a way for sharing benefits between Egypt and Ethiopia and does not constitute a source of conflict, as some claim. He argues that by achieving high levels of development for Ethiopia and meeting Egypt's need for electrical energy, the GERD will force Egypt to cooperate with Ethiopia to obtain

the required electricity supply, considering the growing population of Egypt and the consequent increasing demand for energy. He, therefore, argues that the GERD will contribute to ending the old geopolitical rivalry between Egypt and Ethiopia over the Nile River and, of course, the African continent. Gebreluel (2014) believes that the conflict between Egypt and Ethiopia will end once the dam is constructed, forcing Egypt to coexist with the dam. Mehari (2020) argued that the Ethiopian dam caused a strategic shift in relations between riparian countries by providing a new path that motivates those countries to cooperate and resolve these disputes by international law. Bulgamaa (2019) argues that the Renaissance Dam may be a source of cooperation between riparian countries on water management under specific conditions. Firstly, the conflicting parties focus on a more human-centered approach rather than on states' interests when dealing with the dam. This is through Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan's recognition of the needs of other countries, regardless of the focus on water rights. Secondly, Ethiopia's commitment to disclosing the rules for filling and operating the dam in total transparency and in a way that does not harm Egypt and Sudan. Thirdly, allowing Ethiopia to jointly manage the Renaissance Dam with neighboring countries and involve them in investments regarding importing electricity from Ethiopia at reasonable prices.

Others claim that GERD is a source of conflict. For instance, Yihdego et al. (2017) believe that the pressures on international rivers due to industrial and agricultural developments, climate change, increasing population, as well as high rates of river pollution are reasons for more tensions and disputes over the division of water, as well as the stagnation of negotiations regarding the development of water infrastructure projects such as dams. They argue that despite the GERD's inevitable benefits to the Ethiopian economy and meeting the energy needs of some riparian countries, it still poses a real threat to the security and safety of the region. According to them, the existing negotiations between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan regarding water will be affected negatively or positively by the Ethiopian dam,

meaning that it is currently difficult to predict the inevitable outcome of this project during the negotiations between the riparian countries.

Endaylalu (2024) asserts that the conflict between Ethiopia and Egypt is not just a dispute over the dam or water but rather a geopolitical dispute between the two parties. The geopolitical competition between Egypt and Ethiopia may also transform from a competition over water availability to a conflict over energy trade in the future. Similarly, Tayie (2018) claims that the Ethiopian dam caused a new, more intense geopolitical strife between Egypt and Ethiopia. He emphasizes that the dam will enable Ethiopia to achieve political water dominance and besiege Egypt politically and strategically in the Horn of Africa. Yet, contrary to Tayie (2018), Endaylalu (2024) argues that it is difficult to predict the future of the competition between Egypt and Ethiopia and whether it will turn into an armed conflict or cooperation over water due to the complexities of the geopolitical landscape.

Through his analysis of the benefits and costs related to the Renaissance Dam and its impact on the Nile Basin, Tawfik (2016) argues that the dam will certainly change the rules of the game in the Nile Basin in favor of Ethiopia. He doubts the possibility of the Nile Basin reaching a more cooperative and fairer system in light of regional developments, most notably the construction of the Ethiopian dam. Although he does not deny the positive effects of the dam, he argues that the regional cooperative management of the Nile waters depends on several conditions. Firstly, Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia respect the signed Declaration of Principles regarding the Renaissance Dam. Secondly, trust and transparency should be built between the three countries. Finally, the riparian countries are building a comprehensive plan away from unilateral, zero-sum intends to use the Nile waters reasonably, based on maximizing the benefits and sharing costs and benefits among all countries.

Finally, Abdelhady et al. (2015b) argue that Ethiopia restructured the hydropolitical map in the Nile Basin by building the Renaissance Dam. They believe that both

Egypt and Ethiopia have adopted narratives that focus on national interests only instead of the interests of the region, which has exacerbated the crisis. However, Abdelhady et al. (2015b) believe that cooperation between Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan at significant levels will achieve regional and national interests, contrary to what the countries' governments believe. Therefore, they believe that moving away from the historical discourse of national culture and combining the national narrative with the concepts of water solidarity regarding the management of water resources will achieve public and private benefits for each country. They also argue that intensive cooperation between the three countries on managing the Renaissance Dam is the only way to benefit all Nile Basin countries in the long term.

2.4 Impact of International Actors on the GERD Dispute

Lawson (2017) believes that the water conflict between Ethiopia and Egypt will worsen due to the active intervention of the other riparian countries in the conflict. This increases the complexity and the possibility of it becoming a military conflict. He believes that Egypt's continued attempts to consolidate its relations with Sudan, Eritrea, South Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, and Somalia and Ethiopia's efforts to include the rest of the riparian countries in the Cooperative Framework Agreement reduce the chances of resolving the conflict.

On the other hand, Mohyeldeen (2021) argues that resolving the water conflict between Ethiopia and Egypt, or at least preventing it from becoming a military conflict, requires firm intervention by a third party, namely the state of Sudan. The relative neutrality position that Sudan takes on the issue will enable it to gain the confidence of both conflicting parties. He believes that three factors motivate Sudan to play the role of mediator to resolve this conflict. Firstly, if the Renaissance Dam, which is a few kilometers away from Sudan, is blown up, Sudan will inevitably be forced to enter the conflict as a third party. Secondly, Egypt does not share geographical borders with Sudan, which will turn Sudanese airspace into a war zone

between the two countries. Thus, the outbreak of an Egyptian-Ethiopian military conflict threatens Sudan's stability, which is fundamentally unstable. In addition, bombing the GERD will endanger the safety of millions of Sudanese due to the high possibility of floods following the blowing up of the dam. Finally, Sudan's success in resolving the conflict between the two countries will improve its regional and international standing and increase its influence in the Horn of Africa region due to the successful mediation that strengthened regional and global peace and security. Also, the unwillingness of the Egyptian and Ethiopian parties to accept Sudanese mediation may hinder Sudan's success in mediating a solution to the conflict.

In addition, Otinovs (2022) argues that Sudan can become a balancing factor and a stabilizing element in the tense relations between Egypt and Ethiopia due to its distinctive geopolitical and geostrategic location.

However, other researchers have emphasized the positive role that international parties could play in resolving the GERD conflict. For instance, Mehari (2020) believes that the African Union should seek to invite the parties to preventive diplomacy and work to produce a continental declaration regarding the adoption of the United Nations Convention on Water Resources.

2.5 The Social, Economic, and Environmental Impact of the GERD

There is disagreement in the literature about the environmental, economic, and social impacts of GERD on the Nile Basin countries. Some researchers such as Siddig et al. (2020), Khadam et al. (2016), and Gebreluel (2014) assume that the GERD would only have positive impacts. Yet, others such as Ahmed and Elsanabary (2015) and (Elnour, 2019) believe that GERD would have not only adverse but catastrophic effects on the region. Other researchers such as Ahmed and Elsanabary (2015), Mordos et al. (2020b), Omran and Negm (2018), and Kahsay et al. (2015)

assert that GERD would have both negative and positive impacts on riparian countries.

Gebreluel (2014) and Kahsay et al. (2015) argue that GERD will not negatively affect Egypt's share of water. On the contrary, it will contribute to increasing it by cooling the water in the dam's reservoir, reducing the amount of evaporated water in the Egyptian Aswan Dam. This is because the dam's reservoir in Ethiopia's highlands will preserve more water. Moreover, Mordos et al. (2020b) expect the GERD to reduce flood peaks by approximately 10-25%. Omran and Negm (2018) claim that controlling floods will also affect the annual water courses that enhance the water, food, and economic security of countries in the region. These researchers also think that GERD will contribute to a significant reduction in the sediment of the Nile, reaching 86%, thus reducing the blockage of irrigation channels and improving water flow in the long term. Decreased sediments will also enhance the storage capacity in the Sennar and Roseires dams and save much money spent on dredging and cleaning these canals.

Additionally, Kahsay et al. (2015) argue that regulating the Nile water resulting from the dam will also positively impact groundwater recharge and, thus, water availability for local and agricultural use. This will significantly improve Sudan's economy and food security. The dam will also contribute to controlling annual floods during the rainy season and maintaining human security. They think these benefits would provide Sudan with more than US\$200 million annually, reflecting positively on the Sudanese economy. Similarly, Siddig et al. (2020) assert that Sudan's accumulated GDP from the operation of the Renaissance Dam from 2020 to 2020 will increase by a rate ranging between US\$27.04 billion and US\$29.32 billion compared to the period preceding the dam. These gains are due to increased crop production gains due to agricultural expansion and value-added across the economy. The family welfare predicted results from 2020 to 2060 also highlighted disparities in the gains experienced by different families. The benefits to all

households' range between US\$23.41 billion and US\$24.89 billion compared to the baseline. In addition, the dam will decrease the service sector's contribution to the GDP by between US\$0.81 billion and US\$0.92 billion compared to the baseline. Furthermore, Khadam et al. (2016) expected that the operational capacity of Sudanese dams would increase significantly during the entire operation of the Renaissance Dam. Thus, the ability of the dams to generate hydroelectric power would increase. This is in addition to the possibility of Sudan importing electricity from Ethiopia, which will enhance Sudanese energy security.

Ahmed and Elsanabary (2015) show many adverse effects of the dam's reservoir on the downstream countries, other than the apparent shift in the river's course resulting from the construction of massive dams. The results of the four different time scenarios for filling the reservoir show that the velocity of the Nile water would decrease from 5% to 42%. Duru (2008) also predicted that the temperature of the Nile waters would decline by 0.5 to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Lower temperatures will change the chemical composition and dissolved oxygen levels in the river, harming existing plants and animals. The dam would also block sediments that work to replenish ecosystems downstream, which will affect agricultural lands and disperse millions of families due to the decrease in the share of water for downstream countries, specifically Egypt. In addition, the dam would lead to increased pollution of waterways and create problems in water supplies for drinking and industry, as well as in Nile tourism and fish farms. The dam's blocking of sediments will also cause erosion of the riverbed and banks, potentially undermining bridges and dams in the Nile River. Furthermore, Omran and Negm (2018) note that although the GERD will cause a decrease in sediments, it will result in larger quantities of fertilizers to prepare the soil for agriculture.

Ahmed and Elsanabary (2015) show that if the dam's reservoir is charged with 10 billion cubic meters per year or less within 3.8 years, Ethiopia will be able to achieve its declared goal of generating energy, while the damage to Egypt and Sudan will

be slight. But if the dam's reservoir is filled up to 79 billion cubic meters, this will cause the displacement of 122,000 people and emission of 7 million tons of carbon dioxide. As a result, agricultural lands will be affected, and millions of families will be migrated due to the decrease in the share of water in downstream countries, especially Egypt.

Kahsay et al. (2015) expects the water level to decrease when the dam reservoir is filled, harming Sudanese water security. However, the degree of decline in water levels depends on the rate and time of filling the dam by Ethiopia. Also, the dam projects in Sudan, such as the Roseires, Sennar, and Al-Jazeera projects, depend on the Blue Nile River for their water supplies. Consequently, the water levels of these projects will be negatively affected if Ethiopia finishes filling the dam's reservoir over short periods or during drought times.

Similarly, Ahmed and Elsanabary (2015) state that if the Renaissance Dam collapses, the area surrounding the Sudanese Sennar Dam will be flooded. This region is the most fertile part of Sudan and is home to many Sudanese. Also, the water level is expected to rise by 3 meters from the dam until it reaches Lake Nasser if it collapses. The dam's design is not appropriate and threatens all Nile Basin countries. Elnour (2019) also claims that there is a high probability that the dam will collapse, posing a great threat to Sudan's security. The dam's collapse will spread the Blue Nile River's water for a year to the surrounding area. Consequently, such a flood will cause considerable losses in lives, property, and Sudanese cities.

Mordos et al. (2020b) conducted a study estimating the potential impacts of the GERD on the Nile River system within Sudan. The study showed that the flow rate of the Blue Nile will decrease by 30% during the first filling of the dam, leading to slight to moderate changes in the central Nile hydrograph. This will affect an increase in average Nile water flow during the summer season by a rate ranging

from 10% to 500% for different months. However, the water level is expected to decrease by 2-3 meters during the flood season.

Elnour (2019) argues that most of the research on the negative impact of the Renaissance Dam focused on water availability and regulation in the post-operation phase of the dam while ignoring the effect on seasonal schedules. Many of these studies were not widely accepted by policymakers due to the inaccuracy of the methodology used and perhaps other reasons. In contrast to these studies, Wheeler et al. (2020) are widely accepted by policymakers to be the most critical study that examined the potential risks and opportunities for Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia by simulating the period of filling the Aswan High Dam reservoir to determine the effects of the Renaissance Dam on it. They claim that the Ethiopian dam will not generate a water deficit under average conditions on the High Dam reservoir. However, Essam et al. (2023), using the same methodology as Wheeler et al. (2020) argue that the results reached by them should be carefully considered need to be more accurate, and this is because of high fluctuations in the flow of the Nile River from year to year it is impossible to generalize the result of the historical period the researchers chose as a case study. Essam et al. (2023) noted that 60% of the selected research samples confirmed that there would be a water deficit downstream of the Nile River, ranging from 0.5 to 14.5 billion cubic meters in 3 years if Ethiopia follows the same filling policy. Therefore, it is inevitable and necessary for the Ethiopian state to fill the dam at long-term intervals to avoid the possible risks.

2.6 Solutions to the Conflict

Many scholars recommended several suggestions for solutions to solve the GERD conflict or at least to avoid transferring the cold dispute into an armed conflict. Lawson (2017) suggests that the only solution to preserve Egyptian interests and thus prevent an armed conflict with Ethiopia is to sign the Cooperative Framework Agreement to avoid the country supporting the agreement siding with Ethiopia

against it in the event of an armed conflict between Egypt and Ethiopia. Mehari (2020) argues that a regional cooperative strategy must be strengthened and not neglect all parties until the conflict is settled. He proposed that this strategy should consider the environmental changes caused by climate change within the framework of adopting joint policies to confront the risks of potential war and the consequences of climate change on the region. Whittington et al. (2014) proposed two leading solutions for this conflict. Firstly, both countries should agree on the operating rules and filling times of the GERD, especially during periods of drought. Secondly, Egypt must concede the historical water shares given to it in the 1959 agreement. Egypt must recognize Ethiopia's right to develop water infrastructure and build dams in the Nile basin.

On the other hand, Yihdego et al. (2017), asserting that international law is useless in resolving such disputes, proposed several solutions to avoid the outbreak of an armed conflict between riparian countries. The proposed solutions include several complementary paths that must be followed and achieved side by side to avoid conflict. First, due to the lack of studies that have thoroughly explored the various impacts and dimensions of the dams on riparian countries, researchers believe that it is a must to conduct several studies that examine the political, social, economic, and environmental impacts. Then, based on these results, the parties to the conflict can prepare strategic plans and geopolitical agreements that guarantee the rights of all parties and adopt the principles of justice and equality in the distribution of water resources. Furthermore, they proposed adopting the Roland-Ostrom framework to arrange shared cross-border resources, not only water but also minerals, energy resources, forests, and so on, enabling countries to share benefits and find workable solutions, thus ending the conflict.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Framework

3.1.1 Critical discourse analysis (CDA) theory

In order to understand the complex, dynamic nature of the process of securitization of water discourse and to reveal the contexts that stimulate the securitization process and its impact on the nature of the conflict, this requires a theoretical framework that studies the close relationship between the discourse and the political, economic and social context, in addition to the broader regional and international geopolitical context in which the discourse is shaped. The researcher also needs a theoretical framework that reveals the interaction of discourse with those local, regional, and international contexts, where it affects them as well as being affected by them. The researcher believes critical discourse analysis is the best to guide this study.

The term discourse refers to primarily written and oral texts. The term critical here does not refer to criticism in its negative sense. Still, it means that the researcher continues beyond merely explaining reality but instead searches for the relationship between the discourse and the surrounding contexts and interprets and analyzes the complex nature of that relationship (Tannen et al., 2015). According to Fairclough (1995), Criticism involves bringing to light the interconnectedness between various elements or issues. CDA theorists see language or discourse as a form of social practice (Wodak, 2002). They believe a dialectical relationship exists between discourse and the context in which that discursive event arises. Moreover, there is a connection between the actors (individuals/states/institutions) that create the discourse and the social structures that frame that discourse. They argue that this relationship is bidirectional. This means that not only do the agents, structures, and

surrounding contexts affect the discourse, but the discourse also shapes and influences them. Therefore, discourse is not merely expressions uttered by individuals or institutions but a rhetorical act that may help maintain a current social situation, reproduce it, and contribute to changing it. This arises from the power dynamics among those who produce the discourse and their ability to create and perpetuate unequal power relations (Wodak, 2002). Critical discourse analysis is a qualitative analytical approach concerned with describing, interpreting, and critically analyzing how discourse is constructed, maintained, legitimized, or resisted the established state of hegemony among social, political, or cultural actors, whether they are individuals, institutions, or states in "social and political contexts." It explains how positions of power can be exploited to impose a particular situation and reveals the relationships of political and social forces between different parties. In addition, ideology is a central concept in CDA theory, which considers that individuals or institutions employ a set of ideas and beliefs held by "ideology" to create, consolidate, or resist relations of domination (Wodak, 2002).

The Ideology and power concepts are two main concepts in the CDA analysis. Fairclough (2003, p. 218-219) defines ideology as representations of social and political aspects that play a pivotal role in establishing and upholding power dynamics, "dominance and exploitation." These ideologies are enacted through different forms of interactions and further through personal identities and behaviors (Wodak, 2009). The critical analysis of discourse is fundamental in ideological critique as it shows how various beliefs are impeded and sustained. Political scientists identified four central traits for ideologies. Firstly, ideologies give more importance to the distributions and exercise of power over empirical truths. The ideologies help actors achieve their goals by persuading the audience of these ideological beliefs regardless of how accurate and verifiable this information is. Secondly, ideologies are not merely information or beliefs but a guidance system for the actor's actions. The ideologies impede the norms, aims, and values of specific actors who seek to influence the audience and persuade them of these norms and

values to maintain their narrative and legitimize it. Thirdly, ideologies influence how the audience perceives and legitimizes a constructed reality or achieved actions of oneself and de-legitimize the narrative and actions of others. Finally, ideology targets logical coherence and internal consistency to bolster their persuasiveness and credibility. This internal cohesion ensures its endurance against critique and challenges from rival ideologies and points of view of other actors. Thus, analyzing the text deeply helps the research to unveil such impeded belief systems and objectives of the actors (Wodak, 2009).

Power is the other central concept of the CDA analysis. Vand Dijk argues that CDA researchers usually unveil how different actors use the discourse to maintain, construct, or challenge realities depending on their power (Wodak, 2009). For CDA theorists, language itself may not be determinative, but discourse derives its power from the agents who produce it. This implies that discursive texts are shaped by power differentials that are partially embedded and influenced by the timing and style of discourse. (Wodak, 2002). This makes discourses an embodiment of conflicts between conflicting forces, as the conflicting individuals' different ideologies, ideas, and interests and their negative and positive effects on the nature of the relationship appear (the struggle for hegemony). Therefore, the concept of power and authority is one of the central concepts in CDA due to its direct impact on the form of the resulting discourse, its nature, its impact, and its interaction with the surrounding contexts. Finally, the historical context in which discourse is produced is crucial as it is reproduced and interpreted according to the time and place it emerges, and hegemonic structures gain legitimacy through the ideologies of the most influential actors. The traditional hegemon usually produces texts that maintain the status quo and are consistent with his interests. In contrast, those resisting hegemony tend to produce rhetorical texts that challenge the *status quo* and reshape it according to their interests. The authority and power of the parties determine who is the party most capable of shaping reality (Wodak, 2002).

As previously noted, contextual understanding is crucial in CDA to deeply comprehend the relationship between political actors' speeches and the environments in which they emerge. Highlighting the significance of context in CDA analysis and its application to hydro-politics, Zeitoun and Warner (2010) assert that researchers should consider six distinct local, regional, and international contexts that influence water conflicts. This is because it affects the power relations between the conflicting parties, which affects the conflict because of changing the balance of power. This, in turn, affects the discourse regarding water conflicts. First, climate change. As the author previously explained in the previous studies chapter, there is a close relationship between the negative effects resulting from climate change (such as drought, floods, desertification, water scarcity, food shortages, social changes such as migration, and negative effects on the production capacity of hydroelectric energy) and the outbreak of conflicts. between countries. Daoudi (2007 & 2021b). Confirmed this in her study. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the relationship between water, energy, and food, how it has been affected by climate change, and its impact on the nature of the conflict in the Nile Basin. Secondly, the outbreak of war in a conflict zone, whether within the conflicting states or in the region, causes a change in the regional power equation. In this study, the researcher will explain how the conflicts that broke out in the Ethiopian region of Trigay, the conflict that broke out between the Sudanese army and the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces supported by the UAE later changed, and how the Gaza war affected the balance of power in the region. Moreover, regional conflicts create new major security challenges for borders and neighboring countries, which may narrow the space for maneuver and bargaining that the conflicting countries possess. Third, the political timing of negotiations and the timing of important decisions related to the conflict affect the nature of the conflict. For example, a new variable may contribute to the outbreak of tension between the two conflicting countries over an issue other than the water dispute or the occurrence of a sudden catastrophic local or regional event (leaking of a dialogue between the Egyptian political forces about the Renaissance Dam during the presidential meeting during the era of Egyptian

President Morsi), which negatively affects the Bilateral relations between countries hinder the negotiation process. In the case of the Ethiopian Dam, for example, we will find that bilateral disputes (the dispute between Egypt and Sudan over Halayeb and Shalateen, for example) between the three countries, apart from the issue of the Nile waters and the Renaissance Dam, had a major impact on the nature of the conflict throughout the tripartite negotiations. Fourth, changes in the local political scene may radically or significantly affect the nature of the conflict. Political changes include a change in decision-makers, such as the arrival of a new president or a military coup in one of the countries, which causes a change in the ruling political authority, as happened in Egypt in mid-2013, which caused a change during the conflict. Political changes also include widespread protests that result in political change, as was the case with the events in Sudan in 2019, which resulted in a radical change in the Sudanese position towards the issue of the Renaissance Dam. In addition, some local changes may have a regional impact, producing new alliances within the region that lead to a radical change in the balance of power in the region, resulting in unequal power relations between the conflicting parties. For example, the Arab Spring revolutions, resisted by some regional powers until they failed, contributed to a major change in the balance of power in the Middle East. The traditional powers of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq declined. Iran, Türkiye, the Emirates, and Saudi Arabia rose, and new coalition structures emerged in the region that affected the Renaissance Dam dispute. later. The researcher will explain this in detail during the analysis. Fifthly, one of the conflicting parties receiving support from regional or international powers may greatly affect the power relations between the conflicting forces and thus affect the course of the conflict. In this study, the researcher will explain how the alignment of geopolitical and geostrategic interests between the UAE, China, and Ethiopia contributed to Ethiopia obtaining the support of the UAE (regional powers) and China (international power) and the impact of that support on the Renaissance Dam dispute. The researcher will also examine the impact of American intervention in the dam dispute during the Trump administration on the course of the conflict. Finally, changes in political

circumstances may occur, such as the signing of a peace treaty or cooperation, for example, between the conflicting parties in changing the course of the conflict, not necessarily in the positive, as happened in the Israeli Jordanian water dispute after the signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan. As Daoudi says, cooperation between conflicting countries at some stage and reaching the signing of an agreement does not necessarily mean a complete solution to the conflict. On the contrary, if this agreement does not achieve the interests of the two conflicting parties, the agreements and negotiations may be used as an excuse for procrastination by one of the conflicting parties until it achieves its interests and can impose a reality on the other party, which will deepen the crisis in the long term. The researcher will explain how the 2015 Declaration of Principles agreement signed by the three countries (Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia) regarding the Renaissance Dam contributed to the intensification of the conflict in the long term.

These factors negatively affect the nature of water conflicts, but they vary in the extent of their impact. Through his analysis of the stages of the dam negotiations, the researcher will attempt to reveal the extent to which each of these contextual factors affects the conflict, under what contextual circumstances securitization processes are stimulated, and under what circumstances securitization diminishes. This will help the researcher reveal the effects of securitization or de-securitization on the production and reshaping of reality and resistance to it, in addition to revealing the consequences of this on the nature of the conflict.

Zeitoun & Warner (2006, p. 445) Proposed several tactics riparian countries may use to control the water resources in an international basin. One of these tactics is what he calls "Ideological compliance." This tactic includes knowledge constructing, securitization (whether it is structural, linguistic, or infrastructural), and usage of sanctioning discourse. They say that securitization is among the tactics that hydro hegemons utilize to achieve water resource control. On the other hand, the non-hegemonic riparian countries will have recourse to so-called "agenda-

framing" power. This implies they resort to "morality, de-securitization, international law, negotiations and generating positive-sum outcomes." In analyzing the GERD discourse, the researcher will examine how the traditional hegemonic power in the Nile basin (Egypt and partially Sudan) and the rising hegemonic power (Ethiopia) are both resorting to securitization and de-securitization depending on the local and transboundary contextual factors that affect them and are affected by them as well. As "International support, financial mobilization, and geopolitical factors" tend to foster the position of the riparian country as it provides the more powerful riparian countries with their "competitive edge." Moreover, countries' insistence on continuing negotiations on the condition that their preferential position is not harmed or in a way that does not meet the interests of both parties harms the negotiations. Also, the failure of one of the conflicting parties to show flexibility in sharing data and negotiating makes cooperation useless and a reason for exacerbating the conflict between the riparian countries.

CDA is not simply concerned with studying a linguistic unit but with investigating social and political phenomena that are inherently intricate, demanding a multidisciplinary and multi-method approach (Wodak, 2009). That is why the researcher will analyze the GERD course using the CDA approach coupled with the Securitization theory of Barry Buzan from the Copenhagen school.

3.1.2 Securitization theory

Buzan et al. (1998), in their famous book entitled "Security: A New Framework for Analysis," explain the concept of securitization, which refers to moving the issue from the usual scope of politics to a particular type of politics or what can be called supra-politics or high politics. Through securitization, a politician frames an issue in a new scope, far from the scope in which it was previously positioned, and thus, the rules of the game change, and it turns into an issue of public opinion, which provides the opportunity for the decision maker to make exceptional decisions. This

is what researchers call transforming the issue from a non-politicized issue to a politicized issue. In some cases, politicians take a more extreme path as they tend to securitize an issue, which creates the opportunity to take unusual measures and decisions according to the political, economic, and social contexts at that time. This process is known as securitization, through which an issue is presented as an existential threat that requires dealing with it outside the normal bounds of political procedures.

One of the methods of securitizing water issues that Fischhendler and Nathan (2013) revealed included linguistic securitization or securitization through discourse to which conflicting parties tend to achieve specific interests. Securitization theory assumes that security is produced through the act of speech. Balzacq et al. (2016) say that securitization theory was not the first to be concerned with how social issues are constructed and designed. It was studied by many researchers, such as (Foucault, 1969), who studied the construction of collective categories in addition to their practical consequences. However, with its strong connection to politics, securitization theory has provided security studies with a distinct perspective on security issues. Securitization theory enables researchers to answer the following questions: What turns an issue into a security issue, how is an issue securitized?, and What kind of responses and consequences arise from this?

The securitization theory was built on the speech act approach, which Austin (1975) theorized during university philosophical lectures, later printed in a book entitled "How to Do Things with Words." The concept of speech acts indicates that sentences are not just a few expressive or declarative words. However, they express the intentions, interests, and goals of the speaker who wants to direct the audience to do something. Therefore, Austin (1975) called these sentences performative as they are used to perform a specific action targeted by the speaker (Lamarque and Asher, 1997). Balzacq et al. (2016) claim that securitization theory assumes that the word security or the words used by the securitizing actor in his speech have a performative

character. That is, these words do not only describe reality but also the securitizing actor's aims, through securitization of the discourse, to transform reality and change it in a way that suits his preferred political options and self-interests. Securitization theorists argue that the speaker – the securitizing actor- identifies the referent object of security and the national threat that makes it insecure (Balzacq et. al, 2016).

Buzan et al. (1998) argue that security is a self-referential practice because the issue at hand does not necessarily have to be a security issue that poses an existential threat once that threat is real. It may not be so, and what made it a security matter was presenting the issue in this way to justify certain political decisions and achieve self-interests. Researchers distinguish between securitization and the move towards securitization or securitizing move. Buzan et al. (1998) say that using securitization in discourse to present something as an existential threat to a referent object is merely a move or step toward securitization. Securitizing discourse on an issue does not create securitization but is achieved when the public accepts it. Public acceptance occurs through coercion or consent. Buzan et al. (1998) argue that securitization occurs if actors can resonate enough to legitimize extraordinary measures and unusual actions. This acceptance can be confirmed if existential threats, necessity, and the point of no return are evident in the securitization discourse. If these data do not appear in the discourse, we can discuss a movement toward securitization, not actual securitization.

Nathan and Fischhendler (2016) established seven criteria to determine whether securitization had occurred or not regarding the 38 conflict events they found in the negotiation protocols. They used the variables developed by Buzan & Weaver (2009) to complete the act of securitization. in the Copenhagen School, in addition to new variables. First, the referent object refers to things the actor sees as existentially threatened and must continue to survive, such as social and political principles” (e.g., rights, sovereignty, political stability), “environmental integrity” and “safety” (e.g., resource scarcity, pollution), and human safety (from violence and bloodshed).

Second, the point of no return, which in turn indicates the existence of a threshold (a specific event) after which the danger disappears, and the threat ends once that point is reached. Third, "way out of the conflict" solutions proposed by the parties to the conflict, such as recognition of "the rights of political and social principles, economics/development - an acknowledgment of rights - annexation of land/appropriation of water supplies -cooperation." Fourth, existential verb or speech acts, indicate existential danger or immediate harm such as "attack, live, injure, sacrifice" (e.g., suffering, smothering, sacrificing). Fifth, rhetorical tools of securitization such as "security, suffering," like the phrase "water is life," indicate the presence of a threat due to water scarcity. Sixth, rhetorical construction that reflects negotiation arguments such as "comparison" (compare or contrast), "circumstances" (possible or impossible), "deliberative" (beneficial or harmful and detrimental), "causal arguments" (relationship), and "judicial" (right or wrong).". Seventh, the public's response to the act of securitization and their perception of the existential threat and their recognition of it, such as "agreement," "disagreement," "no response," and "unclear response."

Furthermore, Fischhendler and Nathan (2013) assume that water issues cannot be determined objectively. Still, they are socially constructed, and their nature is perceived and determined through an ongoing collective communication process that results in common meanings and understanding of water issues. They argue that the securitization of water discourse is not static but dynamic, changing according to context. The water issue has been framed as a security issue in four thematic contexts in the literature. First, water availability refers to the difference between supply and demand for water, which causes the formation of water pressures. Secondly, human vulnerability to natural disasters such as floods and damage to water networks and ways to protect against them. Thirdly, human needs include food security, human health, and development. Finally, sustainability is related to human needs but focuses more on administrative aspects related to the needs of the environment and the human system, such as international deals and treaties. They

developed three approaches and methods through which securitizing actors tend to securitize water discourse: (1) linguistic communication, (2) the use of visual images, (3) an institutional approach such as forming a task force concerned with this matter, and (4) finally, developing infrastructure such as building walls and fences or establishing surveillance systems.

In addition, Fischhendler (2015) argues that many scholars have overlooked the mechanisms and strategies that parties to the conflict tend to resort to securitizing water issues by institutionalizing securitization and its impact on political decision-making. He reveals four triggers that stimulate the context of securitization of water discourse, such as (1) the occurrence of a catastrophic event, (2) water scarcity, (3) power asymmetry, and (4) the place or social framework in which environmental issues are contested. Moreover, the researcher presented three securitization mechanisms conflict parties use if contextual variables stimulate the water securitization process such as (1) institutional mechanisms include the exclusion of civil society and the state's monopoly on decision-making, (2) structural mechanisms are concerned with protecting infrastructure, such as creating buffer zones around water infrastructure or dams, and (3) linguistic securitization mechanisms, which water discourses are securitized, and specific narratives are framed that justify certain political decisions, such as taking military action and waging war.

Moreover, Nathan and Fischhendler (2016) reveal the contextual factors motivating the securitization of the water issue and how to build a discourse that includes the language of threats, such as the use of existential verbs and rhetorical expressions indicating securitization, in addition to scrutinizing the effects of the act of securitization. They suggest that the most important contextual factors motivating securitization are the adverse events discussed by the actors during the negotiation process, the proportion of participants from each party in the negotiation venue, and the location and nature of the political or technical negotiation. They argue that

when the previously mentioned contextual factors are present, parties tend toward securitization in all forms, exacerbating the crisis and perpetuating hostility between the conflicting parties.

In his study of the Indus water basin, Burgess (2013) distinguished two types of securitizations that conflicting parties in water disputes tend to use: (1) the state-based or geopolitical securitization model and (2) the human water securitization model. He examined three main variables of securitization theory such as the securitizing actor, the referent object, and the threat in these models. In the geopolitical securitization model, the securitizing actor is the state, which is represented by ministries, various bodies, politicians, and executives who are in a position that allows them to participate in the securitization process by controlling the security political discourse regarding the water issue until the public accepts it as a national security issue. This is what Buzan et al. (1998) refers to as a successful securitization process. In contrast, the security actor in the human security model is assumed not to be separated from the international system with its various components, including governmental and non-governmental organizations and aid agencies. All these institutions in the water issue intervene alongside the state in shaping the discourse on water and moving it from non-political discourse to political and security discourse. However, due to their ineffectiveness, the securitization process often fails; thus, only local actors who firmly control the securitization of water issues remain. The referent object in the geopolitical securitization model is the state that ultimately presents itself as under threat due to the decreasing amounts of water it needs. In contrast, the referent object in the human securitization model is the individual. On the other hand, the threats referred to in the state-based securitization model will negatively affect the strategic and regional interests of the state and have severe consequences for regional peace and security. On the contrary, the human securitization model is concerned with the threats to the individual in his daily life, such as the individual's requirements for

food, health, or desired well-being. In short, countries may securitize the same issue yet in a different way.

Fischhendler and Nathan (2013) argue that applying the security approach to the issue of water security increases the level of accuracy of analysis and distinguishes more profoundly and clearly between the goals, reasons, and consequences of both the geopolitical (state) perspective, as well as the human security perspective. Another difference between human and geopolitical securitization is the high end of the two types. While geopolitical securitization was perceived to intensify the conflict, human securitization targets enhancing cooperation.

However, Burgess (2013) also argues that although this clear diversion between geopolitical and human securitization might exist yet applied to water securitization in democratic states, the case is more complex when applied to non-democratic cases. The securitizing actors in non-democratic states are usually the state itself, as the role of civil society barely exists. The success of securitization does not necessitate the acceptance of domestic audience in a non-democratic state. However, what Buzan et al. (1998) overlooked is the international audience, including neighboring countries, major powers, and international donors. In fact, Burgess (2013) believes that although the acceptance of a domestic audience is not required, the acceptance of an international audience is crucial in case the securitization targets internationalization of the issue.

According to the theory of securitization, there are two main facilitating conditions for securitization, one of which is internal, which is linguistic and discursive, and the other is external, which relates to the external context supporting the securitization process (Fischhendler and Nathan, 2015). However, Balzacq et al. (2016) disagree about whether the performative power of discourse securitization is primarily linked to the contexts in which these discourses are constructed or whether

it is independent of the public's acceptance of these discourses and the contexts of the discourse.

Many researchers have criticized the theory of securitization due to the lack of clarity in the criteria through which researchers can measure the extent of public acceptance of securitization of an issue. For instance, Waever (1995) emphasized the ambiguity of the criterion of "public acceptance" as a condition for achieving securitization. To solve this dilemma in securitization theory, Leonard and Kaunert (2019) proposed combining securitization theory with insights from the three-stream model of public policies that Kingdon (1995) theorized. They argue that this will enable them to determine the extent of the influence of different public sectors on the securitization process. However, they also believe the researcher should not ignore identifying a specific audience that influences decision-making. They have identified two divergent functions of the audience in the securitization process. The first function is to provide moral support, and the second is to formally authorize the securitizing representative, such as taking a mandate from the Parliament because it constitutes the elected official legislative body in the country, facilitating an exceptional decision to address the existing threat. As an example of these functions, although the British government did not receive moral support from the people, it was able to enter the war after obtaining the approval of Parliament, which represented another constituency (Balzacq et al. 2016).

Initially, the researchers assumed the importance of public acceptance to achieve the securitization process on a principal basis, which is the public's primary role in policymaking, by assuming that the policy maker (the securitizing actor) cannot take any exceptional measure without the approval of that public. Therefore, achieving securitization requires the support of the public in advance. However, Contrary to the claims of the Copenhagen school regarding the "linearity" of the securitization process, Balzacq (2019, p. 343) argues that the dynamics of the securitization process in non-democratic societies assert the non-linearity, unpredictability, and

complexity of the securitization process and its consequences in dictatorships. Cote (2016) and Manon (2018) point out that securitization lies in a larger "security narrative," which coexists with other speech acts that aim for different objectives other than legitimizing taking extraordinary measures as the Copenhagen school assumes (Witteck, 2022, pp. 29-30). In addition, scholars have overlooked a fundamental point, which is the role of the public in policymaking in non-democratic countries or dictatorships. All the examples that the researchers were concerned with were limited to the USA and the UK, in which acceptance by the public or a representative part of it, such as Parliament, is mainly required, as happened in the invasion of Iraq in Britain and in the passing of a bill to provide financial support to Israel in the USA, despite the absence of the condition of moral acceptance and moral support by the American public of the bill as mentioned earlier (Balzaq et al., 2016). This shows how the securitization theory was biased toward democratic countries, which questions its applicability to non-democratic study cases (Kapur & Mabon, 2018; Wilkinson, 2007). If this is the situation in democratic countries, what about the situation in dictatorial countries ruled by civilians? To go further, what role can the public play in policymaking in countries ruled by military generals, including the Parliament itself -as part of the public? When the credibility of parliaments that were not formed through free, fair, and transparent elections is questioned, according to reports from many international institutions, and when decision-makers are not elected, can we consider parliaments in those countries as a legitimate representative that can give a formal mandate to the securitizing actor to make a specific decision? Therefore, this question casts doubt on the necessity of fulfilling the condition of "public acceptance" for the securitization process to be achieved. The role played by people in dictatorships such as Sudan and Egypt in policy making is marginal. The people may be directed in favor of a particular cause, and certain sections of the people or Parliament may request a formal mandate. However, it does not necessarily represent the public or its influential role in securitization. However, Vuori (2008, pp.69–71) argues that it is helpful to scrutinize the securitization process in dictatorships to study how non-democratic

regimes tend to securitize specific issues to "reproduce and control the social order or to build and maintain bonds within the society."

Moreover, Holm (2003) contends that although dictatorships may fear the securitization of particular issues to avoid triggering massive demonstrations of internal unrest and instability, they may tend to securitization for legitimizing exceptional political decisions (Wittek, 2022). Consequently, the researcher believes that if non-democratic states securitize specific issues, such as water issues, the spotlight must be focused on the political and economic contexts and on external factors, such as international powers supporting one party to the conflict over another or a change in the balance of international or regional power balance, or Environmental changes such as climate change that have a considerable impact on the issue. Such contexts play an active role in conflicts and fundamentally influence the direction of conflict parties towards securitization or abandoning it.

Stetter et al. (2011) argue that water securitization is helpful in accelerating and legitimizing extraordinary measures to deal with climate change-related catastrophes. While Stetter et al. (2011) scrutinized the impact of securitization of water issues on the national level and during times of peace, other scholars such as Fischhendler and Nathan (2013) investigated the impact of water securitization on the evolution of water conflicts among riparian countries. They both argue that water securitization is beneficial for conflicting parties to resolve the dispute sustainably. However, they also argue that although the securitization of water discourse may create a win-win situation for the parties to the conflict, which addresses the issue more comprehensively and sustainably, it may distract countries from national security issues that represent a real threat to them, leading to the depletion of institutional and governmental resources and capabilities. In addition, the absence of the ability to accurately measure threats will result in taking measures and making policies that are disproportionate to the situation.

On the contrary, Fröhlich (2012), in his study on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict concerning water, highlighted the images and patterns of representation employed by actors in their discourse during times of water-related conflict. These representations infuse the discourse with a security dimension, fostering an exclusionary narrative that hinders communication and renders negotiation seemingly impossible under prevailing circumstances. The researcher concludes that the Palestinian and Israeli rhetorical contents about water focused on securitizing water, excluding the other party, sharply criticizing it, and rejecting its concerns and needs. This exclusionary discourse, which adopts an us-and-them discourse, hinders the cooperation process and obstructs negotiations on the water dispute between the two parties. However, when the warring parties excluded the securitizing actors and included those considered to be reformists in the negotiation team, the communication process was facilitated a little bit and allowed the negotiations to resume. The author points out that the shift in the formulation of discourses on water issues, which occurs when geopolitical, economic, or military change occurs, may change the nature of the conflict and reduce its intensity.

Similarly, Nathan and Fischhendler (2016) concluded that the securitization process negatively affects the negotiation process, possibly contributing to escalating tension and exacerbating the conflict. They claim that securitization marginalizes water as a natural resource and highlights the concerns of each party to the conflict, which creates a zero-sum game. Thus, scholars have called for de-securitization in water issues (Leb & Wouters, 2013; Daoudy, 2007; Waever, 1995; Zeitoun et al., 2013; J. Fröhlich, 2012). They assume that de-securitization would lead to cooperation among the disputing countries, which would avoid the escalation of the conflict, unlike the impact of water securitization. Nonetheless, de-securitization does not necessarily mean cooperation and neither does the existence of cooperation ensure the ending of the water conflict.

According to Mirumachi and Allan (2007), conflict and cooperation are divided into degrees of intensity and impact. Therefore, they claimed that securitization, a level of conflict, may coexist with cooperation. In addition, Craig (1993) also underscores that cooperation and conflict are not necessarily two opponent concepts as they may exist simultaneously in water disputes. Furthermore, Daoudy and Kristin (2008) argue that although international cooperation in the joint management of international waters is promoted as a solution to conflicts over water resources, cooperation may often fall short of expected levels.

Daoudy (2004) studied the minutes of meetings held between Syria and Turkey regarding the Tigris and Euphrates rivers for 40 years to understand the nature of the relationship between the water dispute and other strategic issues and the impact of the regional context on this relationship. The researcher concluded that the negotiation process, during which the two parties signed bilateral agreements, did not help in reaching a final solution to this conflict due to the conflicting positions of the conflicting parties and their clash over other strategic issues that negatively affected the water negotiations. This challenges the effectiveness of negotiation and agreement signing as paths toward cooperation and conflict resolution, particularly evident in the ongoing conflict between Syria and Turkey over the Tigris and Euphrates waters.

The water conflicts Literature has proven that de-securitization, cooperation, and negotiation engagement do not necessarily solve the conflict. On the other hand, it may intensify conflict, leading to an armed conflict in the future. Indeed, Fischhendler and Nathan (2013) contended that more research should be conducted to explore the drivers of securitization of security discourse, as well as more studies that reveal the effects of securitization on the potential for cooperation between riparian states. Similarly, Fischhendler (2015) asserted that a research gap in water conflict studies requires researchers to study both the long-term and short-term effects of water securitization discourse.

In conclusion, the existing disagreement among scholars about the idea of water securitization and whether it had negative or positive effects on the future of conflict raises the significance of conducting more studies to understand the real impact of water securitization on the nature of the conflict. In the same manner, more studies should be done to investigate the impact of cooperation on the nature of water disputes and the possibility of the coexistence of cooperation and conflict in water disputes.

3.2 Data Collection

CDA is carried out on the discourse of three countries - Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan - regarding the conflict on the GERD, which Ethiopia began building in 2011. The year 2013 is a starting point for the discourses because the official negotiations regarding the GERD began between the three parties in 2013. Therefore, the study will cover Jan 2013 and Oct 2023.

The analysis was focused on speeches issued by securitizing actors who are mainly presidents, prime ministers, and ministries concerned with the issue ministers officially participate in the negotiations, such as the ministry of agriculture, irrigation, and electricity, the ambassador of each country to the other country, the foreign minister as well as prominent negotiator team members. The official statements issued by these institutions are also included in the analyses.

The researcher will analyze the statements released by these people and bodies mentioned, which included official statements reported by the media, press, and television interviews regarding the dam negotiations, as well as essential tweets on x sites - previously Twitter - which are no less critical than other statements and have been immensely adopted by ruling men and politicians in the last decade to publish statements about political crises and international conflicts. Taking into consideration the length of the era, the number of statements, the change in political

regimes in those countries, and thus the change in personalities occupying those positions, the researcher believed that the best way to collect the speeches under analysis would be by choosing a newspaper specialized in each of the three countries.

Five newspapers are used as sources for data collection. Three of the newspapers are from the countries involved in the GERD disputes such as Egypt (Ahram Online), Ethiopia (The Reporter), and Sudan (Sudan Tribune), and two of them are international (The Anadolu Agency and Al Jazeera English). In choosing these newspapers, care was taken to ensure that they were among the most famous, the oldest, and the most respected, and they have a website in English. To ensure their status as highly reliable and widely circulated newspapers, the researcher considered not only their historical longevity but also quantified their credibility and reach by assessing the number of followers they have on social media platform X. Two international newspapers were chosen to enhance the credibility and impartiality of the sample analysis and to mitigate potential selection biases.

The "Renaissance dam" is used as a keyword to search for the issue in these newspapers. The data collection period spans from mid-October 2023 to mid-January 2024. A total of 1922 articles include the key word (Table 1). This number decreased to 1336 after discarding 586 articles which are repeatedly published, are not related to the Renaissance Dam dispute, and are opinion articles. After carefully examining each article another 682 articles were discarded because they included the same declarations. Finally, a total of 654 articles are subjected to the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Table 2).

Table 3.1. Newspapers and the number of articles examined

Name of Newspaper	Ahram Online	The reporter	Sudan Tribune	The Anadolu Agency	Al Jazeera English
Founded in	Ahram Online, launched in 2010, is the English-language news website of Al-Ahram that was established in 1875.	1995	2003	1920	Al Jazeera Media Network was founded in 1996 yet it introduced an English-language division in 2006.
Websites	http://t.co/6sUYB2qJtw https://x.com/ahramonline?s=11&t=XBPx-YQdzNMBZEZvnbIA	http://www.thereporterethiopia.com/ https://x.com/thereporter?s=11&t=XBPx-YQdzNMBZEZvnbIA	http://www.sudantribune.com/ https://x.com/sudantribune_en?s=11&t=XBPx-YQdzNMBZEZvnbIA	http://www.aa.com.tr/en/	https://www.aljazeera.com/ https://x.com/ajenglish

Number of Twitter followers	179.1 K	178.5 K	98.2 K	233.6 K	8.8 M
Total Number	781	383	435	223	100
Number of Articles chosen after exclusion (sample analysis)	550	260	238	173	70

Table 3.2. Number of declarations of three countries from Jan 2013 to Oct 2023.

Number of declarations per year	Egypt	Sudan	Ethiopia
2013	25	6	15
2014	33	14	23
2015	39	12	15
2016	19	6	7
2017	12	7	10
2018	19	12	12
2019	26	6	21
2020	28	24	44
2021	50	50	50
2022	29	8	21
2023	7	-	4

Total	287	145	222
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In addition, Data related to water resources in the Nile, the impact of climate change, water scarcity, and water resources in Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan and their uses was obtained from international institutions and organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Bank, the United Nations, and the United States Agency for International Development (climate change risk files). In addition, the official statements announced by the institutions of the countries under study and the climate and international development reports issued by the International Relief Organization were also included. This is in addition to previous literature published in international journals, regional and international think tanks, and research centers.

Furthermore, Data related to international agreements between the Nile Basin countries and the course of relations and bilateral dispute issues between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia was obtained from previous studies, international organizations such as the United Nations, and the governmental institutions in which these agreements were published.

3.3 Data Analysis

Nathan and Fischhendler (2016) contend that parties involved in water conflicts may resort to various forms of securitization, including framing water issues within a security discourse. Their research builds on the variables established by Buzan et al. (1998) and introduces additional factors to explain how actors engage in securitizing discourse. These variables, detailed in Table 3.3, include the referent object, the point of no return, possible resolutions to the conflict, existential verbs, and rhetorical tools for verbal securitization. Securitization involves presenting an issue as a significant threat to a referent object (such as a state, society, or way of life),

thereby justifying the adoption of exceptional measures that surpass ordinary political or legal processes. This concept, originating from the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, involves elevating a subject to a security concern, legitimizing extraordinary actions to address it (Ole, 1995; Buzan et. al, 1998; Buzan, 2007). Conversely, de-securitization entails moving an issue from the security domain to a standard political or policy matter. This process involves reducing the perceived threat and advocating for conventional political solutions rather than exceptional measures, aiming to normalize and manage the issue through standard governance practices.

Drawing on these definitions and building upon the work of Nathan and Fischhendler (2016), the researcher has identified various thresholds contributing to the securitization theory and facilitating an empirical and objective assessment of securitizing and de-securitizing actions. These thresholds encompass key factors indicative of the point of no return, as defined by Nathan and Fischhendler, but not detailed for measurement purposes. These factors include the "embedding of hostile rhetoric, breakdown of dispute resolution mechanisms and severe diplomatic damage, and internationalization through legal appeals to the UN or requests for international mediation, explained in detail in Table 3.3. Additionally, two key variables have been identified to measure de-securitization: shifts in strategic goals by the securitizing actor and declarations of reduced perceived threat or denial of harm, even if such harm exists. These variables are also elaborated in Table 3.3. and table 3.4. Securitizing and de-securitizing moves are identified based on whether a statement includes at least one key variable from Table 3.3. and table 3.4. It is noted that some statements may include multiple variables or even repeat the exact variable multiple times, such as using several existential verbs or combining existential verbs, referent objects, and existential rhetoric within a single statement.

Table 3.3. Key Variables for Identifying Securitizing Moves

Referent object	Refers to the things that are perceived by the riparian country as existentially threatened and must continue to survive (e.g. water security, national security, national unity and identity, economic development, sovereign rights, human safety)
Existential Verb	The verb signifies an existential threat. E.g. (attack, live, suffer, sacrifice, smother, endanger, jeopardize, undermine, destabilize, compromise)
Rhetorical tools of verbal securitization (existential rhetorical)	Any statement refers to existential harm or danger, such as (water is life, a matter of life or death, water is a red line).
Point of no return	implies a critical juncture where the referent object is perceived to be in such grave danger that it may reach a state from which recovery is either extremely difficult, exceptionally challenging or impossible. In international conflicts, asserting that a dispute has reached a point of no return may be used to justify adopting aggressive or extraordinary diplomatic measures. This significantly limits the possibilities for peaceful resolution and may lead to further escalation or prolonged instability. Here are some key factors that could indicate this critical juncture: Embedding of Hostile Rhetoric: When discussions about water conflicts become deeply hostile and adversarial, with entrenched narratives framing the situation as a zero-sum game where one side's gain is seen as another's loss, this hostile rhetoric can solidify positions and reduce opportunities for negotiation.

	Breakdown of Dispute Resolution Mechanisms & Severe Diplomatic Damage: When mechanisms for resolving or managing conflicts fail completely, resolution is prevented through dialogue or negotiation due to mistrust, ineffective mediation, or collapsed institutions. Additionally, when severe damage to diplomatic relationships caused by the securitization of water conflicts makes future negotiations or cooperation nearly impossible, potentially involving actions like withdrawal of diplomatic recognition and treaty violations. Ex: when a party declares that another party violated agreements or declared that negotiations Reached “a dead-end / stalemate/ unwillingness to resume negotiations / last chance of negotiation.” Internationalization through legal appealing to the UN or asking for international mediation: Requests for international mediation, threats of internationalization, or recourse to international tribunals or the United Nations that may obstruct or complicate negotiations if one party categorically rejects these conflict resolution methods such as Ethiopia in the GERD case.
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Source: Nathan and I. Fischhendler, (2016)

Table 3.4. Key Variables for Identifying de-securitizing Moves

Non-existential verbs	The verb does not signify an existential threat. E.g. (Enhances, regulates, asks, demands, contains, rejects, distributes, manages, address, promotes, facilitates)
Strategic goals	Two key factors could indicate this critical juncture: Focus Shift: Redirecting attention from security concerns to other dimensions, such as economic, social, or technical aspects. Ex:

	Phrases like "manageable issue," "not political but technical," or "normal problem" instead of being a "crisis" or "security" problem. Policy Adjustment: An official transition from a security framework to a regular political or policy framework must occur, involving policy changes, official statements, or legislative actions that signify the shift from a securitized to a de-securitized status.
Reduction in Perceived Threat	The issue must no longer be viewed as an existential threat, with the perceived level of threat or harm being denied or minimized
Way-out of the conflict	The condition indicates when a securitized issue no longer poses an existential threat to the referent object, allowing the issue to be re-framed as a standard political or social issue rather than an emergency or security matter. Here are some key factors that could indicate this critical juncture: Engagement and Cooperation: A collaborative approach emphasizes cooperation over conflict, while promoting dialogue and negotiation as preferred methods for resolution instead of unilateral actions or defensive measures. Economic development and environmental benefits of the GERD: Commitment to Non-Violent Resolution: The dispute should be resolved peacefully, with the conflicting parties committing to refrain from succumbing to aggression, rejecting the notion that war is a

	viable solution, and dismissing violent methods as a means of conflict resolution.
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Source: Nathan & I. Fischhendler, (2016).

The government's discourse on the GERD is delineated into three distinct phases marked by significant shifts that influenced the securitization or de-securitization of the water discourse. From January 2013 to May 2014, Egyptian officials initially tended to securitize the GERD discourse, while Ethiopian and Sudanese governments leaned towards de-securitization. Subsequently, from May 2014 to October 2019, the prevailing discourse among Egyptian, Ethiopian, and Sudanese authorities demonstrated a de-securitization approach regarding the GERD dispute. The third phase, spanning from October 2019 to October 2023, witnessed an escalation in the Egyptian government's securitization efforts, particularly from October 2019 to October 2021. In contrast, Ethiopian discourse on the GERD largely maintained a de-securitization stance with occasional minor securitizing actions. The Sudanese government initially intensified securitization efforts until October 2019, when an internally destabilizing event—the UAE-backed military coup—led to internal conflict affecting Sudan's foreign policy approach (see table 3.5, table 3.6, table 3.7, table 3.8, and table 3.9 for further details).

Table 3.5. Number of securitizing and de-securitizing moves of three countries from 2013 to 2023

Number of securitizing and de-securitizing	Egyptian securitizing moves	Egyptian de-securitizing moves	Ethiopian securitizing moves	Ethiopian De-securitizing	Sudanese securitizing moves	Sudanese De-securitizing

moves in each year				ing moves		ing moves
2013	15	6	4	11	-	6
Until 2014 May	4	1	2	6	-	4
First phase	19	7	6	17	-	10
After 2014 May	4	16	-	6	-	4
2015	8	20	1	10	1	5
2016	1	9	-	5	-	4
2017	1	6	1	5	1	5
2018	2	14	-	6	-	6
2019 until oct	-	5	1	5	-	-
Second phase	16	70	3	37	2	24
Since 2019 oct	6	4	1	6	-	3
2020	17	5	4	21	5	10
2021	34	16	4	25	26	5
2022	10	8	1	11	2	1

2023	3	5	-	3	-	-
Third phase	70	38	10	66	33	19

Table 3.6. Number of securitizing and de-securitizing moves of three countries from 2013 to 2023

Number of securitizing and de-securitizing moves in each year	Egyptian securitizing moves	Egyptian de-securitizing moves	Ethiopian securitizing moves	Ethiopian De-securitizing moves	Sudanese securitizing moves	Sudanese De-securitizing moves
First phase	19	7	6	17	-	10
Second phase	16	70	3	37	2	24
Third phase	70	38	10	66	33	19

Table 3.7. Securitizing and de-securitizing moves of Egypt from 2013 to 2023

Criteria for securitization	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Criteria for de-securitization	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Referent objects	13	13	72	Non-existential verb	2	45	25
Existential verbs	15	3	70	Reduction in Perceived Threat	1	5	1
Existential rhetorical	9	6	27	Strategic objectives:			
				Focus shift	-	4	1
				Policy adjustment	1	1	5
Point of no return:				Way out:			
Embedding of Hostile Rhetoric	3	-	19	Engagement and cooperation	6	56	29
Breakdown of Dispute Resolution Mechanisms & Severe Diplomatic Damage	4		33	Economic development and environmental benefits of the GERD	-	-	-
Internationalization through legal appealing to the UN or asking for mediation	1		18	Commitment to Non-Violent Resolution	1	6	-

Table 3.8. Securitizing and de-securitizing moves of Ethiopia from 2013 to 2023

Criteria for securitization	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Criteria for de-securitization	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Referent objects	4	2	9	Non-existential verb	10	18	55
Existential verbs	-	-	3	Reduction in Perceived Threat	5	8	18
Existential rhetorical	-	1	-	Strategic objectives:	-		
				Focus shift		2	6
				Policy adjustment		-	-
Point of no return:		-		Way out:			
Embedding of Hostile Rhetoric	2		1	Engagement and cooperation	11	28	48
Breakdown of Dispute Resolution Mechanisms & Severe Diplomatic Damage	-		2	Economic development and environmental benefits of the GERD	3	3	12
					3	2	6

Internationalization through legal appealing to the UN or asking for mediation	-		-	Commitment to Non-Violent Resolution			
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Table 3.9. Securitizing and de-securitizing moves of Sudan from 2013 to 2023

Criteria for securitization	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Criteria for de-securitization	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Referent objects	-	-	23	Non-existential verb	4	13	15
Existential verbs	-	-	20	Reduction in Perceived Threat	-	3	-
Existential rhetorical	-	2		Strategic objectives: Focus shift Policy adjustment	1 -	-	-

Point of no return:	-	-		Way out:			
Embedding of Hostile Rhetoric			1	Engagement and cooperation	6	20	17
Breakdown of Dispute Resolution Mechanisms & Severe Diplomatic Damage			8	Economic development and environmental benefits of the GERD	4	6	1
Internationalization through legal appealing to the UN or asking for mediation			16	Commitment to Non-Violent Resolution	1	2	-

For each phase, main elements of securitization and de-securitization will be investigated to analyze how, when, and why political actors construct securitizing and de-securitizing moves. The CDA is carried out by carefully examining all the statements to profoundly examine divergent interests, goals, demands, fears, and perceptions of each party regarding the nature of the GERD dispute while highlighting context-related linkages and the importance of the water resource for each actor in order to understand the impact of the discourse as well as the contextual factors triggered the securitization and de-securitization on the paths of cooperation and conflict among the three countries regarding the Nile waters.

In addition, The Mirumachi and Allan (2007) framework is used to investigate the possibility of the co-existence of conflict, with its varying intensities, including de-securitization and securitization, and cooperation. The thesis will further show how Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia using Reyes's (2011) legitimization strategies, which are strategies used to justify actions or policies, tended to construct and challenge realities of cooperation and conflict considering the wider Socio-political-economic local, regional, and international context (geopolitical context). It will later show how the context affected the GERD discourse and how it shaped it. The researcher will further unveil the impeded ideologies, norms, interests, and interests in the GERD discourse the reasons behind securitization and de-securitization, and their impact on the conflict. The same methodology is applied to each conflicting party separately. This methodology made it possible to explore the extent of congruence and difference of the interests, goals, perceptions, policy choices, and visions of the three countries regarding the origin of the conflict, the causes of disagreement, the failure of negotiations, and ways to resolve the conflict.

Mirumachi and Allan (2007) have developed a new analysis approach capable of dealing with the dual nature of conflict, including conflict and cooperation in shaping relations between riparian states in international river basins. This is done by dealing with the ongoing coexisting situations of cooperation and conflict against each other in the two-dimensional and interactive relationship between the parties to the water conflict. Mirumachi and Allan (2007) employed Warner's (2004) and Zeitoun's (2007) framework designed to understand the varying intensity of conflict and cooperation in international river basins. This framework is the best for this thesis as it is drawn from the securitization theory of Buzan et al. (1998) and Neumann (1998), which claim that the intensity of the conflict depends on the perception of the leading actors of water conflicts that escalate due to shifts in the perception of actors. According to them, the intensity of conflict can be categorized into four key categories depending on the varying intensity of the conflict, including (1) non-politicization, (2) politicization, (3) securitization, and (4) violation. Non-

politicization refers to an issue that the state does not include in high politics, which means that it is dealt with as a technical issue that does not need public interference or the attention of the state. Contrary to non-politicization, a politicized issue is what Waever (1998) and Buzan et al. (1998) referred to as a "de-securitized" issue. A de-securitized or politicized issue is an issue that necessitates governmental decisions and the allocation of resources as it has become an integral part of the public policy domain. On the other hand, the "securitized" issue is the one that depicts an issue as "an existential threat requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure" (Mirumachi and Allan, 2007, p. 5-7). However, According to Zeitoun (2007), an opportunitized issue is represented by the exact contrasting side of a "securitized" issue. This denotes that some conflicting parties tend to opportunitize an issue by justifying taking "emergency actions" to improve a situation. This shows that while conflicting parties "securitize" some issues, the same issues may be "opportunitized" by the other parties, which perceive the issue as an opportunity for enhancing a specific situation that requires urgent measures. Opportunitization usually occurs in times of change in circumstances, such as environmental changes or political changes. Conflicting parties opportunitize an issue in such changes to maximize their strategic interests and benefits in order to enhance their position in the negotiations. Finally, an issue is "violitized" when one of the parties employs violent measures, such as a military confrontation or launching a war, to solve this issue (See Figure 3.1) In addition, the different intensities of cooperation are divided into five main categories, from low to high as: (1) confrontation of the issue, (2) ad hoc interaction, (3) technical cooperation, (4) risk-averting, and (5) risk-taking." The "Confrontation of the issue" is the lowest level of cooperation in which parties recognize the issue. Yet, there is no joint effort or a consensus on mutual objectives. The "ad hoc interaction" is when parties have common goals but exert no joint effort. This interaction becomes "technical" cooperation when parties have some common goals or a consensus on resolving this dispute, yet no "actions and policies may necessarily be aligned." The risk-averting level of cooperation is reached when parties have common goals and

joint efforts and actions simultaneously without considering the "costs and risks" of the future. When they consider these factors, conflicting parties reach the highest level of cooperation, called "risk-taking" (Mirumachi and Allan, 2007) (See Figure 3.1).

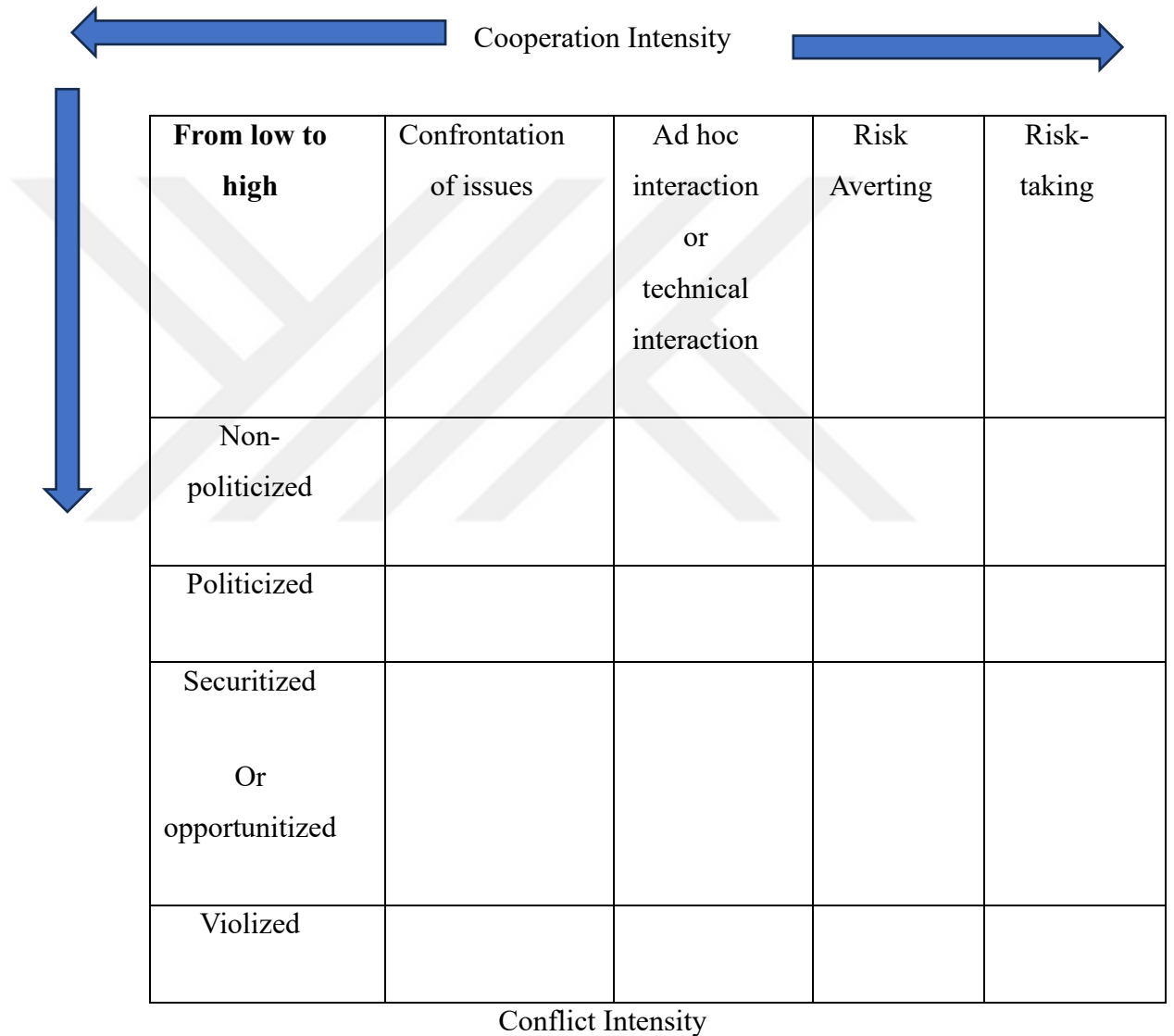


Figure 3.1. Co-existence of cooperation and conflicts. Source: Mirumachi and Allan (2007).

Wodak (2007), one of the prominent theorists of CDA, argues that actors tend to use five main discursive strategies through which they tend to consolidate the *status quo*, challenge realities, and construct new sociopolitical realities. These strategies include (1) nomination, (2) predication, (3) argumentation, (4) perspectivization (framing or discourse representation), and (5) intensification and mitigation. Two of these discursive strategies, predication, and perspectivization, apply to the GERD dispute as Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia use them in their discourses. As Wodak (2007) described, the prediction strategy is concerned with evaluating and criticizing or praising the other social or political actors' aims, values, beliefs, and actions, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses, and indicating whether they are portrayed as negative or positive. The perspectivization (framing or discourse representation) strategy, emphasizing the perspective of the one-self, targets to persuade the audience of their actions, beliefs, and values. Social and political actors who use this strategy tend to use argumentation and internal coherence to increase their influence on the audience; thus, they legitimize their ideology (both beliefs and actions) and delegitimize the perspectives and actions of other conflicting actors (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). In order to uncover these two general discursive strategies, a more well-categorized version of them, defined by Reyes (2011, p. 785:788), is used in this study. Buzan et al. (1998) argued that one of the conditions for the success of securitizing moves is the audience's acceptance of the issue as an existential threat. Although the study will not deal with this dimension, it is concerned with uncovering how political actors attempt to legitimize their perspective. At the same time, it delegitimizes other conflicting parties' perspectives to ensure the success of their policy choices, including both securitization and de-securitization. Legitimizing one perspective and delegitimizing the opponent party's stance is crucial in securitization. Reyes (2011, p. 785:788) categorizes legitimization into five categories, primarily drawing from the original categories proposed by Van Leeuwen (2007). These categories include (1) legitimization through emotions, (2) legitimization through a hypothetical future, (3) legitimization through rationality, (4) altruism, and (5) voices of expertise (Reyes,

2011). These five categories are used as discursive strategies for legitimization and delegitimization by denoting the reverse of their definition. Legitimization through emotional appeal occurs when Speakers utilize emotional rhetoric and tactics to influence how their audience perceives a particular issue, often portraying their opponents negatively to rally supporters for their perspectives (Reyes, 2011, p. 785). This strategy leverages emotions like fear to shape perceptions of the actions and characteristics of others. Legitimization through a hypothetical future occurs when Speakers assert their authority by projecting potential future scenarios, often employing conditional statements to outline positive outcomes they aim to achieve while contrasting with adverse outcomes they attribute to their opponents (Reyes, 2011, p. 786). Legitimization through rational argumentation occurs when Political actors justify their decisions by presenting them as the result of thorough and reasoned processes that involve consultation and thorough exploration of various options (Reyes, 2011, p. 786). Altruistic Legitimization happens when political actors present themselves as altruistic figures, emphasizing their dedication to serving the community and promoting the common good, positioning their actions as selfless and beneficial to the region (Reyes, 2011, p. 787). This portrayal aims to build trust and foster support by demonstrating a commitment to broader regional interests rather than pursuing a self-interest approach. Appeal to expertise as a legitimization strategy occurs when political actors enhance their arguments by citing expert opinions or scientific proofs that support their positions. Thereby enhancing their credibility and authority within the discourse (Reyes, 2011, p. 786).

4. NILE WATER: SOCIO-ECONOMIC NEEDS AND GEOPOLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE IN EGYPT, SUDAN, AND ETHIOPIA

The Nile is of immense importance to Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan, and its significance is evident in the economic value it represents, especially regarding agriculture, as one of the most important sources of foreign income for Egypt, for example. Nile water is also essential in maintaining food security and providing potable drinking water for citizens. Additionally, the Nile River is one of the most essential sources of electricity generation.

4.1 Water Resources, Usages, and Availability of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan

4.1.1 The problem of water distress in Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia

According to the FAO Global Information System Report on Water and Agriculture for 2020, Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia suffer from very high levels of water stress at 141.17%, 118.66%, and 32.26%, respectively (FAO, n.d.). Also, one of the water reports for the year 2017 showed that the average of the total renewable water resources available to Egypt is only 58 billion cubic meters, Ethiopia 122 billion cubic meters, and Sudan 38 billion cubic meters annually (Worldometer, n.d.b). In addition, the rainfall rate in Egypt is the lowest among the three countries, reaching 18.1 billion cubic meters annually, compared to 936.7 and 469.8 billion cubic meters annually for Ethiopia and Sudan, respectively (see table 4.1). Moreover, climate change has caused a decrease in total annual rainfall by 22% in Egypt. The rainfall in Egypt will likely decrease by about 2.9 mm annually before the end of the twenty-first century, exacerbating the water scarcity disaster (Arkeh, 2023). Due to the limited water resources available to the Egyptian state, coupled with the growing population and increasing temperatures, the Egyptian citizen's share of water

resources annually is the least among the three countries, at 589 cubic meters for the Egyptian citizen, compared to 933 cubic meters and 1,162 cubic meters for the Sudanese and the Ethiopian citizens, respectively (Worldometer, n.d.b). This indicates that Egypt and Sudan fall below the water poverty line set by the United Nations, estimated at 1,000 cubic meters per capita. However, the levels of water scarcity in Egypt are much more severe and worrying than in Sudan (Aryeh, 2023).

Table 4.1. Water Resources, Availability, and Usage in the Three Countries and the Problem of Water Distress

Country	Egypt	Ethiopia	Sudan
Population 2022 (Million)	11.0990.1 (World Bank Open Data, n.d.-d)	123.379.92 (World Bank Open Data, n.d.-e)	46.874.2 (World Bank Open Data, n.d.-f)
Population Growth	1.6 (World Bank Open Data, n.d.-d)	2.5 (World Bank Open Data, n.d.-e)	2.6 (World Bank Open Data, n.d.-f)
Renewable water availability per capita (2017)	589 m ³ /person/year (Egypt Water Use, Resources and Precipitation - Worldometer, n.d.- b,)	1,162 m ³ /person/year (Ethiopia Water Use, Resources and Precipitation - Worldometer, n.d.-b)	933 m ³ /p/y (Sudan Water Use, Resources and Precipitation -

	Egypt is among the countries that fall below the UN's water poverty line (estimated at 1,000 m ³ per capita). (Egypt - Water and Environment, 2022)		Worldometer, n.d.-b)
Total Renewable Water Resources (2017)	58 billion m ³ /year (Egypt Water Use, Resources and Precipitation - Worldometer, n.d.-b,)	122 billion m ³ /year (Ethiopia Water Use, Resources and Precipitation - Worldometer, n.d.-b)	38 billion m ³ /year (Sudan Water Use, Resources and Precipitation - Worldometer, n.d.-b)
WATER DEPENDENCY (Water from outside the country (2017))	98% (Egypt Water Use, Resources and Precipitation - Worldometer, n.d.-b,)	0% (Ethiopia Water Use, Resources and Precipitation - Worldometer, n.d.-b)	96% (Sudan Water Use, Resources and Precipitation - Worldometer, n.d.-b)
Long-term average annual rainfall volume	18.1 billion m ³ /year (Egypt Water Use, Resources and Precipitation -	936.4 billion m ³ /year (Ethiopia Water Use, Resources and	469.8 billion m ³ /year (Sudan Water Use, Resources

(billion m ³ /year 2017)	Worldometer, n.d.-b,)	Precipitation - Worldometer, n.d.-b)	and Precipitation - Worldometer, n.d.-b)
Water consumption across different sectors (including water that is used and then returned to its source) (renewable resource).	Agricultural Use: 61.35 billion m ³ (79%), Industrial use: 5.4 billion m ³ (7%), Municipal use: 10.75 billion m ³ (14%). (Egypt Water Use, Resources and Precipitation - Worldometer, n.d.-b,)	Agriculture: 9.687 M3. (Ethiopia Water Use, Resources and Precipitation - Worldometer, n.d.-b)	Agricultural Use: 25.91 billion m ³ (96%), Municipal use: 00.95 billion m ³ (4%). (Sudan Water Use, Resources and Precipitation - Worldometer, n.d.-b)
percentage of renewable water resources used for Agricultural withdrawal (%) (AQUASTAT, 2020)	106.70	7.94	68.54
MDG 7.5. percentage of renewable water resources used for freshwater	134.78	8.65	71.26

withdrawal (AQUASTAT, 2020)			
SDG 6.4.2. Water Stress (%) (AQUASTAT, 2020)	141.17	32.26	118.66

4.1.2 Water resources, usages, and availability in Egypt

Due to changes in temperature, rising sea water levels, irregular rainfall rates, deteriorating soil salinity, and drought resulting from climate change, Egypt's climate will suffer from disasters and high pressures. The adverse effects of climate change will exacerbate the water crisis in Egypt, which already has a dry climate. Moreover, this will threaten food security and economic security as a natural result of decreased food supply because of increasing water scarcity. The Egyptian state depends mainly on the Nile water to meet its freshwater needs for irrigation (79%), municipal (14%), and industry (7%) purposes, at a rate of up to 98%. This is due to Egypt's dry climate, lack of groundwater, and low average annual rainfall of 18.1 billion cubic meters (Worldometer, n.d.-b). In addition, it is expected that there will be no rainfall at all in Egypt in some years due to climate change. Rainfall amounts change during the year's seasons in Egypt, as Egypt's climate mostly has two seasons: mild winters and hot summers. While December, January, and February witness the highest levels of rainfall throughout Egypt, the average percentage of rainfall in the remaining months, i.e., from April to November, is less than 3 mm per month. This is due to the difference in average temperatures in the summer and winter, which range between 30-41 in the summer and 18-23 in the winter. Furthermore, the average annual temperature in Egypt is expected to increase by 2-3 degrees Celsius from the beginning of 2050. The surface level of the delta is also

expected to grow between 3-61 cm by 2085. This will worsen the water scarcity levels in Egypt due to rising water evaporation levels due to increasing temperatures (USAID, 2018).

The increasing environmental pressures caused by climate change over the past years, which will increase over time, and the increase in the country's population at a significant rate of 1.6 per year have exacerbated the water crisis the government is suffering from. Egypt's population has increased by about 25 million in the past 13 years. The Egyptian population reached 12,716,598 in 2023 from 87.25 million in 2010 (*World Bank*, n.d.-d). Consequently, the rate of water scarcity has reached dangerous levels, approaching the water scarcity threshold set by the United Nations of 500 cubic meters per person per year. According to the Egyptian National Water Resources Plan (NWRP, 2017), the rate of demand for water from various sectors is greater than the average water available annually to Egypt by about 33.75 billion cubic meters (USAID, 2018).

4.1.3 Water resources, usages, and availability in Sudan

The Nile River is of immense importance to the State of Sudan, as the Nile River is the primary source of water supply in Sudan at a rate of 67%, followed by seasonal rainwater at a rate of 20% and groundwater at a rate of 13%. (USAID, 2016). Irrigation represents about 94-96% of water demand in Sudan. According to data on the increasing demand rates for water due to agricultural development plans in Sudan, the water demand will exceed the quantities supplied in 2030 (USAID, 2016). These statistics do not consider the impact of climate change on water supplies in Sudan, which will significantly complicate the crisis. Sudan's climate is characterized by high rainfall rates, especially from May to October, where it experiences rainfall ranging from under 50 mm in the far northern areas to over 1,500 mm in the southern regions. However, the expected changes in Sudan's climate because of climate change include an increase in temperatures, already high,

at a rate ranging between 0.5-3 degrees Celsius by the year 2050 (USAID, 2016). Elevated temperatures generally cause drought in the country by contributing to a decrease in soil moisture and an increase in the evaporation rate (USAID, 2016). Considering the environmental pressures threatened by climate change, in addition to ambitious agricultural development plans, Sudan may witness dangerous levels of water stress.

4.4.1 Water resources, usages, and availability in Ethiopia

Unlike Egypt and Sudan, Ethiopia has enormous water resources, with its massive groundwater supply of about 206 billion cubic meters and 12 river basins overlooked by the Ethiopian state, including the Nile River (Worldometer, n.d.-b). Moreover, the average annual rainfall in Ethiopia is about 936.4 billion cubic meters (Worldometer, n.d.-b). Accordingly, Ethiopia relies entirely on internal sources for water supplies, unlike Egypt and Sudan, which depend on 98% and 96% of their supplies from external sources (Worldometer, n.d.-b). Although negative values of the water deficit index indicate values less than -2 with severe drought rates due to increased water evaporation, positive values indicate increased humidity. However, rainfall rates are expected to rise in Ethiopia in the coming years, and drought rates are expected to decrease throughout the country. However, expected trends related to rainfall indicate that the level of rainfall in Ethiopia in the spring and summer seasons in the central and southern regions may decrease by 20%. In addition, expectations indicate that temperatures in Ethiopia may rise by 1.8% and 3.7% in 2050 and 2090, respectively (Climate Risk: Ethiopia, 2021b). Therefore, rising temperatures will contribute to increased water evaporation and drought, which may cause a water stress crisis. Although negative changes in flow rates in river water affect the capabilities of hydroelectric power generation, upstream countries such as Ethiopia are much less affected than downstream countries. In the Ethiopian case, constructing the massive Ethiopian Renaissance Dam with enormous turbines will

provide the necessary electrical supplies to the Ethiopian state. However, it will negatively affect the downstream countries (Climate Risk: Ethiopia, 2021b).

4.2 Water for Economy

4.2.1 Water for economic development and food security in Egypt

Since Egypt depended almost entirely on the waters of the Nile, it had to resort to increasing water efficiency, rationalizing consumption, water desalination, and reclaiming agricultural lands. However, the worsening economic pressures that the country has been suffering from since 2014 until the present day are hampering reforms and ambitious development plans in the field of improving water efficiency, rationalizing consumption, water desalination, and agricultural reclamation, which increases the paramount importance of the Nile waters to the Egyptian people. In addition, the farm sector in Egypt represents about 11.3% of Egypt's gross domestic product in 2021 (WFP, 2024). Egyptian labor in the agricultural sector represents about 55% of the Egyptian workforce (WFP, 2024). Moreover, the agricultural sector meets about 30% of Egypt's food needs, making it of utmost importance to Egyptians to provide food commodities and an essential source of income for citizens (WFP, 2024). Furthermore, the proportion of grain imports increased by about 8% until it reached 42% in 2011-2013 after only 34% in 1999-2001. Additionally, according to the International Food Program's 2024 report, the percentage of the Egyptian population suffering from food insecurity reached approximately 14.4% (WFP, 2024). Agricultural products and industries also represent about 21% of the Egyptian state's exports, exacerbating the disaster and causing three problems. Firstly, any decrease in Egypt's annual share of Nile water will reduce the proportion of food supplies, negatively affecting Egyptian food security. Secondly, water scarcity will exacerbate the economic crisis in the country due to the decline in foreign income and the decrease in agricultural sector exports.

Thirdly, the depletion of farmland will decrease the employment rate, which will increase the already high levels of unemployment in the country.

4.2.2 Water for economic development, agriculture, and food security in Sudan

The agricultural sector has always been of immense importance to the Sudanese economy. During the 1990s, the agricultural sector represented about 43% of the value added to the total gross domestic product. (Ndip & Lange, 2019). However, this percentage decreased from 2000-2010 to 32%, then reduced again from 2011-2021 to 28%, but it still constitutes a significant percentage of the gross domestic product. Despite the decline in the agricultural sector in Sudan, it is the largest source of employment and income for Sudanese citizens. The agrarian sector provided job opportunities for approximately 44% of Sudanese workers in 2014 (Ndip & Lange, 2019). Also, according to statistics from the Ministry of Economy and Environment in Sudan, the agricultural sector includes about 69% of the workforce. (Alhelo et al., 2023b). The contributions of the agrarian sector to Sudan's total exports in 2020 amounted to about 60%, after representing a noticeable gradual increase since 2011 by 44% (Alhelo et al., 2023b). This is in addition to the prominent role that the agricultural sector plays in Sudanese food security by providing most of the grains used from local production, in addition to the fact that 15% of the wheat used is produced locally. This puts Sudan at risk in the event of any decrease in water supplies in addition to the drought that the country is suffering from (Alhelo et al., 2023b).

High temperatures and variable rainfall are expected to make the northern agricultural regions unsuitable for agriculture, such as the Kordofan region, where drought will increase by 2060, reducing the country's corn production levels (WFP, n.d.). Consequently, this will contribute to the rise of the already existing food crisis in Sudan, leading to levels reaching the risk of famine and increasing poverty due to the lack of agricultural labor. These statements were issued before the Sudan war

between the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese National Army. The war has contributed to increasing levels of food insecurity in Sudan. As the conflict worsens, about 18 million Sudanese out of 46,874.2 million people suffer from acute hunger, and about 5 million Sudanese have reached emergency levels of hunger, according to World Food Program statistics. Despite this, the war may contribute to the decline of the water crisis in Sudan due to the displacement of more than 1.2 million Sudanese outside the country and the decline in agricultural production to below-average levels (WFP, n.d.). Nevertheless, the water crisis will be worsened in Egypt, a neighboring country to Sudan, because of the displacement of millions of Sudanese to its borders due to the war. However, as per the latest report released by the Egyptian Government regarding the number of Sudanese war refugees in November 2023, Egypt has received about 370,000 Sudanese refugees (UNHCR, 2023b).

4.2.3 Water for sustainable economic development in Ethiopia

For the Ethiopian state to become a middle-income country by 2025, the state has developed several ambitious economic plans, most notably the Growth and Transformation Plan, which aims to achieve Ethiopia's development goals based on the principle of sustainable development. Ethiopia (Degefu et al., 2015b). With the expansion of the Ethiopian state in various sectors of the economy to achieve economic prosperity, in addition to the high population growth rate, the energy demand increased. However, environmental degradation and the adverse effects of climate change prompted Ethiopia to develop a "climate-resistant green economy" strategy to implement the principle of sustainable development in various sectors, starting with the energy sector. This strategy aims to achieve a carbon-neutral economy by leveraging renewable energy sources, specifically hydroelectric energy, to benefit from Ethiopia's enormous hydropower resources and its low cost and economic feasibility. According to estimates, the Ethiopian state can generate hydroelectric power at a rate of up to 30 thousand megawatts. Thus, this increases

the importance of hydropower for developing the Ethiopian economy and combating poverty, water stress, and environmental degradation resulting from climate change. As rural areas in Ethiopia depend on burning biomass as a significant energy source, it negatively affects green areas such as forests. To avoid this, hydroelectric energy is the best and cheapest solution for the Ethiopian Government. It may also represent a significant source of foreign income for the Ethiopian state if it exports electricity to neighboring countries as targeted within its current development plans. Indeed, the Ethiopian Government has signed some agreements to export electricity to neighboring African countries. Indeed, Ethiopia has allocated its dams overlooking the Nile River to generate hydroelectric power only and not for irrigation and drinking purposes. Most importantly, the Ethiopian dam will contribute to achieving the ambitious development goals that the Ethiopian Government seeks to achieve and will address many economic, social, and environmental problems in Ethiopia (Degefu et al., 2015b).

4.3 Hydropower Capacity of Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia and the Position of the GERD Among them

4.3.1 The Nile water for electricity generation

There are many dams on the banks of the Nile River, some of which were built specifically for irrigation and agriculture in addition to generating electricity and hydroelectric power only. Egypt has three dams on the banks of the Nile with a total hydropower production capacity of 2,775 MW. Sudan has five dams to generate hydroelectric power, some used for irrigation and agriculture. The total hydropower production capacity of Sudanese dams is 1755,4 MW. As for the number of Ethiopian dams on the Nile's banks designated for generating hydroelectric power, there are only two dams, the most famous of which is the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which is the source of the dispute between the three countries. Despite this, the two Ethiopian dams' total hydroelectric power production capacity is 5555 MW.

(See table 4.2 for further details). Before the construction of the GERD, Egypt and Sudan had dams with the highest production capacity on the banks of the Nile in terms of electricity generation. The total production capacity of the Aswan High Dam is 1200 MW. The total production capacity of the two Sudanese dams, Roseries and Merowe, is 1800 MW and 1250 MW, respectively. After filling operations are completed, Ethiopia aims to generate 5,250 MW from the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. However, this means that the capacity of the Ethiopian dam to generate electricity is equivalent to twice the total production capacity of the Egyptian dams combined and approximately three times the total production capacity of the Sudanese dams. However, the problem lies in the adverse effects of building the Ethiopian dam on the Nile Basin countries, starting from the potential floods in the event of its collapse to the side effects related to the risks of filling the Ethiopian dam on the Egyptian and Sudanese dams and the shares of Egypt and Sudan from the Nile water, which in turn affects food, economic, environmental and energy security in those countries.



Figure 4. 1. Hydropower dams in Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia on the Nile River. Reference: Self-Made.

Notes: 1. Nag Hammadi, 2. Aswan High Dam, 3. Aswan Low Dam, 4. Jebel Aulia, 5. Roseires, 6. Merowe, 7. Khashm el-Girba, 8. Sennar, 9. GERD, 10. Tekeze

4.1.2. Significance of hydropower for Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan

4.3.2.1. Importance of Ethiopian hydropower dams in the Nile basin for its energy security

Energy is one of the most critical sectors of Ethiopia for the development and growth of the Ethiopian economy because Ethiopia has abundant resources and a distinctive geographical location that enables it to generate electricity from renewable energy, specifically hydroelectric and solar energy. Ethiopia could create more than 60,000 MW of electricity from renewable energy sources (ITA, 2024b). However, it has not been exploited by the Ethiopian government for many reasons, most notably technical and financial constraints (Yalew, 2022). Therefore, biofuels are still the primary energy source for Ethiopia, accounting for 91% of the energy consumed, and the electricity sector represents only 2% of the total energy use in Ethiopia, with a generating capacity of 5,200 megawatts (Gebremeskel et al., 2021b). However, electricity supplies meet less than 60% of the population's needs. Knowing that 90% of the installed generation capacity comes from hydroelectric energy shows that hydroelectric energy is important for Ethiopia's ambitious plan to develop. The Ethiopian Renaissance Dam will double the size of the installed electrical generation capacity in Ethiopia with its production capacity of 5250 MW. It will enable it to meet the needs of citizens, as well as export electricity to neighboring countries, which will increase foreign income (ITA, 2024b)

Table 4.2. Ethiopian Hydropower Dams in the Nile Basin

Description		Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam	Tekez Dam
Coordinates		11°12'55"N 35°05'35"E	13.348°N 38.742°E
Construction began		2011	1999
Construction end year		2023	2009
Cost		US\$5 billion	-
Total Storage, bcm		74	4
Installed capacity, MW		11 x 400 MW + 2 x 375 MW= 5250 MW final yet 750 MW (operational)	4 x 75 MW= 300 MW
Annual electricity generation, kWh		15.76 TWh (est., planned)	
Sources		(Eldardiry & Hossain, 2021), (Bombelli et al., 2021), (Diriba & Li, 2021), (Priscoli, 2015), (McDonald et al., 2009)	

4.3.2.2. Importance of Egyptian hydropower dams in the Nile basin for its energy security

Fossil fuels still dominate the Egyptian energy sector at a rate of up to 88%, compared to renewable energy resources, which include hydropower at 7%, wind energy at 3%, and solar energy at 2%. (Egypt Oil & Gas, 2023). However, in late 2022, the Egyptian Government announced its plan to diversify the energy mix to include distinct types to raise the percentage of renewable energy within the Egyptian energy mix to 42% by 2030. The export of fossil fuels is the state's most important national income source. Fossil fuels are also important to meet the needs of citizens' electricity, considering the continuous high demand for electricity due to the population increasing by a substantial percentage annually (Egypt Oil & Gas, 2023). The total hydroelectric capacity in Egypt will reach 2832 MW by 2022, representing 44.8% of the total renewable energy capacity of electricity (Statista, 2023b). However, despite Nile water contributing only 7% to Egyptian renewable energy production, this figure represents a significant portion given Egypt's current shortfall in meeting its electricity demands. Moreover, climate change-induced high temperatures in Egypt, coupled with a rapidly growing population, will escalate the demand not only for water and food but also for energy, particularly electricity. This surge in energy demand will be exacerbated in cooler areas, exacerbated by increased energy consumption due to inefficiencies and shortened lifespan of industrial equipment caused by the extreme heat. (USAID, 2018). Considering that Egypt relies mainly on three dams on the Nile River to generate hydroelectric power, any adverse changes in the water levels in the Nile River will inevitably affect its electricity production capacity. Therefore, it will, in turn, affect the country's energy security, considering the recurring waves of power outages.

Table 4.3. Egyptian Hydropower Dams in the Nile Basin

Description	Aswan High Dam	Aswan Low Dam	Nag Hammadi Dam
Coordinates	23°58'14"N 32°52'40"E	24°02'02"N 32°51'57"E	-
Construction began	1960	1899	
Construction end year	1970	1902	2008
Total Storage, bcm	169	5.3	
Installed capacity, MW	12×175 MW=2100 MW	4 x 67.5 MW+ 7x 40 = 592MW	4x 16 MW=64
Annual electricity generation, kWh	10,042 GWh	592 MWh	64 MWh
Sources	Eldardiry & Hossain (2021), Priscoli (2015), Diriba & Li (2021)		

4.3.2.3. Importance of Sudanese hydropower dams in the Nile basin for its energy security

Hydropower represents 4.6% of the total energy supply in Sudan, preceded by petroleum, biofuels, and waste, at 32.4% and 63%, respectively (IEA, n.d.b). However, hydropower contributes 64% of Sudan's total electricity generation, increasing its importance (Gamil et al., 2022b). Considering that only 54% of the population in Sudan has access to electricity, more than 20 million Sudanese are not connected to the national electricity grid (World Bank, n.d.g). Moreover, The Sudanese dams overlooking the Nile River account for most of the hydroelectric power generated in Sudan, in addition to the two Upper Atbara dams and the Setit Dam complex, which have a production capacity of only 135 MW out of the total production capacity of the Sudanese hydroelectric power dams which is estimated at 1,923 MW. (OPEC Fund, 2021b). This doubles the significance of hydropower dams lying on the Nile for Sudan to preserve Sudanese energy security and economic development.

Table 4.4. Sudanese Hydropower Dams in the Nile Basin

Descrip tion ³	Jaba l Auli a	Roseires	Merowe	Khasm el-Girba	Sennar
Coordi nates	15.1 4° N 32.2 9° E	11°47'53"N 34 °23'15"E	18°40'08"N 3 2°03'01"E	14°55'31 .29"N 35°54'28 .30"E	13.32N3 3.38E
Constr uction began	1933	1961	2004	1960	1914
Constr uction year comple ted	1973	1966, yet Roseires underwent rehabilitation & modernization from 2009 to 2013	2009	1964	1996

³ Note: Elgria Poer plant consists of three pumps, a Turbine, and two units with a total capacity of 17.8 MW (1964), which makes the total hydro generation of Sudan is 1539

Total Storage , bcm	3.3	5.5 (old) 7.5 million cubic meters (New) 5909 Mm3 (in 2012)	12.1	1.3	640 Mm3 (in 1985)
Installed capacity, MW	30.4 MW	7 x 40 MW=280 MW (old) and 1800 MW (New), and others say 400	10 × 125 MW =1250 MW	2 x 5 MW =10 MW	65 MW
Sources	Kgi-Admin & Kgi-Admin (2021), Hydro review (2023), Eldardiry & Hossain (2021), Diriba & Li (2021), Wayback Machine (n.d.), Saeed et al. (2019), Sudan – Sennar (n.d.), Basheer & Elagib(2019), Priscoli (2015)				

Table 4.5. Total Hydropower Capacity MW of the Three Countries from Hydropower Dams in the Nile Basin Reference: Self-made.

Country	Total hydropower capacity MW
Egypt	2.775
Ethiopia	5550
Sudan	1755,4

4.4 Water for Hydro Hegemony

4.4.1 Water for hegemony and national integrity in Egypt

The Nile River has been an integral part of Egyptian society throughout ancient and modern times. The Nile contributed to the formation of Egyptian civilization because of its historical role in all aspects of life. The most important of these roles lies in the Nile, supporting Egyptian economic and commercial activity by providing rich terrain for agriculture and water for irrigation in the Egyptian Delta or Upper Egypt. The distinctive river features in each location contributed to the emergence of two completely different regions in the same country. Other cultures, languages, and lifestyles were formed in Upper Egypt (Northern Egypt) and Lower Egypt (Southern Egypt). However, the Egyptians have believed since ancient times that "Egypt is the gift of the Nile" and that the ruler of Egypt is the unifier of the two lands, referring to Lower and Upper Egypt (Hassan, 2023). Sultans considered the Nile River sacred throughout various eras, and it significantly impacted the political climate in Egypt, economic and social conditions, and social and political cohesion. This is because it substantially affects how power and money are distributed in the region. Given the importance of the Nile in maintaining societal cohesion, economic well-being, and food security, whoever controls the Nile now owns the reins of the African continent. Egypt's control of the Nile River over the past decades has increased its influence on the African continent. However, the challenges accompanying climate change, such as water scarcity, excessive temperature rise, significant population growth, and economic and political crises, threaten Egypt's regional position, strength, cohesion, and national unity. Therefore, Egypt portrayed the construction of the Ethiopian dam as an existential threat because it would enable Ethiopia to reposition itself strategically in Africa at the expense of the Egyptian state. This demonstrates the leading role that the Nile plays in maintaining Egypt's strength, regional status, and identity. Some thinkers even argued that Egypt needs to rebuild a new national identity that does not revolve

around the Nile, as the Nile's connection to Egyptian identity threatens the country's stability.

4.4.2 Water for hegemony and national integrity in Ethiopia

The Ethiopian state is suffering from deep crises related to the state's identity and national unity. So, for several decades, the country has witnessed a series of tensions and conflicts in its various parts between nationalities and ethnicities in all Ethiopian regions. Over the past three decades, the three main Ethiopian ethnic groups (Tigrians, Amharas, and Oromo) have tried to strengthen their power over minorities in their regions, marginalizing millions of Ethiopians (Liyew, 2022). High rates of poverty, increasing acts of violence, and political and economic marginalization of different ethnicities contributed to the disintegration of the state in the absence of a general sense of a solid national identity around which Ethiopians could unite, regardless of various ethnicities, nationalities, and religions. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) Government attempted to build a state and form a solid national identity by converting the Government to a federal one. This ensures that different ethnicities, religions, and nationalities obtain economic and political rights by weakening the center's power and strengthening the federations. However, conflicts did not stop under federal rule, and the tendency among many Ethiopian ethnic groups to secede from the state increased. Therefore, the Ethiopian Government took development as a solution to ensure the unity of the state and shape its new identity around achieving economic achievements that all Ethiopians share. Indeed, the Renaissance Dam was at the forefront of these projects as a catalyst for building the Ethiopian nation by reducing poverty and raising levels of well-being. The Renaissance Dam was announced as not just an economic development project but a symbol of national unity and the sovereignty of the Ethiopian state. The Ethiopian state followed a financing model for building the dam that enables all Ethiopian citizens to contribute to the completion of the dam's construction, constituting a sense of national solidarity and thus significantly

enhancing the nation-building process. Celebrating the dam's fourth anniversary, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Adhanom said that the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is a "symbol of racial harmony" (Liyew, 2022).



5. NEGOTIATING THE NILE WATERS: HISTORICAL PATHS OF COOPERATION AND CONFLICT

5.1 Legal System of the Eastern Nile Basin (Colonial Agreements and Post-Colonial Agreements)

The Nile River Basin, the longest river in the world, includes ten countries: Egypt, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Nile River has three main tributaries: the Blue Nile, the Atbara River, which flows from the Ethiopian highlands, and the White Nile, which flows from Lakes Albert and Victoria. Although the Nile River is the longest in the world, the semi-arid geographical nature of the Nile Basin region, in addition to the continuous rise in temperatures, the change in annual rainfall, and the high rates of drought resulting from climate change, not to mention the growing population of the region and the dependence of the riparian countries on the Nile as a vital source, made Water a source of many disputes and conflicts over control of the Nile waters throughout history. Moreover, water resources, in addition to the African wealth that the Nile Basin countries abound with, made the Nile Basin countries coveted by the colonial powers at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although all cooperation attempts and agreements signed between the Nile Basin countries in the colonial era were made at the bilateral levels, not the regional level, these agreements established the legal basis through which water resources were divided, and significant development projects in the region were organized throughout the past century. In addition to the negative impacts that occurred and are expected to occur in this region due to the Climatic changes, the unfair division of water shares and the prevention of most of the riparian countries from building and developing dams resulting from the colonial era laid the roots for disputes between the riparian countries.

As shown in Table 5.1, several agreements were signed between Britain (on behalf of Egypt and Sudan), Italy (on behalf of Eritrea), Belgium (on behalf of Congo), and independent Ethiopia during the colonial times. The United Kingdom guaranteed Egypt and Sudan's full water rights to the waters of the Nile. It also prevented Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Eritrea from building any dams or placing barriers on the river without its approval to ensure that projects that affect the shares of Egypt and Sudan are not developed. However, the most prominent agreement was signed between the Egyptian government and the British mandate in Sudan in 1929. According to this agreement, the British Queen granted Egypt the right to use 48 bcm of Nile water, compared to 4 bcm for Sudan and about 32 bcm divided among the other eight countries. Moreover, this agreement gave Egypt the right to build dams and stop any development projects or build dams for the riparian countries on the banks of the Nile. However, this agreement was canceled with the 1959 agreement signed between Egypt and Sudan after independence.

**Table 5.1. Treaties and Agreements Signed on Sharing Water Resources
During Colonial Times**

Name of the Treaty/Agreement	Date	Parties	The most important provisions related to the GERD conflict
The Anglo-Italian Protocol, officially called "the Protocol between the Governments of Great Britain and Italy, for the Demarcation of	1891	Great Britain and Italy	Article III states that "the Italian government engages not to construct on the Atbara River, given irrigation, any work which might sensibly modify its flow into the Nile." Remarks: The language used needs to be clarified by this agreement;

Their Respective Spheres of Influence in East Africa, from Ras Kasar to the Blue Nile.” (Gwynn, 2020)			Great Britain prevented the construction of any work that could decrease the Egyptian share of water to secure enough water for cultivating Egyptian cotton to export to Britain (Carroll, 1999).
The Anglo-Ethiopian treaty (Treaties between the UK and Ethiopia and between the UK, Italy, and Ethiopia relative to the borders between the Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea)	1902	Great Britain, Italy, and Ethiopia	Article III states, "His Majesty the Emperor Menilik II, King of Kings 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 except in agreement with His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of Sudan". Remarks: By signing this Treaty, Ethiopia agreed not to build any dam or barrage across these water basins without the consent of Great Britain.

Great Britain, France, and the Ethiopian Tripartite Treaty of 1906	1906	Great Britain and Belgium on behalf of Congo	Article III states, "The Government of the independent state of the Congo undertakes not to construct, or allow to be constructed, any work over or near the Semliki or Isango river which would diminish the volume of water entering Lake Albert except in agreement with the Sudanese Government" Remarks: According to this Article, Congolese water rights in the Nile were restricted (Okoth-owiro, 1998).
A tripartite agreement between France, Italy, and Great Britain	1906	Britain, France, and Italy	Article IV states, "to preserve the integrity of Ethiopia and provide further that the parties would safeguard the interests of the United Kingdom and Egypt in the Nile basin, especially as regards the regulation of the water of that river and its tributaries." Remarks: Article IV underscores the importance of preserving Ethiopia's territorial integrity while addressing the United Kingdom's and Egypt's

			historical interests in the Nile Basin. It highlights the need for equitable regulation of the river and its tributaries, reflecting historical agreements and setting a framework for regional cooperation. This article aims to balance national sovereignty with effective water management, fostering dialogue among Nile Basin countries and addressing the complexities of shared resource allocation. Article IV underscores the importance of preserving Ethiopia's territorial integrity while addressing the United Kingdom's and Egypt's historical interests in the Nile Basin. It highlights the need for equitable regulation of the river and its tributaries, reflecting historical agreements and setting a framework for regional cooperation. This article aims to balance national sovereignty with effective water management, fostering dialogue among Nile Basin countries and
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			addressing the complexities of shared resource allocation. (Okoth-owiro, 1998).
The Nile Commission (exchange of notes between Britain and Italy concerning Lake Tana)	1925	Britain and Italy	Italy recognized the water rights of both Egypt and Sudan "in the headwaters of the Blue Nile and White Nile rivers and their tributaries." Remarks: Italy also vowed not to construct any work in these basins that would negatively affect or change the Water flow into the main river (Okoth-owiro, 1998)
The Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, also known as the 1929 Nile Water Agreements (Exchange of Notes between the UK government and the Egyptian Government regarding the use of Water of the Nile for irrigation)	1929	Egypt and Sudan (under British administration)	This agreement granted Egypt the right to use 48 bcm of the Nile River flow per year while only 4 cm for Sudan, leaving only 32 cm per year for the other eight riparian states. It also ensured that the flow of the Nile River during the dry season would be reserved only for Egypt. Furthermore, it allowed Egypt to monitor the flow of the Nile River in the upstream countries. In addition, it gave

			Egypt the right to build any project on the Nile basin and veto the other riparian states' other projects (Knobelsdorf, 2006).
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Table 5.2. The Post-colonial Agreements Signed between Nile Riparian Countries

Treaties/Agreements	Date	Parties	The most important provisions related to the GERD conflict
The agreement between The United Arab Republic of Egypt and The Republic of Sudan for the comprehensive Utilization of the Nile Waters	1959	Egypt and Sudan	This agreement resolved the debate over the average annual Nile flow, about 84 bcm annually. It granted Egypt an annual allocation of 55.5 bcm of Nile water a year and Sudan 18.5 bcm per year, which means complete control over the utilization of the Nile waters. However, if another riparian country wants to claim a water share, their share would be

			taken equivalently from the shares of Egypt and Sudan. The agreement granted Egypt and Sudan the right to build The AHD and the Roseries Dam, respectively (Knobelsdorf, 2006; Mason, 1999).
The 1993 Framework for General Cooperation regarding the Nile issues	1993	Egypt and Ethiopia	It stated that all bilateral negotiations regarding the allocation of the Nile waters should be conducted according to the principles and general rules of international law, including the "No Harm" rule (Abdo, 2004).
The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI)	1999	All the Nile River basin riparian states (except Eritrea). Nevertheless 2010, Egypt and Sudan suspended their participation in the Nile	The parties considered this agreement a transnational accord until the parties could agree on "a permanent legal and institutional framework for sustainable development of the Nile Basin." It states that member countries "seek to develop the river cooperatively, share substantial socioeconomic benefits, and promote regional peace and security" (Swain, 2002b).

		Basin Initiative following some upstream countries' signing of the CFA.	
The Nile Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement CFA or the Entebbe Agreement	2010	It was signed by out of the 10 Nile Basin Initiative states. The parties involved are Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, and Burundi.	The Treaty establishes the basis for the Nile River basin's permanent institutional and legal framework. The Treaty establishes the basic principles, rights, and obligations for cooperative management of the Nile water resources. Such as giving all riparian states the right "to use, within their territory, the waters of the Nile River Basin, and lays down several factors for determining equitable and reasonable utilization" (Salman, 2013). The most controversial article of this agreement is Article 14b, which states, "Nile basin states, therefore, agree, in a spirit of cooperation, not to significantly affect the water security of any other Nile Basin States."

			However, Egypt and Sudan refused this article. They wanted to change it to be "not to adversely affect the water security and current uses and rights of any other Nile Basin States" (Onyormoi, 2022). As Egypt and Sudan say, this article deprives them of their historical water rights.
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The 1959 agreement divided the waters of the Nile between Egypt and Sudan, granting Egypt 55.5 bcm and Sudan 18.5 bcm annually. Under the agreement, if any of the other eight countries request its share of the Nile water, its share will be deducted from the shares of Egypt and Sudan in equal proportions. Moreover, the agreement granted Egypt and Sudan, apart from the other countries, the right to build dams, namely the Aswan Dam in Egypt and the Roseries Dam in Sudan. This agreement caused serious disputes between the riparian countries over the past decades due to the unfair division of water. (see Table 5.2 for further information regarding treaties and agreements signed on sharing water resources during the post-colonial period).

The riparian countries later formed a regional organization known as the Aerial and Hydrological Survey of the Watersheds of Lakes Kyoga, Albert, and Victoria, or the Hydromet Project, in 1967, to enhance cooperation on the management of water resources of the Nile River. This was the first step for cooperation between all the Nile Basin countries, including Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan through the Hydromet Project, which was supported by UNDP. The primary goal of this initiative was to collect hydrometeorological data and study the hydrology of the Upper Nile Basin

to reduce and control floods. However, the institution neglected the fundamental issues among the Nile Basin countries, which are the fair and equitable allocation of the Nile waters. Therefore, Ethiopia and the Republic of the Congo did not join it but participated as observers. In a broader step, the Hydromet Project was developed into what was known as the Undugu Project to stimulate regional cooperation in trade, culture, water, infrastructure, and the environment in 1983. Egypt was the founding member of UNDUGU and had a pivotal and pioneering role in its management. However, it only convinced some riparian countries to join, as Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Kenya abstained from participating (Metawie, 2004). The main problem of these regional initiatives was that they did not address the key issues in dispute in the basin. It also failed to establish a legal framework for the equitable division and sustainable and cooperative management of the Nile waters, as all initiatives focused on technical aspects only. This made it unable to achieve genuine cooperation or prevent future conflict.

The UNDUGU project catalyzed enhanced coordination and cooperation among the riparian countries of the Nile Basin. In 1993, this initiative led to the formation of the Technical Cooperation Committee for the Nile Basin (TECCONILE), aimed at advancing Nile River development. Despite its establishment, Burundi, Kenya, Eritrea, and Ethiopia participated only as observers due to TECCONILE's shortcomings in addressing equitable water distribution and regional resource management. The committee's primary objectives were to support infrastructure development, integrate national water master plans, promote sustainable water use, and foster environmental protection within the Nile Basin. TECCONILE established essential legal, technical, and political frameworks for water regulation and allocation, laying the groundwork for the 1999 Nile Basin Initiative Agreement. In 1999, Ethiopia and Egypt signed the General Cooperative Framework, which mandated adherence to international law principles, including the no-harm rule, during bilateral negotiations regarding the Nile waters. This agreement is pivotal as

it provides the legal foundation for subsequent bilateral discussions between the two countries (Metawie, 2004).

In the context of encouraging the Nile Basin countries to cooperate on the Nile water issue formally and under the umbrella of an international institution, the UNDP supported the establishment of an intergovernmental organization known as the Nile Basin Initiative in 1999. The primary goal of this organization was to reach a regional agreement agreed upon by all Nile Basin countries regarding establishing a "cooperative framework that includes principles, structures, and institutions" to manage the Nile waters cooperatively. (Salman, 2013). All Nile Basin countries signed this agreement except Eritrea. However, Egypt and Sudan froze their membership in the agreement after the members signed what was known as the Cooperative Framework Agreement in 2010.

The colonial agreements, especially the 1959 agreement, remained the most significant obstacle and the primary cause of disagreement between the Nile Basin countries, leading to the withdrawal of Egypt and Sudan. Through the 2009 Comprehensive Cooperative Agreement (CFA), the riparian countries sought to establish the principle that "each Nile Basin country has the right to use the Nile waters within its territory within equitable and reasonable limits," in addition to emphasizing the commitment of the Nile Basin countries to the principle of non-harm, as well as repairing the damage that the state may cause during Use of Nile water. While Egypt and Sudan, as downstream countries, agreed to abide by the rule of non-harm, the rule of fair use of Water and the cancellation of the 1959 agreement thus reducing their historical shares in the Nile waters, was a significant source of disagreement. (Salman, 2013).

5.2 Post-GERD Trilateral Agreements: The 2015 Declaration of Principles on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

The first agreement signed after the construction of the GERD started was the Declaration of Principles, known as the "Nile Agreement." It was signed between Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan on the GERD Project in Sudan on the 23rd of March 2015. About two and a half years after the start of tripartite negotiations between countries regarding the Renaissance Dam, the countries finally reached an agreement that included ten principles related to establishing mechanisms for cooperation, resolving conflict, and compensating for the damage caused by the dam.

One of the most important principles is the principle of development, regional integration, and sustainable development, which recognizes that Ethiopia's purpose in building the dam is "to generate electricity and contribute to economic development." (UN Environment Program, 2015). However, although the Ethiopian authorities declare that the dam will only generate electricity, Egypt fears that Ethiopia will later use it for irrigation and agriculture, seriously harming its share of the Nile water. The DoP was criticized for not clearly stating that Ethiopia's sole purpose of building the dam was to generate electricity. The phrase "economic development" also raised doubts about the sincerity of Ethiopian intentions, which included using Nile water for irrigation and economic development.

Another important principle is the principle of not causing severe harm. This principle addresses the obligation of states to undertake the necessary actions to avoid causing substantial harm to each other riparian states. However, if damage occurs, the countries that caused the damage must eliminate or mitigate this damage according to what the countries reach after discussion. Although this principle seems to guarantee the obligation of compensation in the event of damage, it was later criticized for placing a requirement that such damage be "serious damage." The

word "particle" has no legal definition, and controversy may arise (UN Environment Program, 2015). Each country's definition of what constitutes "serious damage" may differ, which does not guarantee the necessity of compensation.

In addition, the fifth principle is about the operation of the three countries regarding filling and operating the dam. The second clause of this principle ensures the necessity of reaching an agreement on the guidelines and rules for the annual operation of the dam. However, the second part of the clause guarantees that the dam owner may amend these regulations and principles from time to time. This means that reaching an agreement does not mean obligating Ethiopia not to change or violate it.

The Nile Agreement also includes provisions on the importance of exchanging information to complete studies on the effects of the dam (UN Environment Program, 2015). It obliges the three countries to put into effect the suggestion provided by the IPOE and respect the results of the final report of the TNC on the joint studies recommended in the final report of IPOE during the stages of construction, filling, and operation of the dam. Moreover, the fourth principle requires using the Nile's water fairly and equitably, considering the geographical, climatic, and ideological dimensions, economic and social needs, areas of water use, and methods of using them. However, the principle did not specify in detail a mechanism to reduce the increasing rates of water stress, especially in Egypt and Sudan. It also did not establish a legal mechanism for water allocation and fair division, meaning that the agreement needed to address the problem of the broader dispute between the three countries. In short, it can be said that the Nile Agreement has a lot of controversies and shortcomings. From this point of view, it would not be wrong to claim that the agreement made the problem even bigger in the long run instead of bringing a healthy solution to the GERD problem.

6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The study utilizes Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and securitization theory to analyze the rhetoric of Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), which Ethiopia began building in 2011. The analysis covers the period from the onset of official negotiations in 2013 through October 2023. It centers on statements from major securitizing actors, including presidents, prime ministers, and pertinent ministries such as those of agriculture, irrigation, and electricity, foreign ministers, ambassadors to these countries and key negotiation team members. Figure 6.1 illustrates the number of declarations from these countries that form the basis of this study's sample analysis during the specified timeframe. Figure 6.1 illustrates significant fluctuations in the number of declarations from Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan concerning the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). The first peak in 2014 for Ethiopia and Sudan contrasts with Egypt's peak in 2015, which was influenced by internal political turmoil, including a coup, continuous demonstrations, the Rabaa massacre, and a presidential election. These events diverted Egyptian authorities' focus from the dam crisis to internal security concerns. The second peak observed in 2021 across all three countries corresponds with Ethiopia's unilateral declaration and commencement of GERD filling without a consensus, leading to heightened diplomatic activity. This period also reflects a broader increase in declarations since 2020. Specifically, the rise in statements from Sudanese officials is attributed to the Sudanese revolution in December 2018, which led to the ousting of former President Omar al-Bashir and the establishment of a new government that revised Sudan's policies on the GERD.

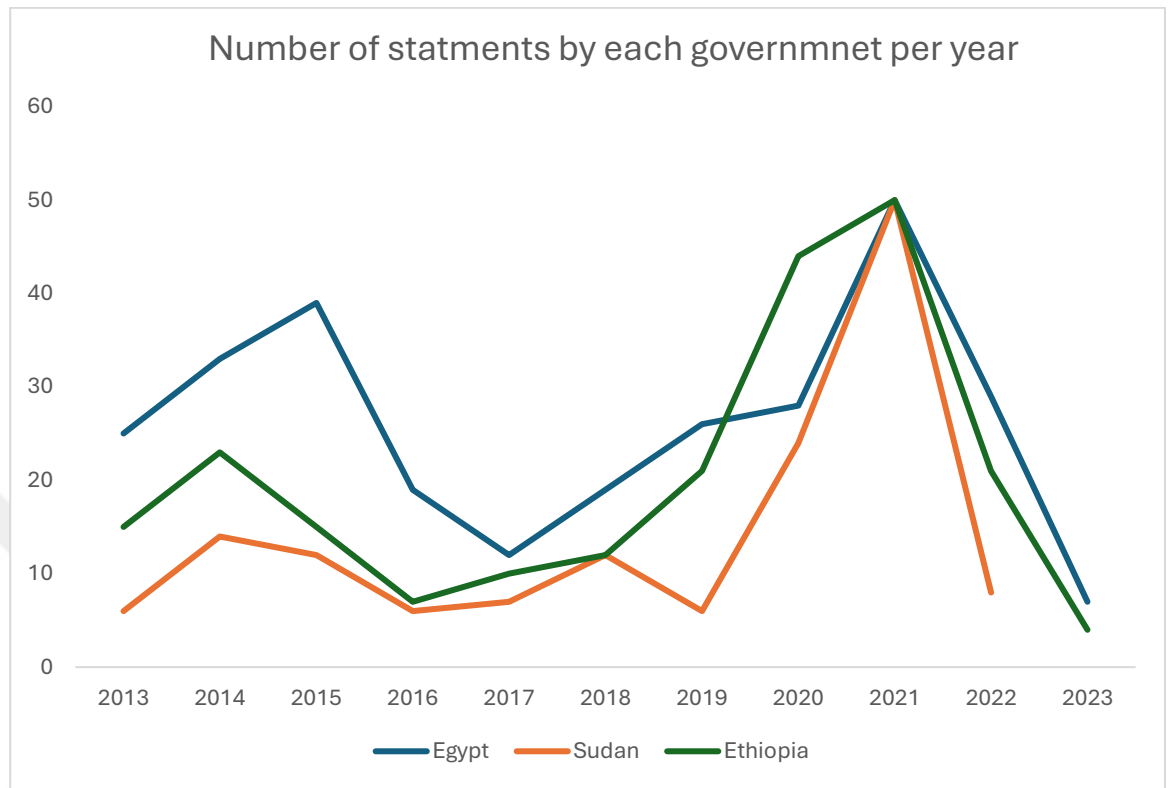


Figure 6.1. Number of Statements by Each Country Per Year

6.1 First Phase: From Jan 2013 Until May 2014

6.1.2 Historical background and context of this period

Understanding the historical background of the Nile water dispute within the sociopolitical and geopolitical context helps to understand how the governments' discourse regarding GERD is constructed. This will also facilitate the investigation of how, when, and why government officials tend to securitize or de-securitize water issues.

There is a long history of threats and conflicts in the Nile Basin. In 1979, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat issued a war threat against violators of Egypt's historical rights to the waters of the Nile (Carlson, 2013b). Also, Hosni Mubarak warned Ethiopia in 2010 that Egypt would launch an air strike on Ethiopia if Ethiopia built

a dam on the Blue Nile (Okoth, 2021). Following several failed regional attempts to cooperate over the Nile, the conflict between Egypt and Ethiopia flared up immediately after Ethiopia announced the dam's construction in 2011. Following the 25th-Jan Egyptian revolution that resulted in the ousting of Mubarak from rule, an Egyptian delegation visited Ethiopia in May 2011 and agreed with the Ethiopian Government to boost bilateral cooperation and resolve their differences on the GERD. The two countries agreed to form an international committee in Sep 2011 to study the impact of the GERD on Egypt and Sudan. A panel of experts (IPoE), consisting of two from each of the three countries and four international experts, was established during the inaugural session of the tripartite technical committee, comprising the irrigation ministers of Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia in Nov 2011. However, in the fall of 2012, foreign newspapers published reports about a WikiLeaks document surreptitiously obtained from the American think tank Stratfor, mentioning about Egyptian and Sudanese plans to build an airstrip to bomb a dam in the Blue Nile River in Ethiopia (Carlson, 2013b). Although the two governments denied these reports, they intensified the conflict and contributed to destroying mutual trust between the three countries. Nonetheless, President Mohammed Morsi who came to office in July 2012, ruled out the securitization approach in dealing with the GERD following a wise policy based on cooperation and mutual trust.

Indeed, the state of political polarization, which prevailed in Egypt after the revolution between the liberal and political Islamic movements to which President Morsi belongs, was reflected in their speech regarding the GERD. Egyptian opposition frequently accused President Morsi's Government of giving little attention to the GERD issue and the Nile water. While the Egyptian presidency preferred to wait for the impact report from the IPoE, which evaluates the dam's potential impacts on downstream countries, the Egyptian opposition has repeatedly reported their heightened concern over the dam.

The upcoming analysis will show how political polarization and local instability in Egypt triggered water securitization by high-level officials. The analyses will be carried out under three periods, covering the time spans between Jan 2013-May 2024, May 2014-Oct 2019, and Oct 2019-Oct 2023.

6.1.2.1 Egypt (first phase): from Jan 2013 until May 2014

6.1.2.2 Cooperation from the beginning of 2013 until May 2014

The level of cooperation between Egypt and Ethiopia at the beginning of President Morsi's era was ad hoc, where both parties might have a joint action with no shared goals. President Morsi agreed with Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn during the 21st African Union summit on promoting Africa's growth and economic development that the interests of both countries would be addressed throughout the construction of the GERD. Morsi also agreed with the PM to wait for the report that the IPoE will release regarding the impacts of the GERD. Despite both countries exerting joint action, they shared different goals of ensuring building the GERD as soon as possible.

It should be noted that at the beginning of Morsi's era, the language used to deal with the crisis adopted non-existential verbs and many words and connotations indicating the importance of cooperation and achieving common interests. Morsi's Government also adopted a rhetoric that tends to emphasize confidence in the words and actions of the other party. Ehab Fahmy, Spokesperson of the presidency, stated that Ethiopians will "understand the situation and not allow harm to befall Egypt in the light of the historic ties between the two counties and the other Nile Basin countries" (Ahram Online, 2013b). Furthermore, The Egyptian Defense Minister Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi asserted his rejection of the use of military force, saying, "We want to live, and they [referring to Ethiopians] want to live, so we have to find a peaceful solution for this file, which was abandoned for so long [referring to the era

of former President Hosni Mubarak]" (AhramOnline, 2013b). The Egyptian ambassador to Ethiopia, Mohamed Idris also stated that "In a positive atmosphere of mutual trust and cooperation, we are certainly capable of moving forward with our cooperation, but should the overall atmosphere take a negative turn, it is unlikely that we could pursue the improvement in our mutual interests" (Ezzat, 2013).

However, after the disastrous Egyptian presidential meeting of June 2013 that caused tensions between the two parties to escalate, cooperation declined to the lowest levels, which is a confrontation-of-the-issue type of interaction where conflicting parties acknowledge the issue. However, they share neither joint action nor common goals. Even though cooperation was at its lowest levels, it remained present even considering the wave of security movements that clouded the political scene in Egypt.

The level of cooperation between the two countries is related to the intensity level of securitizing moves regarding the GERD issue. Following that catastrophic presidential meeting when the securitizing moves were at their highest levels, the Egyptian PM still confirmed the significance of "cooperation between the states of the Nile Basin countries [referring to Ethiopia specifically]" to overcome that *impasse*. He also proceeded to say, "We understand the rights of developmental projects for the Nile, and there is always a way out that both parties can win," steering on the importance of following a win-win policy when dealing with the GERD to avoid the intensification of the dispute (Ahram Online, 2013c).

6.1.2.3 Politicization of the GERD issue

Following the Ethiopian announcement of May 2013 on the diversion of the Nile River, the presidential spokesperson Ehab Fahmy stated that the presidency would "not allow anyone to threaten Egypt's supply of Nile water." (Ahram Online, 2013). This statement portrays the Nile water supply as an immutable, non-negotiable

priority that will be under the direct control of the presidency. Positioning the GERD issue as an integral part of the presidency's high political agenda directly politicizes the GERD dispute. As it is no longer a technical dispute that should stay under the exclusive control of the environment or water and irrigation ministries. This statement further reflects a sense of sovereignty over the Egyptian water supply that requires national protection. It also suggests repercussions for those perceived as threatening the Egyptian water supply. The presidential spokesperson further stressed in May 2013 that Egypt backs development projects and initiatives in Africa "as long as they do not affect Egypt's national security" (Ahram Online, 2013). He noted that President Morsi was enthusiastic about cooperating with "all African states" on water-sharing issues.

The statement positions Egypt as a supporter of developmental hydroelectric projects in the Nile basin, which depicts Egypt as an upholder for universally accepted principles regarding equitable water management of transboundary waters. However, the second part of the statement portrays Egypt as the country with the power and authority to legitimize and legalize the construction of any dam in the Nile based on its impact on Egypt's national security. This statement further reveals Egypt's ideology on the GERD *impasse*, prioritizing its national security over international water cooperation and regional development collaboration regarding Nile water resources.

At a press conference held after the meeting with the President in May 2013, the irrigation minister Bahaa El-Din declared that "Egypt had ruled out a military response" if Ethiopia insisted on going ahead with its dam project (Ahram Online, 2013). This portrays Egyptian peaceful ideology towards resolving water conflicts. Nevertheless, it also asserts that the country's military capabilities and strategic decisions are central in designing its foreign policy. Egyptian President Mohammad Morsi said in Jun 2013, "Before Ethiopia's Grand Renaissance Dam is built, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan should reach a consensus" (Anadolu Agency, 2013). This

statement implies both a moral obligation and a practical necessity for reaching an agreement regarding the GERD that protects Egypt's Nile water supply before the construction ends. It depicts Egypt as prioritizing diplomacy and engaging in dialogue on resolving conflicts rather than resorting to violent choices.

6.1.2.4 Securitizing the GERD issue

Two catastrophic events were the main trigger behind the securitization of the GERD issue. The first event was the unilateral decision of Ethiopia to divert the Nile River bed as it built the GERD in May 2013. The second event was the Egyptian presidential meeting, which took place in Jun 2013 and brought different Egyptian political party leaders together with the President to discuss the GERD issue. The following section will explain how these events shifted the Egyptian government policy approach towards the GERD from politicization to securitization.

Egyptian government officials were divided over the Nile Dam project, especially after Ethiopia announced the diversion of the course of the Nile River to construct the dam in May 2013. The move came right after President Morsi visited Ethiopia to discuss the GERD issue. In addition, In May 2013, the report released by the IPoE recommended that additional impact studies should be done to examine the actual impact of the GERD on downstream countries (Osama, 2018).

The political opposition in Egypt perceived the Ethiopian diversion of the Nile River as crossing the red line, endangering Egyptian water security, and jeopardizing Egyptian national security and integrity. On the other hand, the Egyptian administration did not believe in the first place that the diversion of the river was a primary concern, yet it had concerns over the dam's impact on Egypt. As came in the declaration of Ali Hifni, Egypt's Deputy Foreign Minister for African Affairs in May 2013, as "diverting the course of the river was not a major concern but the overall impact of the dam it will cause upon completion" (Tekle, 2013). This

statement reflects the ideology of Morsi's Government regarding the GERD, which tends to understate the significance of an environmental change, which is the diversion of the Nile River to prioritize the possible impacts of the GERD on Egypt as their primary concern. This implies that Egypt will investigate the impact of GERD without rushing to a policy decision regarding the GERD. This also denotes that the environmental impacts of the GERD are not Egypt's biggest concerns; instead, it is the economic and political impacts that would guide the Egyptian policymakers on how to deal with the GERD issue.

The securitization of the water discourse started at the local level and then was transferred to the presidency under too much internal pressure. The political polarization and unstable internal political situation explain the Morsi Government's policy shift towards the GERD. These tensions between the different viewpoints of politicians in Egypt were evident during the famous national dialogue that brought together politicians from different political factions with President Morsi in the presidential palace. What makes this dialogue intriguing is that it was broadcast live without the participants' knowledge, focusing on Egypt's stance regarding Ethiopia's construction of the GERD.

The 3rd of June presidential meeting can be considered a catastrophic political event, as it sparked the securitization of water discourse regarding the GERD by Egyptian politicians and various Egyptian governmental institutions, including the presidency. This meeting led to the igniting of the crisis and the cessation of negotiations. Egyptian party leaders put forward many hostile actions and subversive plans against Ethiopia during this meeting, which was initially intended to be a private meeting. Egyptian politicians considered this dam a significant threat to Egyptian national security, necessitating taking exceptional measures when dealing with the dam project. During the meeting, the head of the conservative Islamist Nur Party, Yunis Makhyun, affirming that the GERD project constitutes a significant danger to Egypt's national security, suggested backing Ethiopian rebels

to demolish the GERD as a plan A. As he said, "We can communicate with them [Rebels] and use them as a bargaining chip against the Ethiopian government" (Tarek, 2023). Makhyoun suggested an alternative plan: "If all this fails, then there is no choice left for Egypt but to play the final card, which is using the intelligence service to destroy the dam." (Tarek, 2023).

Moreover, Ayman Nour, head of the liberal Al-Ghad Party, suggested spreading rumors alleging that Egypt is buying advanced military planes so that Ethiopia would perceive this move as if the Egyptians planned to airstrike the dam. He believed that these rumors would prevent the Ethiopian Government from building the GERD or, in the worst case, force Ethiopia to cooperate with Egypt's interests. He also recommended that Egypt deploy political, intelligence, and military teams to the East African countries by saying, "We need to intervene in their domestic affairs" (Tarek, 2023).

Nonetheless, other politicians among the meeting attendees warned that spreading rumors about adopting any aggressive policy or taking military action would be dangerous and could intensify the dispute by turning the Ethiopians into foes to Egypt. Mohamed Anwar El-Sadat, chairperson of the liberal Reform and Development Party, also mentioned the role that should be played by the Egyptian intelligence apparatus in the GERD dispute, referring to Ethiopian rebels who can be used against the Ethiopian Government. El-Sadat said, "Ethiopia consists of multiple tribes, and your Excellency [referring to Mursi] knows that everybody in Africa can be bribed" (Tarek, 2023). On the other hand, President Morsi concluded the meeting by asserting that "Egypt respects Ethiopia and its people and Egypt will not engage in any aggressive acts against Ethiopia" (Tekle, 2013c).

The conflict between the two countries intensified after this series of threats made by politicians and party leaders in Egypt, demanding that the dam be blown up to protect Egyptian national interests. This, in turn, resulted in an intensive wave of

securitization by Egyptian officials. The main securitizing actors from the end of May until June 3 are the President, the foreign minister (FM), the Prime Minister (PM), and the Water and Irrigation Ministers. The referent objects perceived as threatened by the GERD during this phase were energy security, water security, economic prosperity, national security, and the national unity of Egypt. These officials used different discursive strategies to legitimize their stance on the GERD issue.

Morsi's government shifted its policy towards this issue by securitizing its discourse regarding the GERD and their water rights in the Nile. This was revealed through the use of existential verbs and existential rhetoric to express the severity and seriousness of the situation. The declarations released by President Morsi or the Egyptian FM, PM, and Irrigation Ministers that followed the meeting of Jun 2013 tended to securitize the GERD issue highly.

Some statements further indicated the possibility of violation. The Egyptian Minister of Irrigation and Agriculture, Bahaa El-Din, linked the Renaissance Dam crisis to the problem of electricity outages and the water scarcity crisis of recent years. Bahaa El-Din said in Jun 2013, that the GERD project would negatively affect the electricity-generating capacity of the High Dam, and incredibly, "In times of shrinking water resources, the GERD would lead to a disaster for Egypt" (Ahram Online, 2013b). Referring to Egypt's water scarcity crisis, El-din warned Bahaa El-Din by saying, "We are suffering a yearly deficit of water that reaches LE7 billion," thus "We will not allow anyone to touch Egypt's share of Nile water, which is a matter of life and death for Egypt." . He also affirmed that Egypt had never accepted the construction of the GERD, asserting that Egypt "will not give up on one drop of water," as well as will "not allow for its Nile water shares reduction" (Ahram Online, 2013b).

The excessive use of the phrase "will not allow" indicates that Egypt's Nile water share is a "non-negotiable" issue that constitutes a crucial priority to the Government. Describing the issue as "a matter of life or death" increases the urgency of the issue, elevating the issue to a national security matter. The statements further contain securitizing moves to the GERD issue. The irrigation minister referred to three referential objects perceived as in danger from GERD. The referential objects include the state's water security, energy security, the well-being of Egyptians, and the state's survival. This implies that any threat to Egypt's water supply indicates a direct threat to the state's national security. He tended to combine three legitimization strategies in his statement: legitimizing through a hypothetical future, triggering emotions, and voice of expertise. By implying the negative impacts of the GERD on the already water-scarce Egypt and supporting his claims with empirical data, the official triggered fears of the audience from the GERD. Thus, it indicates the commitment of the Government to take exceptional measures such as military action or unprecedented policies to protect the state's survival, and the legitimization attempt to garner support for these policies.

In Jun 2013, Sherif Mohamady, the representative of Egypt's irrigation minister, announced that "scientific studies" have indicated potential future risks for Egypt once the construction of the GERD is completed. He said, "This is because there are huge problems in its design since the Ethiopians' technical approach is very weak." Mohamady further stressed, "In case of its collapse, there will be lots of negative consequences for both Egypt and Sudan" at a symposium organized by the Egyptian-European Council to discuss the dam deadlock in Jun 2013 (Ahram Online, 2013l).

Mohamady tended to legitimize his securitizing move through the voice of expertise. The phrase "Scientific studies have proven" depicts the speaker as credible and dependable as his words are based on empirical science and impartial research, not simply his thoughts. Describing the dam's design as weak calls into

question Ethiopia's ability to design safe dams in the region. Talking about the future consequences frames the dam issue in a regional context and gives it a geopolitical dimension that invokes fears and concerns about water security and regional stability. The statement thus aims to legitimize the Egyptian rejection of the GERD while delegitimizing the Ethiopian claims regarding the beneficial impacts of the GERD. Thus, this framing will influence the audience to perceive the Egyptian stance on the GERD and support it.

The Foreign Minister, Mohamed Kamel Amr, also used existential language when dealing with the dam crisis, as he considered the presence of any obstacle to the flow of the Nile River as a threat to the survival of the nation, highlighting the significant economic crises that Egypt suffers from due to the annual water deficit. Following the Ethiopian Government's refusal of an Egyptian request to halt the project, the FM said, "No Nile - no Egypt" (Reuters, 2013). The FM also pledged that Egypt "will not give up on a single drop of water from the Nile or any part of what arrives in Egypt from this water in terms of quantity and quality" (Reuters, 2013).

Amr tended to legitimize his securitizing move by triggering emotions of fear from the GERD. This statement highlights Egyptians' high dependence on the Nile to the point that they perceive it as an existential necessity for survival. This further depicts that Egypt would face severe challenges without the Nile, which depicts the issue as requiring urgent measures to deal with. However, The FM stressed the significance of high-level communication and engaging in negotiations by saying, "We will talk to Ethiopia, and we will see what comes of it...Ethiopia will not harm Egypt, not even by a liter of water. We are looking at this being implemented" (Reuters, 2013). The statement denotes an authoritative commitment and a firm declaration by Ethiopian officials to avoid inflicting harm on Egypt's Nile water supply. The statement portrays Egypt's willingness to engage in diplomatic negotiations to solve the issue rather than resorting to other violent policy options.

The statement targets alleviating the tensions between the two countries following that catastrophic meeting. It also proves that Egypt is a benign and cooperative party that targets the enhancement of regional cooperation over resource allocation and water management.

Egyptian PM Hisham Qandil also pointed out Egypt's limited share of rainwater, stressing the severity of limiting Egypt's access to Nile water. In a speech before the Shura Council (the upper house of Egypt's parliament) in Jun 2013, Qandil said, "Given the arid nature of its topography, Egypt depends on the Nile for 98 percent of its water needs" and "some 1600 billion cubic meters of rain that falls on the Nile Basin annually, only about 84 billion cubic meters – roughly 5 percent – reached Egypt's southern borders" (Ahram Online, 2013c).

Qandil tended to combine three legitimization strategies in his statement: legitimizing through a hypothetical future, triggering emotions, and using the voice of expertise. The first part of the statement depicts Egypt's vulnerability and reliability to its supply from the Nile River, highlighting how critical it is for Egypt on all levels. Mentioning that about 5% of the Nile's supply reaches Egypt annually indicates a situation of inequality. Egypt positioned itself as being unequally treated by the upstream country. Egypt's concerns regarding GERD and its impact on its water supply add to this. The statement implies an inequality in power relations and resource allocation. It could be perceived as a counterargument against Ethiopia's accusations of Egypt's dominance over the Nile water. Furthermore, Qandil asserted that Egypt would oppose the GERD project if the studies affirmed its adverse impacts on Egypt. He warned that Egypt's access to the Nile River was "national security" and "a matter of life and death." The statement depicts the GERD as an "existential threat to Egyptian national security and the country's survival", intensifying the urgency of solving the issue.

The securitizing moves again target triggering emotions of fear from the GERD by depicting it as a matter of survival for the state. Nonetheless, despite the securitizing moves of Qandil that were clear in his speech, he affirmed "the importance of cooperation between the states of the Nile Basin, pinpointing that only the "wise use" of the Nile water that would ensure the prosperity of all Nile basin countries. He also said he visited Ethiopia to discuss the GERD crisis (Ahram Online, 2013c). He used the legitimization strategy of altruism to garner public support for his perspective on the GERD. Emphasizing the significance of cooperation highlights the importance of prioritizing joint efforts and fostering mutual benefits rather than unilateral acts in regional water management.

The "wise use" phrase portrays Egypt as an advocate for sustainable, equitable, and responsible usage of the Nile's water. This positions the Ethiopian acts as inequitable, irresponsible, and unsustainable, which goes against the universally accepted principles regarding transboundary water management. Qandil also asked Ethiopia to "abide by all the international and regional water-sharing treaties to which Egypt has signed, even if they were signed during periods of colonial era." By referring to historical agreements, Egypt highlights the longevity and importance of agreements in managing water resources. The statement denotes a claim to have the legal right to a specific amount of water from the Nile that other riparian states should respect. This implies an attempt by Egypt to preserve the *status quo* against Ethiopian attempts to change the geopolitical context. This legitimizes the Egyptian stance and concerns the GERD, influencing the audience's perception of the dispute. Such legitimization strategies are recurrently used to mobilize the audience for its ideology regarding GERD and thus gain their acceptance of the exceptional measures and policies taken afterward. This ensured the success of the securitizing moves made by the Egyptian executives during this period.

Moreover, during a live televised speech in June 2013, President Morsi also conducted some securitizing moves that can be considered the beginnings of

violation. Morsi warned against compromising Egypt's water security by saying that "Egypt's water security cannot be violated at all" and "all options are open" when dealing with the dam issue (Sudan Tribune, 2013). The Egyptian President portrayed Egypt's water security as threatened by the GERD. The phrase "all options are open" is an escalator language. It includes policy options such as diplomatic efforts and taking legal action, internationalizing the issue, or even waging war to protect Egyptian water security. Such escalation impacts regional and international dynamics, possibly encouraging other actors to engage in the dispute. Thus, this implies a potential intensification of the tensions and the dispute on the GERD over the Nile's water resources. The statement puts pressure on Ethiopia to urgently reach a deal regarding the GERD to avoid the escalation of the tensions.

The Egyptian Prime Minister had previously warned against compromising Egypt's share of the Nile waters and expressed that Egypt would stop building the dam. However, he did not specify the method Morsi's Government would use to implement this. Although Morsi stressed that he was not "calling for war," his speech about the dam indicated that all options were available, including war. The language used by the President in his speech indicated that the unity of the Egyptian people is also threatened by the Ethiopian dam, not only water or economic security. President Morsi threatened by saying, "If it loses one drop, our blood is the alternative" and "The Egyptians' lives are connected around it as one great people. If it diminishes by one drop, our blood is the alternative" (Sudan Tribune, 2013). This statement portrayed Egyptian unity and dignity as being endangered by the existence of the GERD. Thus, it targets triggering the emotions of solidarity between the Egyptians against a specific belligerent and threat to their country's survival and welfare. This further elevates the urgency of dealing with the GERD issue while legitimizing any exceptional measure against the national and international audience, even if it was a military action.

Some securitizing moves were also conducted after the coup in Egypt from July 3, 2013, to May 2014. The negotiations between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia were stopped entirely after the Egyptian coup that ousted President Mursi on July 3, 2013. However, in November 2013, negotiations resumed between Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan. Nonetheless, the negotiations reached a deadlock again in Jan 2014 as the three parties could not agree regarding the GERD. Egyptian executives continued to securitize the GERD issue upon the continuous failure of trilateral negotiations. The Egyptian PM also stated, "It is untrue that the Renaissance Dam has become a reality we have to deal with," El-Beblawi said, highlighting the financial and other technical problems the GERD project faced at that time. (Ahram Online, 2014). By implying the existence of technical problems in the dam, they tended to delegitimize the existence of GERD. Such statements denote the potential negative impacts of GERD in the future. The PM tends to raise doubts about the safety of the GERD in the whole region and questions the credibility of the Ethiopian policymakers who reiterate that the GERD would play a pivotal role in the development of the whole region. The statements aim to legitimize the Egyptian claims regarding the GERD against the national and international audience to mobilize its acceptance.

The Water Resources and Irrigation Minister Mohamed Abdel-Muttalib warned that "all options and scenarios are open" for Egypt to deal with the GERD issue in Feb 2014 (Anadolu Agency, 2014). Abdel-Muttalib further underscored that "Egypt's Nile water share is a 'red line' thus, Egypt will not allow it to be crossed (MENA, 2014). This indicates a warning for escalating the issue by securitizing it, depicting the GERD endangering Egypt's Nile water supply. Re-stating the same phrase, "All options are open," that was used by Morsi to imply potentially resorting to military action to protect Egypt's water supply constitutes an escalator language to increase pressure on Ethiopia.

Nevertheless, it does not imply the Government's real intention to wage a war against Ethiopia as a policy option. As Mursi's administration declared before,

Abdel-Muttalib warned that Egypt would lean toward the internationalization of the GERD crisis as a preferred option besides the negotiation rather than going to war. He asserted that "Egypt would not close the door to negotiations with Addis Ababa". Still, he warned of the "internationalization" of the crisis as another option for the Government if the negotiation failed. This statement denotes the usage of legitimization through altruism. The statement confirms that the real aim behind securitization was to persuade Ethiopia to reach a deal through negotiation and diplomacy to avoid escalation. Abdel-Muttalib also affirmed that "each party has the right to defend its interests without compromising the other's rights" and warned that "Ethiopian decision-makers must bring a solution to the table that will not compromise Egypt's share of water," referring to Egypt's firm position on not giving up a drop of its historical Nile water shares. (Anadolu Agency, 2014). The usage of "must" in the statement denotes urgency in dealing with the GERD issue. Emphasizing the necessity of "bringing a solution" assures the Egyptian diplomatic approach to solve the issue in this period. The statement reassured that the Egyptian Nile water share is non-negotiable and must be respected by the Ethiopians. This statement further portrays Egypt as a collaborative party that prioritizes diplomatic approaches and cooperative water management rather than prioritizing unilateralism.

This contradicts Buzan et al.'s (1998) argument that most securitizing moves were likely conducted by local and relevant officials in the environmental sector. The occurrence of securitization by high officials at the national level in Egypt during that period is explained by political conflict and local tensions among various political movements, as well as between them and President Morsi and the ruling party. These securitizing moves appeared in the speech of the President, the Prime Minister, and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Irrigation, and Agriculture after Egyptian politicians intensified pressure on the Government, accusing it of not doing enough to stop the construction of the GERD.

This thesis argues that two catastrophic events were the main trigger behind securitization for the GERD issue as the following. The first event was the unilateral decision of Ethiopia to divert the Nile River bid as it built the GERD in May 2013. The second event was the Egyptian presidential meeting, which brought different Egyptian political party leaders together with the President to discuss the GERD issue. How such events shifted the Egyptian government policy approach towards the GERD from politicization to securitization will be explained in the following section.

It should also be mentioned that one of the leading politicians who asked to deal aggressively with the dam issue was discovered to be backed by the Egyptian Military at this time. Makhyoun, the chairperson of the Salafist Al-Nour party, was one of the main political factions utilized by the military against the Morsi administration (McTighe, 2014). The streaming of the meeting, which was supposed to be a secret closed-door meeting, was perceived by the Morsi administration as a political game exerted by the military to increase the intensity of political polarization between Morsi and other political factions. Therefore, the main target behind the securitization exerted by some of the political factions was internal, not external, in the first place. It mainly targeted creating an internal political crisis to add up the package of internal crises that preceded the Egyptian-July-coup.

6.1.3 Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Government used the discourse to dispel the Egyptian concerns regarding the GERD. As a rising hegemon, it used discourse as a counter-hegemony strategy to legitimize the construction of GERD. The Ethiopian Government adopted a discourse that tends to produce and reproduce three main points for the legitimate building of the GERD on the Nile River. Firstly, Ethiopia insisted that the construction of the GERD would not affect the historical Nile water shares of Egypt

and Sudan. Ethiopia's Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy also confirmed that the GERD project will not "greatly harm" Egypt and Sudan (Ahram Online, 2013f). The Minister used the legitimization strategy of implying a hypothetical future to persuade the audience that the GERD would not inflict harm on them. This phrase implies that there could be some harm by the GERD over downstream countries, yet it is manageable. Thus, it frames the Ethiopian executives as holding full authority over the GERD and control over its impacts, knowing the costs and risks of the GERD. This frames the discussion regarding how to manage such minimal harm, not about the existence of GERD itself. In addition, the FM asserted that "Ethiopia has a clear and firm position on Nile issues. We have no intention to harm the peoples of Sudan or Egypt." Ethiopia's Ministry of Water and Power also confirmed, "With regard to the diversion, the Ethiopian Minister said, "river diversion does not stop the flow of water to the downstream countries" (Tekle, 2013). By emphasizing that the GERD will not inflict massive harm on Egypt and Sudan, Ethiopia frames the GERD as non-threatening to Egypt's national or water security.

Secondly, in order to refute what Egypt is promoting regarding the collapse of the GERD, saying that "its design violates international standards," the Ethiopian Water and Power Minister repeatedly affirmed that the design of the GERD was done according to "the international standards" (Ahram Online, 2013g). This statement positions the construction of the GERD as progressing as meeting internationally accepted norms and standards regarding water infrastructure. It also adds a legal aspect to the GERD as it was designed according to the established guidelines of international agreements. This effectively refutes criticism from Egypt and minimizes security concerns regarding the GERD. Thus, the statement legitimizes the construction of the GERD by supporting it scientifically, which aims to mobilize the audience to support the GERD rather than accept Egypt's securitizing moves.

Thirdly, it was evident from the discourse of the Egyptian government that the GERD would not be used for electricity-generation purposes and, therefore, would shrink the water shares of Egypt and Sudan from the Nile. Thus, the Ethiopian discourse also focused on dismissing this information. The Ethiopian FM affirmed that the GERD would not harm the downstream countries, pinpointing that it would be "used exclusively for power generation and not for irrigation" (Tekle, 2013). Emphasizing that the only purpose of the GERD is electricity generation dispels the Egyptian fears regarding the impact of the GERD on their water supply. It also frames the Nile's water as fundamental for meeting the Ethiopian and regional energy demands. This further mobilizes the audience to perceive the GERD as a regional project to achieve energy security, independence, and sustainable economic prosperity of Nile basin riparian countries.

In a global era in which sustainable economic development and transition to clean renewable energy are cherished, Ethiopia portrays itself as a country that seeks to promote the values of the currently changing energy world system. This shows how officials use the altruism strategy of legitimization to garner support for the GERD. Additionally, Ethiopia denies the possible negative impact of the dam and affirms that the GERD will benefit both Egyptians and Sudanese people. The Ethiopian FM spokesperson Dina Mufti said, "The final findings indicate that Egypt and Sudan will benefit from clean energy generated by the plant and will also reduce the accumulation of sedimentation on lower riparian countries" (Tekle, 2013b).

The Ethiopian Ambassador to Sudan, Abadi Zemo, also asserted that the GERD would increase Ethiopian electricity generation capacity and "reduce the silt levels in the Nile." He tried to dismiss the Sudanese concerns regarding the decrease of its Nile water share due to the GERD, stressing that all Nile basin countries "would have access to water stored by the GERD," adding that the GERD would protect both Ethiopia and Sudan from expected flood waters (Ahram Online, 2013j).

The altruism legitimization strategy is accompanied by assuring good expectations from the GERD for the whole region. These statements tended to highlight the positive impacts of the GERD not only on Egypt and Sudan but also on the whole region and the environment. This suggests a proactive benefit and necessity for the GERD framing it as a solution to diminish the silt levels in the Nile. This takes the audience's attention from focusing on the negative impacts of hydroelectric dams in general and of GERD, specifically on the environment, to focus on its positive impacts, thus legalizing its existence. Supporting the claim with scientific framing elevates its credibility and legitimacy in the region. The statement is also a counter argument against Egyptian concerns regarding the securitization of the GERD, asserting that GERD would contribute to the environmental security of the region rather than endangering it.

The Ethiopian Government repeatedly attempted to prove its good intentions to avoid the escalation of the tensions among the three parties. The Irrigation Ministry, referring to the Ethiopian initiative step to form the tripartite committee to scrutinize the impacts of the dam, praised Ethiopia by saying that this step is proof of their "good intentions and respect for Egypt."

The Ethiopian discourse always pinpointed their openness to cooperation. Following the diversion of the Nile River, the Water and Power Minister Tegenu said, "If Egypt has some issues to discuss with Ethiopia, we are very ready to discuss them" (Ahram Online, 2013h). Again, the altruism legitimization strategy is utilized in the GERD discourse. Ethiopia tends to portray itself as a cooperative party that prioritizes engaging in negotiations and achieving mutual benefits for all parties. This would increase Ethiopian influence over the audience and thus legitimize its values, beliefs, and actions regarding the GERD.

In response to Egyptian politicians' threats to blow up the dam, followed by hints from President Morsi that all options were open, The Ethiopian foreign Ministry has

called upon the Egyptian ambassador to Ethiopia for clarification. However, The Ethiopian discourse regarding the GERD, following the disastrous Egyptian high-profile meeting of June 2013, was characterized by wisdom and a tendency to mitigate the severity of the crisis and de-securitize the political discourse regarding the dam, in addition to emphasizing some Ethiopian convictions regarding the dam.

The Ethiopian Government has continuously tried to deal with the dam issue as merely a technical dispute, not a political one. Therefore, it avoided the securitization of the water discourse regarding its share in the Nile waters or the dam, mainly because it was the weaker side. Unlike Egypt, the Ethiopian Government tended to use non-existential language in dealing with the GERD issue even during the period when the Morsi administration achieved many securitizing moves.

Ethiopia Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Ambassador Dina Mufti said that "the Nile is not a source of confrontation," adding "it is a source of development and cooperation among the Nile basin countries" (Tekle, 2013b). This statement portrays Ethiopia as a cooperative party promoting a collaborative transboundary water management narrative that enhances mutual benefits. The statement suggests a proactive stance on the GERD that aims to mitigate the tensions to avoid conflict with Egypt through enhancing bilateral trust.

Depicting the GERD as a catalyst for "cooperation and development" influences the audience to perceive the GERD as a necessity for regional stability and welfare, thus legitimizing the existence of the GERD on the Nile basin and delegitimizing the Egyptian Securitizing moves. Furthermore, Ethiopian leaders tend to use the altruism legitimization strategy, which tends to portray oneself as good while depicting the other party in a negative way. By doing this, Ethiopia aims to mobilize the audience to believe in its ideology and legitimize its policies and decisions regarding the GERD. Ambassador Dina Mufti also affirmed, "Our wish is that they

would understand that the dam's construction is not going to harm them in any way. We have always sought a win-win cooperation and relationship with Egypt" (Tekle, 2013b).

Moreover, the Ethiopian government condemned the statements made by Egyptian politicians, describing them as "unconstructive propaganda against Ethiopia," yet it chose to remain "patient" (Tekle, 2013c). The use of altruism to legitimize GERD is apparent in these statements. While Ethiopia portrayed itself as a cooperative party that sought diplomatic solutions to the GERD issue, it criticized the Egyptian discourse by describing it as "unconstructive propaganda." This phrase implies that the Egyptian statement regarding the GERD lacks good intent and is devoid of merit and thus may mislead the audience.

This attempts to delegitimize the Egyptian statement for being misleading and inaccurate and instead mobilizes the audience to the Ethiopian narrative. Ambassador Dina Mufti said date??, "This sort of bragging will not divert our attention." And added, "Ethiopia is not intimidated by Egypt's psychological warfare and will not halt the dam's construction, even for seconds (Reuters, 2013a). The term bragging conveys a negative connotation, implying self-promotional language. The term "psychological warfare" implies Ethiopian resilience against Egyptian threats.

The statements further positions Egypt in an inferior position while positioning Ethiopia in a higher authoritative position over Egypt. This portrays Egypt as manipulative and prioritizes belligerent approaches to diplomatic approaches, whereas it depicts Ethiopia as cooperative. The statements aim to delegitimize the Egyptian narrative by downplaying its credibility while fostering the Ethiopian stance on the GERD as reliable and valid.

However, upon escalating the tension and the continuous securitizing moves conducted by Egyptian executives, the Ethiopian Government also exerted some securitizing moves. Egypt had previously proposed joint management of the Ethiopian dam to regulate filling periods and ensure that Egypt was not exposed to any harm from the GERD. However, Ethiopia rejected all these proposals, stressing that the GERD is an integral part of the sovereignty of the Ethiopian state.

The Ethiopian PM Spokesman Getachew Reda said in Jun 2013, "We are going to continue with our project; I don't think it will depend on the will of politicians in Egypt" (AFP, 2013). Furthermore, FM Tedros Adhanom warned in Jun 2013, "There is no internal or external force that could stop the dam project." Despite what Egyptian politicians say, Ethiopia's Foreign Ministry was determined not to halt the GERD "even for a second" (Sudan Tribune, 2013).

These statements underscore that Ethiopia tends to prioritize traditional principles regarding resource allocation that depict water and, thus, hydro infrastructures as being an integral part of the country's sovereign authority. However, such ideology diverges from currently accepted principles highlighting the regional cooperative management of water resources. This statement implies a strong position from an upstream country asserting the country's resilience against Egyptian opposition and securitizing moves. The statement aims to garner public support for the Ethiopian government's decisions on the GERD and national development projects, positioning the GERD as a sovereign issue crucial to Ethiopian energy security and sustainable economic development. By framing the GERD as under threat from internal and external pressures, it underscores the urgency of addressing it as an existential necessity. This narrative also influences how international stakeholders, neighboring countries, and donors perceive the issue, shaping their policy decisions related to the dispute. Another securitizing move was conducted by the Ethiopian FM Tedros Adhanom who defined the GERD as the only means of survival to lift Ethiopia out of poverty and economic decline and that without the dam, the threat

of poverty to Ethiopian society would continue. He said in Jun 2013, "Ethiopia cannot remain poor" and "It must utilize its resources to lift its people out of poverty" (Reuters, 2013a). These statements depict the GERD as an existential necessity for the Ethiopians to alleviate poverty rates and increase welfare levels. This mobilizes internal and international audiences by depicting the GERD as a critical infrastructure for the future of the Ethiopians.

Ethiopia continued its approach of de-securitization regarding the GERD issue with Egypt after the coup. On July 13, 2013, Ethiopian PM Hailemariam Desalegn repeatedly affirmed that dialogue was the only way to solve the *impasse* with Egypt by saying, "Ethiopia believes, as it has demonstrated on numerous occasions, that dialogue and discussion provide the necessary way forward to resolve external or internal disputes. It is also a near neighbor and deeply involved in developing a mutually beneficial relationship with all the states in the Nile Basin, including Egypt." Ethiopia also dismissed the possibility of a military confrontation with Egypt. The PM stated, "Ethiopia believes that all the riparian states will continue to work together to provide peaceful solutions to all current problems" (Sudan Tribune, 2013b).

These statements show the Ethiopian recurrent usage of the altruism strategy of legitimization to increase their influence. It underscores Ethiopia's commitment to resolve the GERD dispute through dialogue and diplomatic paths, portraying Ethiopia as a cooperative international actor that favors peaceful conflict resolution strategies. Emphasizing the promotion of mutual benefits for all Nile Basin countries enhances regional cooperation and solidarity with Egypt. This target rebuilding trust and opening a new chapter with Egypt to mitigate the conflict over the GERD and persuade Egyptian policymakers to engage in negotiations and avoid military confrontation to resolve the dispute.

Nevertheless, due to the internal instability Egypt experienced after the coup, the tripartite negotiations were halted until they resumed in Nov 2013, which failed again within two months. As explained before, the failure of the negotiations triggered some securitizing moves by the interim Egyptian Government. However, this time, the Ethiopian discourse surrounding the GERD included some securitizing moves. Ethiopian Irrigation Minister Alamayo Tegno said in Jan 2014 that the GERD "represents a strategic priority for Ethiopia that will have a vital role in eradicating poverty" (Ahram Online, 2014a). The Ethiopian official depicted the GERD as an "existential necessity to eliminate Ethiopian poverty." In other words, they portrayed the Ethiopian economic development and welfare as threatened in case the GERD is halted. This triggers pride in the audience, thus enhancing national unity and solidarity for the GERD. It further influences the international audience to legitimize the existence of the GERD that will rescue the Ethiopians from severe poverty.

Additionally, the Deputy PM of Ethiopia, Demeke Mekonnen, stressed in April 2014 that The GERD "symbolizes Ethiopia's determination and ability to get back to its ancient civilization and glory." This statement shows how Ethiopian authorities tended to securitize the GERD issue, depicting the GERD as a symbol of Ethiopian economic development and national identity. Again, the legitimization strategy through emotions was utilized by Ethiopian officials. The statement aims to influence the domestic audience to support this national project, which will enhance their economic situation and regain a sense of unity around the GERD.

In Feb 2014, responding to the Egyptian threats of internationalizing the GERD, Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn said his country would "win politically" if Egypt insisted on international arbitration: "We seek to persuade the Egyptian authorities to avoid unnecessary complaints against the dam and to resume the tripartite talks with Ethiopia and Sudan." However, while speaking before the Ethiopian parliament in Apr 2014, he affirmed that the government "was ready to

respond if Egypt decided to issue its dispute over the GERD to the UN" (Anadolu Agency, 2014).

Nonetheless, such securitizing moves were combined with some discursive strategies to de-securitize the issue after the Egyptian threats to resort to international arbitration to resolve the dispute. The statement depicted international arbitration as a favorable option for the Ethiopian Government and is aligned with its interests, claiming it could promote its political stance on the GERD issue. Desalegn's statement targets deviating the Egyptian policymakers from pursuing legal arbitration to avoid internationalizing the GERD issue. Ethiopia aims to influence yet manipulate the audience not to garner support for legal arbitration to save the Egyptian interest. It was also coupled with calls for resuming Trilateral negotiations and promoting regional cooperation as Ethiopian Water, Irrigation, and Energy Alemayehu Tegen stated, "We urge Egypt to re-join the engagement and work for the benefits of our countries" (Anadolu Agency, 2014).

Zeitoun and Warner (2006, p.445) proposed several tactics riparian countries may use to control the water resources in an international basin. One of them is securitization, which hydro hegemon utilizes to achieve water resource control. On the other hand, the non-hegemonic riparian countries will have recourse to de-securitization and negotiations. The analysis of the GERD discourse shows that the traditional hegemonic power (Egypt and partially Sudan) and the rising hegemonic power (Ethiopia) are both resorting to securitization and de-securitization depending on the local and transboundary contextual factors that affect them and are affected by them as well. International support, financial mobilization, and geopolitical factors often enhance the position of more powerful riparian countries, giving them a competitive edge. Therefore, contextual factors cannot be excluded from the analysis as they significantly influence the positions of riparian states in the conflict. Thus, it affects the policy choices of riparian countries regarding the water conflict.

In conclusion, Ethiopia wanted to make rules for future periods. The most crucial rule that Ethiopia wanted to disseminate was its natural right to build a dam that was deprived for many years because of Egyptian dependence on colonial agreements. Secondly, it emphasized sovereign rights to administrate its nationally developed developmental projects without the interference of any force, including the Nile basin countries, specifically Egypt and Sudan.

Ethiopia's de-securitization approach in this period confirms what Zeitoun and Warner (2006) argued regarding the impact of power relations on how policymakers deal with water issues. The strong countries or hydro hegemons typically tend to securitize water issues as a means to control water resources. However, weaker countries, non-hegemonic riparian states, tend to de-securitize water issues and favor negotiations to enhance cooperation. During this phase, Ethiopia was the weakest party. Although Ethiopia is an upper-stream country, which puts it in a preferable position, Egypt still holds the hegemonic position in the Nile basin during this phase. If the dam's construction is not completed, the situation will favor the traditional hegemon, which is Egypt in the region in this case. As explained above, the Ethiopian discourse concerning the GERD in this phase mainly tended to securitization. However, opportunitizing from the Egyptian internal instability before and after the coup, the Ethiopian government turned to opportunitize the GERD issue in favor of its interests discursively and non-discursively. For instance, the Ethiopian decision to divert the Nile River bid for the GERD came amid high instability and political polarization among Egyptian political factors.

6.1.4 Sudan

The small number of Sudanese declarations in this phase reflects the need for more interest from Sudanese policymakers in the GERD issue. However, the avoidance of the Sudanese policymakers could also explain this by disclosing their pro-Ethiopian position on the GERD to preclude affecting its relationship with Egypt.

Nonetheless, the catastrophic Egyptian presidential meeting held in June 2013, during which opposition figure Ayman Nour described Sudan's stance on the GERD as "disgusting," led to deteriorating bilateral relations (Sudan Tribune, 2013a). Following the June meeting, Sudan's Information Minister and Government Spokesperson, Ahmed Bilal Osman, appealed to Egyptian officials to abstain from insulting remarks against his country. Osman said in a television interview on 5 June 2013, "The hurtful talk [against] Sudan does not serve the interests [of Egypt]," stressing that Sudan would "benefit greatly from the GERD" (Sudan Tribune, 2013a). The statement implies the usage of altruism while triggering fears and emotions in the Sudanese and regional audiences. The statements portray Sudan as a responsible and rational international actor prioritizing its strategic interests and global reputation. It further portrays Sudan as a cooperative riparian country and collaborative neighbor to Egypt, concerned with regional solidarity, peace, and stability by avoiding conflict escalation or endangering broader geopolitical objectives. Sudan aimed to frame Egyptian negative remarks on Sudan as a threat to Sudanese national interests, aiming to delegitimize the Egyptian negative discourse while garnering the support of the public audience for the Sudanese narrative.

The occurrence of the military coup in Egypt on 3 July 2013 had an impact on the Sudanese discourse regarding the GERD. Like Ethiopia, Sudan tended to mitigate bilateral contentions with Egypt during that period. In July 2013, Sudanese Agriculture and Irrigation Minister Abdelhalim Almutaafie underscored his country's support for the construction of the GERD, portraying it as a "model for development" in the Nile basin (Ahram Online, 2013). The minister further called on the parties to achieve the construction of the GERD, the "spirit of cooperation" and "mutual benefit" (Ahram Online, 2013). These statements depended on hypothetical future strategies to legitimize their stance on the GERD by assuring that it would contribute to the region's development. The statements suggest that the GERD will contribute to the region's economic development. This target influences

public opinion on the GERD to legitimize the existence of the GERDP in the Nile basin, which will increase the development rates of the whole region. It further portrays Sudan as a cooperative riparian country that seeks to achieve mutual benefits and interests of all countries, specifically Egypt and Sudan. It depicts Sudan as a neutral party to the GERD dispute rather than biased toward the Ethiopians, as the Egyptian officials portray. In Dec 2013, during a meeting with the Sudanese PM Deseglan, Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir underscored, "Backing the dam project is not a political stance, but rather a belief in its benefits for all Nile Basin states." Sudan's Ambassador to Ethiopia Abdul Rahman Sir-al-Katim also affirmed that his country "fully supports the project [GERD] because it benefits Sudan," stressing that they are "not playing a political role" (Eleiba, 2013). Sudan aims to depoliticize the GERD issue to preserve good and stable relations with Egypt, secure political stability and regional solidarity, and avoid conflict escalation and political contentions. In Feb 2014, Sudanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Karti, underscoring his country's neutrality on the GERD issue, stated, "We will continue our efforts to bridge the gap between Ethiopia and Egypt on the disagreements about the Renaissance Dam," emphasizing Sudan's neutrality in the negotiations. He further used an altruism strategy to increase Sudan's geopolitical influence by portraying it as playing a pivotal diplomatic role as a mediator between Egypt and Sudan on the GERD issue (Ahram Online, 2014c).

6.2 The Second Phase: From May 2014 Until Oct 2019

6.2.1 Egypt

After Sisi took office, he met with the Ethiopian PM Hailemariam Desalegn, and that meeting resulted in what was known as the Malabo Declaration in late June 2014. The two parties agreed to form a higher committee under the presidency's direct supervision to coordinate all aspects of bilateral relations, especially the economic, political, and security fields. In August 2014, Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia

agreed to implement the recommendations of the IPoE report, which chose two international consulting companies (a French and a Dutch company) to conduct studies on the effects of the dam on Egypt and Sudan. The three parties also agreed to select international experts to resolve any disputes. Cooperation rose to its highest levels in Mar 2015, as the three parties reached a binding agreement on the GERD, known as the Declaration of Principles (DoP) (see Chapter 5 for details). This Declaration includes ten basic principles, the most important of which are some provisions that obligate Ethiopia to compensate for any damage the dam may cause to Egypt and Sudan. It also allows third parties to be engaged as mediators to resolve disputes if the three parties fail to reach agreements regarding filling and operating the dam. Although DoP caused several problems (see Chapter 5 for details), it has been a cornerstone in the history of negotiations because it represents an official approval by Egypt and Sudan for the GERD and an Ethiopian achievement towards legitimizing the presence of the GERD (El-Gundy, 2021b).

6.2.1.1 De-securitizing the GERD discourse

In this period, the Egyptian government abandoned the securitization of the GERD discourse and the use of existential verbs and rhetoric in their speeches regarding the dam. Instead, it tended to de-securitize the issue. The Egyptian officials mainly tended to use an altruistic strategy of legitimization accompanied by triggering emotions of brotherhood to enhance bilateral cooperation with conflicting parties and mitigate the conflict intensity regarding the GERD. President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi, in his first speech regarding the GERD after the presidential elections in Jun 2014, affirmed that the relations between Egypt and Ethiopia are not confined to the GERD by stating that "I will not allow the Renaissance Dam to cause a crisis or problem with sisterly Ethiopia" (Ahram Online, 2013i). The phrase "Sisterly Ethiopia" indicates a narrative of solidarity and unity between the two countries, suggesting a new vision that prioritizes bilateral cooperation and enhances bilateral

relations. Sisi further made himself responsible for avoiding conflict escalation over the GERD issue.

Sisi's statement, through an altruistic strategy of legitimization, aims to influence internal and international actors. His foreign policies regarding current conflicts would focus on conflict mitigation by prioritizing diplomatic paths to secure internal and regional stability. In another presidential speech, El-Sisi stressed the significance of recalling the deep historical bonds for enhancing bilateral cooperation and resolving the GERD conflict through dialogue. A spokesman for the Egyptian presidency, Ihab Badawy, said that El-Sisi stressed that the GERD issue "should be solved through dialogue" (Ahram Online, 2014c). This framing positions confrontation and violence as a non-preferred means to deal with the GERD issue; instead, they depict negotiations as a morally accepted approach to solving water disputes. These statements targeted mitigating bilateral tensions and building confidence among the parties.

Furthermore, a new vision of El-Sisi's government regarding the GERD was declared in a speech in Aug 2014 by the Egyptian Irrigation Ministry, affirming "Egypt's willingness to assist its brothers in Ethiopia in their development efforts and to manage the water resources in a fair and balanced approach" (Ahram Online, 2014d). This statement portrays Egypt as the party prioritizing universally accepted principles regarding the equitable distribution of transboundary water resources. Sisi said in similar words during the 23rd summit of the AU in Jun 2014 that "The Nile that brings us together should be a source of joint interest rather than dispute" (Ahram Online, 2014d). This statement recalls the cultural, historical, and geographical links between Egypt and Ethiopia, emphasizing that the Nile has always been a source of benefit for all riparian nations and should continue to be so in the future.

As clearly seen from these statements, a significant shift occurred in Egypt's policy towards the GERD in the second period. By scrutinizing these declarations, three critical points were observed. First, El-Sisi wanted to follow a zero-problems policy with his neighbors, especially after the GERD conflict escalated rapidly in Mursi's era. The new Egyptian Government was unwilling to engage in an armed conflict and thus, only peaceful political options will be followed during the upcoming era. Second, The GERD was perceived as an opportunity to enhance cooperation with Ethiopia rather than being perceived as a threat that endangers Egyptian national, water, food, and energy security.

With the signing of the 2015 Declaration of Principles (DoP), the intensity of cooperation reached the level of "risk-taking," in which Egypt and Sudan did not consider the real risks and costs of this step (see Chapter 5 for details). Signing the GERD agreement was described by El-Sisi as a "historic moment," stressing that "Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt are inaugurating a new era of love and trust which will secure life, future, and prosperity of the peoples of the three nations" (Sudan Tribune, 2015). The Egyptian FM Shoukry also praised the agreement by saying, "For the first time, Ethiopia is committed to the international technical studies concerning GERD." The statements underscore the government's perspective regarding the DoP, framing it as a diplomatic achievement that should be added to the government's achievements. It further depicts that the trilateral agreement is a pledged commitment from Ethiopia to the international technical studies that the two companies will do. This suggests holding Ethiopia responsible for accepting the results of the studies regardless of.

The Egyptian Foreign Minister Shoukry also stressed in Mar 2015 that there will be no military involvement in the dispute over Nile water shares by saying, "Egypt contributed to the founding of African countries; it will not be an aggressor, not at any time" pointing to Egypt's contribution to the African independence movement in the 1960s (Ahram Online, 2015). Again, El-Sisi's government pinpoints pan-

Afrocentrism. Underscoring Egypt's crucial role in African countries' independence and peace-building periods portrays Egypt as a cooperative peacemaker and neighbor that shares geography, exceptional historical relations, and links with African countries. This framing fosters a sense of solidarity, trust, and cooperation with Ethiopia and Sudan.

However, there was sometimes a conflict between the speeches of the securitizing actors from the Egyptian government in this period, as some declarations contained existential rhetorical compromising uncomplete securitizing moves. The same securitizing actors used non-existential language to de-securitize the issue or even to depoliticize the GERD issue at other times. The officials tended to legitimize their new policy approach towards the GERD by triggering emotions of safety and reassurance while dispelling fears regarding the GERD crisis to influence the public.

They tried to redirect the audience's attention from perceiving GERD as a power struggle to perceiving it as a technical issue. For instance, Irrigation Minister Hossam Maghazi said in a press statement that "the current dispute is not about a power struggle between the involved parties, stressing that Egypt is seeking political and diplomatic solutions for the standoff" in Oct 2015 (Ahram Online, 2014f). In Jan 2016, Moghazi also said that although Egypt is "worried" about the GERD, it does not view it as a "threat," denying the existence of a struggle for power or dominance (Ahram Online, 2016).

Rejecting GERD as a threat to the country demonstrates the Egyptian Government's approach to de-securitizing the GERD issue. In Jan 2018, President El-Sisi said that "Egypt will not fight its brothers," adding, "Our spending on the Armed Forces is to achieve Egyptian national security per security concepts that require a military capability to protect Egyptians and preserve peace" (Ezzat, 2018). Using the phrase "brothers" fosters bilateral solidarity between the two parties by pledging to solve the dispute peacefully. The statements further target dispelling rumors about the

possibility of a military confrontation with Ethiopia to solve the GERD dispute by underscoring that the increase in Egyptian military spending is unrelated. This positions the issue as requiring a diplomatic solution. The statements aim to influence both domestics worried about the GERD's impact on Egypt's water supply and the Ethiopian government to downplay increasing tensions.

In order to better understand the new government's tendency to de-securitization, it is necessary to examine the conditions under which these policies are developed. The political situation became volatile after the military coup in Egypt. Massive demonstrations broke up in the streets opposing the coup in Egypt, accompanied by sit-ins in national squares. The Egyptian authorities confronted these protests with severe oppression and forcibly dispersed the sit-ins. However, this oppression was countered with more demonstrations, accusations, and attempts to sue the Egyptian authorities internationally. Amidst this unstable political situation, El-Sisi took office after the 2014 June presidential elections. Considering this instability and insecure political arena, El-Sisi's government sought a "zero-problem policy" with its neighbors and prioritized internal security and stability to avoid more unrest in the country that could arise if the securitization of the GERD continues.

6.2.1.2 Securitizing moves

However, the de-securitization of the GERD issue was also coupled with some securitizing moves from the same actors, including the President, the Foreign Minister, and the irrigation minister. In March 2015, the irrigation minister Maghazi asserted that Egypt was "highly sensitive" to any project that might decrease Egypt's Nile water shares (Ahram Online, 2015). The statement suggests a critical level of concern over any dam project built on the Nile banks due to its potential impact on the Egyptian water supplies. In addition, In Nov 2015, He also ensured that Egypt's Nile water share was "non-negotiable" (Ahram Online, 2015b). The statements frame the Nile water and Egypt's water security as a high priority in the Egyptian

policy agenda. This means that the GERD is a threat to Egyptian water security. Furthermore, El-Sisi told the audience that Egypt took the issue seriously, saying that Egypt's water supply was a matter of "life and death" (Ahram Online, 2017). In Dec 2017, the President's Spokesperson, Bassam Rady, said that Cairo was committed to peaceful negotiations on the GERD. He reiterated that Egypt's supply of Nile water is "a matter of life or death for the country" (Barakat, 2017).

These phrases highlight how the water issue is urgent to policymakers who require more investment and measures to deal with it. Nevertheless, it also mobilizes the audience to legitimize any exceptional decision or measure the government may take to protect water security. Furthermore, in Apr 2018, the Irrigation Minister Mohamed Abdel Aty described the Nile water issue as "national security" (Anadolu Agency, 2018). Although these securitizing moves tended to securitize the water issue, depicting it as a critical security concern that was threatened and should be dealt with urgently, they did not directly depict the GERD as an existential threat to the water problem.

It is impossible to understand the existence of some securitizing moves in the Egyptian discourse regarding the GERD without investigating the political context of that period. While the Egyptian government considered the DoP agreement a victory, the opposition harshly criticized the agreement. For instance, the largest opposition party, the Muslim Brotherhood, despised the agreement, describing it as "high treason" (Sudan Tribune, 2015d). It depicted the government as a betrayal of Egyptian national interests by approving this agreement.

The opposition's critique of the DoP positioned the agreement as morally condemnably to influence public opinion against the agreement and thus against the government's policies regarding GERD. These accusations further portrayed the government as irresponsible and damaging to national sovereignty and security. That is why this thesis argues that the aim behind these securitizing moves was not

to legitimize exceptional measures but to achieve another target that will be shown in the upcoming analysis. I claim that the government did not conduct some cautious securitizing moves to mobilize the domestic audience against the GERD or to get their acceptance for exceptional measures regarding water security. I argue that the real reason behind these securitizing moves was to justify the government's policy approach in dealing with the GERD and the increasing water scarcity problem to delegitimize the critique of the opposition to the government. In order to legitimize the government's policy choice concerning the GERD, the officials combined three legitimization strategies. They first tended to legitimize their acts through rationality by persuading the audience that such political decisions were taken after patience and consultation. They combined this with a hypothetical future legitimizing strategy to garner their support by implying the positive expectations and results from these decisions concerning the GERD. The officials also used a legitimization strategy through emotions by controlling the fears and doubts of the audience regarding the government's ability to deal with the crisis and protect Egyptian national and water security.

Many examples can be given to prove these views. In Mar 2015, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry declared that "Egypt's rights stated in all Nile water treaties have not been tampered with" (Sudan Tribune, 2015a). In Dec 2015, commenting on the absence of an agreement regarding filling the GERD because the two firms were still working on the reports, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ahmed Abu Zeid said, "The anxiety that Egyptians feel towards this issue is legitimate, but we should not take this to another level; officials will not give up on Egypt's water security" (Ahram Online, 2015c). Similarly, Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said in an interview with Al-Ahram Daily in Dec 2015, "No Egyptian official will ever cede Egypt's right to its water security," and "Any Egyptian citizen should be assured of the ability of Egypt and its negotiators to protect its water interests." (Ahram Online, 2015d). These statements frame the country's water security as an unwavering

critical priority to Egyptian policymakers. They also aim to garner the audience's support for the government's decisions regarding GERD.

When we evaluate these announcements in the context of their nature, we see that they coincided with the signing of the DoP agreement and the following periods. The statements legitimize the government's policy by portraying the policymakers as responsible and loyal officials who seek to preserve the country's water security and achieve its national interests.

In Dec 2015, President El-Sisi told the Egyptians not to worry about the GERD, adding that "matters are fine." He added, "I totally understand the concern of Egyptians as water is a matter of life or death" and "I have not led you astray before, and I will not lead you astray now," assuring the Egyptian people to maintain their trust in him in this matter (Ahram Online, 2015e). The president's statement was made to establish harmony, mobilize support, and diminish Egyptians' concerns regarding the GERD and related Egyptian water security issues. It aims to build trust between the government and the domestic audience to legitimize the governmental stance on the GERD and, most importantly, to avoid national unrest.

Again, in Mar 2018, following a meeting on the sidelines of the African Union's Summit in Ethiopia, President Al-Sisi said: "People should be reassured. None of the three countries — Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia — will be harmed." (Ahram Online, 2018). This statement aims to alleviate public fears regarding GERD by persuading them to trust the government and to support it rather than believing in the opposition's continuous accusations of the government. In May 2016, the Foreign Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Ahmed Abu Zeid repeated the Minister's words: "Pointless to bury our heads in the sand by not acknowledging a tangible physical reality" (Ahram Online, 2016a). This statement positions the GERD as a consolidated fact that influences the audience to accept its existence on the Nile banks rather than deny or oppose it. The statement positions the GERD as a fact,

portraying the signing of the agreement as detachable to legitimize the dam's existence as it has already existed. Thus, it redirects the attention of the audience from questioning the mere existence of GERD to thinking about the consequences.

Further evidence of the government's politicization of the dam issue to suppress the opposition movement within the country is seen in President El-Sisi's speech regarding the GERD in Sept 2019: "In 2011, we were not ready for the major developments that took place... the country moved... however, platforms had already been set up... I stress that the very pure youths who went into motion wanted the best interests of the country." El-Sisi continued his speech by saying, "country has been paying since 2011 for one mistake... a price we have paid and will continue to pay," "I have not said this in public before, dams would not have been built on the Nile River." El-Sisi also talked about the popular uprising of January 2011: "I am saying extremely critical things. I am telling you because the more dangerous thing is that you repeat [the same mistake] again" (Morsy, 2019).

If we evaluate these statements in the context in which they are said, we see that they coincide with the beginning of the protests in in several Egyptian governorates in September. The demonstrators called for the removal of President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi from power. El-Sisi's securitizing move for the GERD and the water security could be explained as a way to deviate the opposition from continuing their protests. By recalling the 2011 Egyptian revolution from which Ethiopia took advantage to declare the construction of the GERD, the president portrayed the demonstrations as bringing about catastrophic repercussions to the country. Thus, the statements aim to mobilize the audience against public demonstrations while redirecting their attention to the GERD issue and persuading them that revolutions are the primary source of national crises and catastrophes they fear.

The Egyptian Government's policies regarding the GERD issue in the second period conform to the studies of Cote (2016) and Manon (2018) regarding securitization in

non-democratic countries. According to them, securitization is embedded within a "larger security narrative," existing alongside various speech acts that pursue different objectives beyond justifying the use of extraordinary measures such as those assumed by Buzan et al. (1998). They also conform to Holm (2003), which assumes that despite the non-democratic countries' fear of securitization to avoid inciting large-scale protests, they might securitize some issues to legitimize exceptional political decisions such as signing the DoP. Non-democratic regimes may also conduct some cautious securitizing moves to challenge the discourse of the opposition against the government. Securitization was used here to avoid triggering existing national demonstrations by linking demonstrations to the rise of crisis, such as what the Egyptians did when he linked the breakup of the Egyptian revolution and the Ethiopian decision to start the construction of the GERD.

6.2.2 Ethiopia

During the beginning of this phase, the Ethiopian discourse was dominated by a de-securitization approach, promoting cooperation, dialogue, unity, and mutual benefits to alleviate tension and concerns surrounding the GERD. The de-securitization policy of Ethiopia aims to portray the country as an active and cooperative partner in the tripartite negotiations and in managing the Nile water resources, which facilitates the process of reaching an agreement that legitimizes the GERD. This would emphasize the influential position of Ethiopia in managing regional dynamics, reaching an initial solution with its regional partners, and legislating the dam. Thus, it enables Ethiopia to increase its influence in the region and rally approval for its approach regarding the management of the GERD. Taking advantage of the political instability and change in Egypt, the Ethiopian government tended to de-escalate the conflict by rebuilding the trust between Egypt and Ethiopia and persuading the new government of the significance of cooperation.

The officials mainly depended on two main legitimization strategies to achieve this aim. First, they tended to trigger emotions of solidarity while dispelling fears about the future by stressing the positive impacts of the GERD on downstream countries. Second, they used a rational legitimization strategy to influence the audience on the significance of pursuing diplomatic approaches to resolve the dispute rather than violent means.

In Jan 2015, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn said that "Egypt and Ethiopia will either swim together or drown together," adding that "This is a shared destiny... I think this is an important historic time for Egypt and Ethiopia" (Ahram Online, 2015a). The PM further stressed that the "more hostile strategy" followed by former presidents Mohamed Morsi and Hosni Mubarak "was not going to work" (Ahram Online, 2015a). The statement linking Ethiopia's fate to Egypt suggests the existence of potential common threats and challenges that both countries should collaboratively deal with. It further depicts cooperation as the only viable solution for the GERD conflict. These statements also ascertain how critical the Nile water is for both parties. Nevertheless, it incites the Egyptian government to avoid an extreme securitization approach to avoid conflict escalation while seeking a win-win situation. They aim to garner support from the audience, both domestic and international, for preferring diplomatic means to solve the GERD issue. In Mar 2015, Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom further underscored that "Ethiopia is committed to 'fruitful' cooperation with Egypt and Sudan to overcome points of contention concerning the dam."

In Sep 2019, Deseglan further affirmed that "Egypt and the rest of the Nile Basin countries are 'one family,' highlighting that Ethiopia opted to pursue the 'collaborative path' regarding the Nile water and the GERD issue (Morsy, 2019). The phrases "one family" and "collaborative path" portray Ethiopia as a negotiator who is willing to engage actively in negotiations for the sake of achieving mutual benefits and maximizing trilateral interests. It further depicts Ethiopia as a

cooperative negotiating party seeking effective and diplomatic solutions to the problem. Thus, Ethiopia attempted to persuade Egypt and Sudan of the effectiveness of signing agreements and engaging in negotiation rather than taking the issue to the U.N. Security Council or resorting to a military confrontation.

Following the signing of the DoP agreement, Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom described it as a "new chapter" in the diplomatic ties of the three parties. He elaborated, highlighting that "Mutual benefit and win-win principles should be the basis of this new chapter, which boosts trust and confidence between our three sisterly countries" (Ahrām Online, 2015c). Stressing on advocating "mutual benefits and win-win" approaches in dealing with the GERD would depict Ethiopia as a genuinely cooperative party that advocates the globally adopted principles regarding international waters governance and would depict it as a party that would never pursue a zero-sum competition against Egypt and Sudan. Thus, this would help in the de-securitization of the GERD issue. This further would help Ethiopia to garner international recognition and support for diplomatic and peaceful solutions for the GERD.

In Dec 2015, the FM Spokesman Dina Mufti stated, "Ethiopia is a large and important country in the African continent, and its stability and safety is in the interest of the whole continent, including Egypt" (Ahrām Online, 2015g). This statement portrays a pivotal actor in the region's future by linking its stability and welfare to that of the whole region. It depicts the GERD as a strategic tool to consolidate the development and stability of Ethiopia, which significantly influences broader geopolitical dynamics. In Dec 2015, Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom underscored, "The peoples of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan are tied by the Nile, which represents our common destiny" (Ahrām Online, 2015g). The phrase "common destiny" enhances the sense of regional cooperation and shared gains among the riparian states, which conforms to the universally accepted rules surrounding the management of international water resources. He further invited

Egypt and Sudan to visit the GERD, affirming his country's transparency and trustworthiness by saying, "We have nothing to hide; they [Egypt and Sudan] should inspect the dam site, and this would promote [our] partnership and build trust. We also extend the invitation to the public diplomacy and the media [in Sudan and Egypt] to visit the [Renaissance] dam." This statement portrays Ethiopia as a transparent, cooperative party against the international and regional community. Amid Egyptian disseminated concerns regarding the GERD, Ethiopia wanted to dispel them, proving its openness to cooperation with other parties. Therefore, it enhances the legitimacy of the GERD in the Nile basin. The Ethiopian government further tended to use "a legitimization through a hypothetical future" discursive strategy to legitimize the existence of the GERD. In May 2016, Minister of Communication Getachew Reda said, "The people of the three countries will benefit from it" and "But if some (parties) believe that they will be harmed by it, then this is not Ethiopia's problem" (Ahram Online, 2016a). These statements depict the positive impacts that the GERD will have on Egypt and Sudan, targeting to influence the public to mobilize to support the GERD for the region's welfare.

In Feb 2018, speaking at a meeting marking the signing of the NBI agreement, Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy Seleshi Bekele urged Egypt to "resume full participation" in the NBI by ending the freeze on its membership. He further underscored that this is "benefiting equitably calls for cooperation among all riparian countries" (Getachew, 2018). Bekele depicted Ethiopia as the party that promotes regional cooperation and mutual benefits, whereas Egypt is the party that undermines the significance of regional unity and cooperation. This came after two years of suspension of trilateral negotiations.

In June 2018, PM Abiy Ahmed, during a visit to Egypt only two months after his appointment as prime minister, stated, "What I want to tell the people of Egypt is that we Ethiopians know the value of the spirit of brotherhood... we are God-fearing people, and we will never harm the people of Egypt" (El-Bey, 2018). The phrases

he used, such as "brotherhood" and "god-fearing," construct a moral, cultural, and regionally shared narrative by the Ethiopians and the Egyptians, which sanctify religious beliefs. This approach aims to enhance mutual trust and foster solidarity between the two parties. Linking the religion to the rejection of harming Egypt further elevates the issue of harm to be a sacred issue that Ethiopia would never violate.

6.2.2.1 Securitizing moves

Some small securitizing moves were conducted throughout the second phase. Officials tended to combine both legitimization strategies through emotions and hypothetical futures by reassuring the positive impacts of the GERD on the country, invoking a sense of unity and solidarity. Thus, the support for GERD increases while social harmony is increased among the socially fragmented Ethiopian society. In Nov 2015, Minister of Water, Irrigation and Electricity Motuma Mekasa pointed to the detrimental consequences of poverty for Ethiopians from the lack of energy and food security access. Mekasa underscored, "We need equitable use for our available resources to meet food and energy needs, eradicate poverty, and raise the standard of living" (Sudan Tribune, 2015d). The statement depicts the Ethiopian real target behind the GERD construction as a noble target aimed at achieving universally adopted principles of sustainable development. Ethiopia further securitizes the GERD issue by depicting it as an existential necessity for saving Ethiopians from poverty. The referential objects are Ethiopian energy security, food security, and economic development, which are perceived as vulnerable to the incompleteness of the GERD project.

Moreover, responding to the statement of Egyptian President Sisi, who called the GERD issue "a matter of life or death to Egypt" in Nov 2017, Ethiopia's FM Spokesman Meles Alem said the GERD was a "matter of life or death for Ethiopia too" (Getachew, 2017). This depicts the GERD as an existential necessity for the

Ethiopian state while ending its construction as an existential threat to the existence of Ethiopia and its people. Another securitizing move was conducted by the Ethiopian FM Spokesperson Meles Alem. Commenting on the dissemination of some reports regarding the GERD by the Egyptian Media, he described them as "irrelevant" and "destructive reports being disseminated by some Egyptian media and institutions against the Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Dam." Alem further stressed that "Ethiopia does not need to get permission from anyone to use its natural resources, including to build the dam, whose construction has been completed by 60 percent now," adding that Ethiopia would continue to cooperate with Sudan and Egypt besides accelerating the construction of the dam (Getachew, 2017). These statements emphasize Ethiopian sovereign rights over its natural resources, mainly depicting its Nile water shares as a sovereign property for Ethiopia. This suggests a securitizing move towards management of the GERD or any other hydro infrastructure, depicting Ethiopia as an autonomous actor that can solely manage its resources. Adding the sovereignty aspect further implies a legal justification for rejecting cooperative or shared management of the GERD, as it is a universally respected and accepted international norm for nation-states. Pinpointing the self-determination aspect of managing the GERD implies that this securitization aimed to gain national legitimacy by depicting it as a symbol of pride and solidarity for the country.

Ethiopian strategy in this phase conforms to Zeitoun's (2007) argument, stating that conflicting parties may tend to seek opportunitization in water disputes at specific times. The main aim behind opportunitization is that it facilitates benefitting from changing circumstances, such as political shifts, to enhance their interests and achieve strategic goals or to enhance their position in the negotiations. For instance, Ethiopia exploited the opportunity for political change in Egypt and the ideological differences between Egypt and Sudan after the coup to enhance relations with Sudan in favor of the GERD. Opportunitizing from the excessive need of Sisi's regime to secure regime stability, the fall of Egyptian influence in the region, and the rise of

Emirati influence, Ethiopia sought to achieve the UAE-sponsored DoP agreement. Ethiopia further exploited the opportunity of existent contentions between the international consultancy companies to continue the construction of the GERD without waiting for the impact studies to be released.

6.2.2.2 Sudan

Sudan's position in support of the Ethiopian dam remained the same during President Omar al-Bashir's rule (16 Oct 1993-11 Apr 2019). The principles of enhancing regional cooperation, advocating peaceful solutions to conflicts, and focusing on the importance of dialogue in resolving disputes prevailed in Sudanese discourse concerning the GERD. In Aug 2014, amid the resumption of trilateral negotiations, the Sudanese Irrigation and Electricity Minister Motazz Moussa described Sudan's "optimism" regarding the Khartoum trilateral meeting, asserting that the return to negotiations "puts the three countries on the right track regarding the agenda tabled for discussion." He further underscored, "There is no choice to the states other than negotiations, consultations and reaching amicable solutions to what is tabled as issues on the agenda" (Sudan Tribune, 2014). This statement affirms the Sudanese stance on the GERD issue, prioritizing active participation in negotiation and following diplomatic paths to reach a consensus.

The Sudanese officials tend to combine two legitimization strategies to dispel fears regarding the GERD project. They targeted legitimization through underscoring the positive impact of the GERD on Sudan and on the region while depicting cooperation as the most viable and rational solution to the conflict. Sudan denied the negative impacts of GERD, stating that their concerns about GERD were dispelled after scientific studies refuted claims regarding the existence of adverse effects of GERD on the downstream countries and affirmed the exact opposite. In Dec 2014, Sudanese President Al-Bashir stated, "I have all the information about the dam since its launch. We have also studied the effect the dam could have on

Sudan" and "We believe that the dam benefits riparian countries, and I hope it will be completed on schedule" (Tekle, 2014). The use of a legitimization strategy to invoke the voices of experts to support the government's stance on the GERD is apparent in this statement. This statement aims to delegitimize the Egyptian concerns surrounding the GERD. The phrase "we have also studied the effects" adds scientific proof, enhancing regional and international acceptance and persuasion towards the Sudanese positive statement about the GERD.

Following signing the DoP agreement, Sudan's stance on the GERD changed. During this period, the Sudanese government recurrently underscored that it is not a mediator in the GERD dispute between Ethiopia and Egypt but a party with an equal foot, such as Egypt and Ethiopia, to the GERD negotiations. In Dec2015, Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour said, "We are not mediators, we are not neutral, and we are not biased [concerning the GERD], but we are stakeholders such as Egypt and Ethiopia ... our stance on the GERD talks comes within the framework of our national interests which requires us to seek to converge views of the three parties" (Sudan Tribune, 2015e). By stressing that it is a party rather than a mediator, Sudan positioned itself as the leading party in the dispute whose stance on the GERD is as significant as that of Egypt.

Framing the GERD issue as an integral part of the Sudanese national interests, considering that Sudan is also a downstream country, increases the influence of its stance on the future of the GERD and the international community. If the downstream country takes a positive stance on the GERD contrary to another downstream country, this enhances the Ethiopian narrative concerning the GERD towards the international community. Using legitimization through rational strategy is evident in these statements. Sudan wanted to approach the audience from a rationality perspective to legitimize the existence of the GERD. Thus, it delegitimizes the Egyptian concerns and opposition to the GERD. Let alone the

rhetorical acceptance of the GERD, Sudan linked its energy security and economic development to the construction of the GERD.

The Sudanese government adopted some securitizing moves to legitimize the existence of the GERD against Egypt. In Jan 2016, Sudanese FM Ibrahim Ghandour expressed his country's pledge to safeguard Egypt's water rights and share the interests of the three countries, underscoring that "Sudan was not playing the mediator role between Egypt and Ethiopia as the Dam is not located in Sudan" (Ahram Online, 2016a). The re-affirmation of the Sudanese role as a party in the GERD dispute and the commitment not to harm Egypt portrays Sudan as not biased toward Ethiopia but as a downstream state that prioritizes equitable distribution of water resources. This further elevates the influence of their stance on the GERD on the international community, portraying Egypt's concerns regarding the GERD as lacking empirical validation.

In Apr 2017, Sudanese President Omer al-Bashir underscored, "We agree on the Ethiopian Renaissance dam, which will supply Sudan and Ethiopia with electricity" And "We stress that Ethiopia's security is an integral part of Sudanese national security, and therefore, we will work to develop this relationship and take it to the level desired by every Sudanese and Ethiopian" (Sudan Tribune, 2017). Linking the Sudanese national security to Ethiopia's national security while talking about the GERD, Al-Bashir portrays Sudan as a strategic security partner to Ethiopia. The statement also implies legitimization through emotions and a hypothetical future. By invoking emotions of solidarity with the Ethiopians and assuring that the development of Ethiopia is an integral part of Sudan, the government sought to influence the audience's opinion in favor of the GERD. This further shows a securitizing move to the GERD, portraying it as an issue of national security for the two countries that require exceptional decisions to deal with in case of any threat against the GERD.

Sudanese officials further used the legitimization through emotional strategy to dispel Egyptian concerns regarding Sudanese's stance on the GERD, which was considered biased against Ethiopians. Sudanese President al-Bashir pledged to prevent the reduction of Egypt's historic share of the Nile waters. In Aug 2017, he pointed out that "Sudan is committed to the 1959 agreement, which established the parameters for water-sharing between Sudan and Egypt" and "We can also ensure that Egypt will not be affected by the dam's construction" (Amin, 2017). By invoking the 1959 agreement and emphasizing Sudan's commitment to it, Sudan appears as a protector of the interests of the downstream countries. This pledge portrays Sudan as a major player in protecting downstream interests and thus in maintaining regional stability and sustaining the *status quo vis-à-vis* Ethiopia, which seeks to change it. Thus, Sudan seeks to regain its influence in the Nile water policies, strengthening its position within the Nile Basin and the African continent.

However, In Dec 2017, al-Bashir said, "The renaissance of Ethiopia is considered the renaissance of Sudan and vice versa" (Sudan Tribune, 2017b). Al-Bashir's linking of the Ethiopian Renaissance to the Sudanese Renaissance portrays Sudan as a strategic security partner for Ethiopia. This further frames the GERD issue in a security context. Linking Sudanese economic development to Ethiopian economic development, which initially depends on the dam's presence, indicates the development of some Sudanese securitizing moves. The securitizing moves depict the Sudanese economic development and welfare as the referential object correlated to the dam's survival and rendered insecure and threatened by its absence. Sudan seeks to achieve a balance between the Nile Basin countries to mitigate trilateral tensions and the continuation of negotiations, thus guaranteeing political, economic, and social stability and security.

Reacting to the Egyptian FM's statement, which objected to the recent report released by the French consultancy company, The Sudanese Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation name surname? underscored in a statement that the

Egyptian remarks may obstruct the recently established positive momentum. He stated in May 2018, "We regret the Egyptian minister's speech, which contradicts the recent positive atmosphere between the two countries. Sudan positively bridges differences between Ethiopia and Egypt, so the allegations are questionable" (Amin, 2018). In this statement, Sudan again portrays itself as a pivotal player in the Nile Basin's Basin's diplomacy, acting as a facilitator and cooperative party to the GERD dispute. By emphasizing its constructive involvement, Sudan depicts itself as an active party that seeks to foster reconciliation and mitigate disputes between the prominent regional actors, Ethiopia and Egypt. This further denotes that Sudan occupies a central position in managing regional disputes. The phrase "allegations are questionable" challenges the credibility of criticisms and doubts regarding Egyptian impartiality to the negotiations, thus delegitimizing its doubts against the international community.

Several authors assumed that de-securitization plays a crucial role in resolving water disputes by shifting the focus from dealing with the issue as a matter of national security, allowing them to cooperate and prioritize mutual interests (e.g., Leb and Wouters, 2013; Daoudy, 2007; Waever, 1995; Zeitoun et, al. 2013; J. Fröhlich, 2012). However, in the GERD case, despite de-securitization being conducted more widely towards the GERD issue by all parties, they needed help to solve the dispute. Although de-securitization mitigated tensions at first, facilitating the resumption of negotiations and signing the DoP agreement, the parties could not reach an agreement, the tensions kept escalating, and even the negotiations stopped for two years.

There are several reasons behind the failure of cooperation and recurrent negotiations stalemate. First, increasing bilateral disagreements between the three parties have contributed to the continuous failure of cooperation. During this stage, one of the most prominent disputes between Egypt and Sudan arose because of the ideological difference between the Islamist Party in Sudan and General El-Sisi.

Tensions emerged between Egypt and Sudan due to the opponent position of the Islamic Sudanese government of Omar Al-Bashir to the military coup that ousted President Morsi and their support for the Muslim Brotherhood, the most prominent Egyptian opponent of Sisi. Al-Bashir's government was harshly criticized at some point after the coup, with some Egyptian media describing it as "ingrate" and "treacherous" (Sudan Tribune, 2014a). In Nov 2015, tensions increased between the two countries following the spread of news about the arrest, torture, and killing of Sudanese citizens in Egypt, causing protests to erupt in Sudan in opposition to this. The Sudanese embassy in Cairo accused the Egyptian authorities of illegally detaining and torturing several Sudanese citizens. The third dispute between Egypt and Sudan occurred over the border between the Halayeb and Shalatin regions. Both countries insist that this region falls under its sovereignty and within its land borders on the Red Sea. The dispute over this region escalated after the Egyptian media focused heavily on it during the parliamentary elections from Oct to Dec 2015, stressing that it is an integral part of Egyptian territory. These statements sparked widespread controversy among the Sudanese people until Al-Bashir strongly criticized him in an interview in late December. He described the media coverage during the elections as "provocative" (Amin, 2016).

Moreover, the Sudanese Defence Minister Ahmed Awad Ibn Auf notified the Sudanese Parliament that he had sent military forces to the border with Egypt in anticipation of any Egyptian military move. Sudan-Egypt's complaint to the United Nations came after Egypt's Water Resources and Irrigation Ministry announced plans to construct a dam in Wadi Houdin in the Shalatin region to benefit from flood waters and heavy rains. Sudan described this decision as an ongoing violation of Sudanese territory. Another factor contributing to the breakdown of cooperation was the incident where American reports linked hepatitis infections to Egyptian strawberries. This prompted Sudan to impose restrictions on all Egyptian agricultural exports and initiate a review of imported goods from Egypt. This caused increasing tensions between the two countries after restrictions were imposed on

Egyptian agricultural products, considering the economic situation the country was going through.

One of the biggest disagreements between Egypt and Sudan occurred because of the Sudanese-Turkish rapprochement, which the Sisi government feared, seeing Erdogan's government as a threat and competitor to it in the region. This is due to Erdogan's opposition to the Egyptian coup and his support for Egyptian political opponents against Sisi.

Another reason behind the failure of cooperation is the parties' recurrent refusal to commit to the results of the reports issued by the two international consultancy firms. In Nov2017, the Sudanese Minister of Water Resources, Irrigation, and Electricity Mutaz Musa, commenting on the failure of the tripartite meeting, stated that "Sudan and Ethiopia have reservations on some main points in the preliminary consultative report over the economic, social and environmental impact of the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam" and "At the top of these points, there is the baseline data from which any study of the dam's operationalization starts" (Amin, 2016). This was a perfect instance to show how bilateral contentions affected the discourse regarding the GERD issue and thus contributed to raising the tensions and preventing the success of cooperation.

When the wider context of these reservations and accusations against Egypt was investigated, it was found that they were made right after the announcement of the border delineation agreement between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. This agreement, signed in 2016 and known in the media as the "Tiran and Sanafir" agreement, was declared in Nov 2017. It intensified tensions between Egypt and Sudan because the agreement considered the disputed Halayeb Triangle with Sudan to belong to Egypt, not Sudan. Another example of how bilateral disputes affected the GERD discourse was the Sudanese accusations of Egypt for using some of the Sudanese Nile water quotas assigned to Sudan by the 1959 Agreement.

These statements were made after declaring the "Tiran and Sanafir" Agreement. In Nov 2017, Sudanese FM Ibrahim Ghandour stated that the main reason behind the Egyptian refusal of the GERD was their fear that it would enable Sudan to use its Nile water quotes. He said, "The Renaissance Dam preserves Sudan's water that was going to Egypt at the time of the flood and gives it back [to Sudan] in drought" and "There is an agreement between Sudan and Egypt that this share is a loan by the 1959 agreement. Now the creditor can stop giving this loan, and it is clear that the debtor does not want this tender to stop" (Sudan Tribune, 2017b). This was the first time since 1959 that a Sudanese official disclosed this information, which caused tensions with the Egyptian government. The Egyptian FM Sameh Shoukry described Ghandour's statements as "inaccurate," stating that Egypt tended to use some of the Sudanese quota in the past because "in previous years, Sudan's absorptive capacity for its quota was incomplete. Therefore, the overflowing part of its share went to Egypt without its will and with the consent of Sudan" (Sudan Tribune, 2017b). Although bilateral contentions existed among the parties, they did not trigger securitization. However, they contributed to the failure of cooperation.

In addition, the delay of the two consulting companies, which were tasked with studying the effects of the dam on the downstream countries, also contributed to the failure of cooperation. Significant delays occurred because the French and Dutch companies chosen initially could not reach an agreement regarding the GERD. As a result, the parties involved had to opt for another French company to proceed with the project. Another reason lies in the parties' unwillingness to reach a compromise. Egypt had proposed many suggestions regarding the storage capacity, operation, and filling timing of the GERD, but all Egyptian proposals were utterly rejected by both Ethiopia and Sudan. In 2015, the Egyptian Irrigation Ministry asked Ethiopia to decrease the storage capacity for the GERD, underscoring that some scientific studies have proven that the specified capacity is "unjustified and technically unacceptable." (Ahram Online, 2015a). However, Ethiopia declined the Egyptian proposal. Another Egyptian call to increase the GERD's water holes from two to

four in Jan 2016 was also rejected by Ethiopian officials, saying it could not redesign the GERD to increase its holes.

The continuous refusal of Ethiopia and Sudan to engage third parties as mediators in the negotiation process also prevented cooperation (El-Gundy, 2021b), even though the DoP agreement compelled the parties to ask for mediation if they failed to reach an agreement. The proposal of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry in Jan 2018 and September 2019 "for mediation or intervention by any technical body in a way that serves the interests of the concerned countries as well as provides development opportunities and protects the interests of downstream countries given the importance of the Nile as a vital source for water" was also rejected by other parties who stressed that mediation is unnecessary (Sudan Tribune, 2018; El-Din, 2019).

In May 2017, the French consultancy firm issued preliminary reports after a protracted disagreement between the three parties over the data that should be used as a baseline to evaluate the impact of GERD on Egypt and Sudan. However, Sudan and Ethiopia expressed reservations about those reports while only Egypt accepted them (Sudan Tribune, 2015d). Furthermore, Ethiopia's insistence that Egypt and Sudan have to sign a document stating their acceptance of Ethiopia's reservation to the 1959 Agreement before reaching an agreement on the dam also enhanced the disputes. The Sudanese Foreign Minister Ghandour noted that although both Sudan and Egypt accepted this reservation, Ethiopia insisted it to be a written agreement, which Egypt rejected: "The small point of disagreement at the Khartoum meeting is related to Ethiopia's reservation on the Nile Water Agreement between Egypt and Sudan. All of us have accepted it, but some refused to sign [a document stating the acceptance of this reservation], saying they agree but do not want to see a written text about it. In contrast, another party said it should be written as long as we agreed" (Sudan Tribune, 2018b).

The failure of trilateral cooperation can also be attributed to other factors. Firstly, the opportunitization of the Ethiopian government for Egyptian political and economic instability, aligning its interests with the geopolitical ambitions of China and the UAE in the region. Additionally, ideological differences between Sudan and Egypt, along with disputes between the two international consultancy firms tasked with conducting the GERD impact study, have further complicated the situation. This opportunitization facilitated the completion of the construction of the GERD before reaching a trilateral agreement on the GERD. This gave Ethiopia a competitive advantage to strengthen its position in the negotiations. Furthermore, the opportunitization of the GERD issue contributed to downplaying mutual trust among the parties, which intensified the dispute.

Daoudy and Kristin (2008) argue that cooperation may fall short of anticipated levels when used to resolve water disputes. Similarly, Daoud (2004) argues that the paths of negotiation and signing agreements are representations of cooperation and one of the ways recommended to resolve water conflicts unless they achieve the goals and interests of all parties. These arguments explain the intensification of the GERD dispute very well. The GERD issue also conforms to Craig's (1993) argument, which entails that signing agreements may only sometimes offer accurate portrayals of cooperation.

6.3 The Third Phase: From Oct 2019 Until Oct 2023

6.3.1 Geopolitical rivalry in the horn of Africa: impact on the GERD dispute

The role of extra-regional powers such as China and the UAE in the GERD dispute is also substantial. Although some experts argue that China has become part of the problem by funding the GERD (Clynch, 2023), the UAE has been at least as involved in the problem. The dams GERD was completed with the UEA's financial, political, and diplomatic support.

China has provided massive funds to Ethiopia. In early 2013, China gave Ethiopia a \$1.2 billion loan to build power transmission lines linking the dam to local towns and cities (Piliero, 2021). The China State Electric Power Equipment and Technology Corporation Limited and the Ethiopian Electric Power Company EEPCO signed an agreement to finance and build power transmission lines in Apr 2013. According to this agreement, the transmission line with capacities of 400 kilovolts and 500 kilovolts connected the Renaissance Dam to the capital city of Addis Ababa (Times, 2016).

Moreover, Chinese companies undertook some construction work in 2017 thanks to a total of \$652 million in loans provided by China to Ethiopia (AlAli, 2022). The China Gezhouba Group Corporation (CGGC) and Voith Hydro Shanghai (VHS) companies also obtained contracts to accelerate dam development. In addition, China provided Ethiopia with a loan worth \$1.8 billion after Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed visited China in 2019. The loan was provided to strengthen the dam's infrastructure to increase the efficiency of hydroelectric energy production (Klaassen, 2021). The Ethiopian Electrical Power (EEP) company also signed a contract with Vitho Hydro Shanghai worth \$113 million and with CGGC worth \$40 million (Africanews, 2019). This Ethiopian Chinese partnership aims to contribute to the completion and development of the mechanical, electrical, and construction works necessary to complete the construction of the power plant and water drainage channels in the GERD. Furthermore, China voted against any resolution condemning the GERD in the UNSC not to create a political precedent for arbitrating water disputes in the UNSC (Clynch, 2023).

The main reason China supports Ethiopia financially in completing the dam, despite its attempt to please all parties and its efforts to calm tensions between Egypt and Ethiopia, is the connection between its self-interests in the region and Ethiopian interests. First, Ethiopia is an integral part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, which is regarded as the most significant global infrastructure project in the world. China's

support for Ethiopia's most significant development project will benefit the local economy (Piliero, 2021; Clynch, 2023). China is interested in Ethiopia's economic progress to protect its commercial projects and investments in Ethiopia. About 400 Chinese construction and manufacturing projects in Ethiopia are worth more than \$4 billion. This makes China's interest in supporting the dam primarily in Chinese economic interests.

China's support for the Ethiopian dam is also essential politically. Ethiopia is the home to the headquarters of the African Union and Beijing adopted and presented to the union as a gift (Sany and Sheehy, 2022). China is also an upstream country like Ethiopia, which tends to support upstream countries in asserting the rights of upstream countries worldwide. This represents a challenge by China to international standards and agreements that embrace the idea of fair and joint management of transboundary waters (Clynch, 2023).

The role of the UAE. is as important as China. The UAE has made substantial financial contributions to Ethiopia over the past few years, noting that most of this money was used to complete the construction and operation of the GERD. This money was provided in two different forms. The first includes economic grants and aid; the other was presented as investments in agriculture, which political analysts considered an excellent incentive for Ethiopia to complete the GERD (Nada, 2024). In 2018 alone, the UAE. provided Ethiopia with financial support worth \$3 billion, of which \$2 billion was allocated to agriculture, while \$1 billion was deposited in the Central Bank of Ethiopia (Khalij, 2018).

The political support that the UAE provided to Ethiopia is also substantial. The UAE. showed a supportive position from the Ethiopian point of view when Egypt filed a complaint against Ethiopia to the U.N. Security Council. Also, later, the UAE. proposed that Egypt sell part of its share of water to Ethiopia. This is in exchange for this part being allocated to Egypt later, but for a low fee that the UAE.

will pay on its behalf. However, after a specified period, the purchase prices of the discounted share of Egypt's historic water shares will be renewed. However, Egypt rejected this offer because it amounted to an explicit waiver of its share of the Nile waters (Nada, 2024). UAE. also played an essential role as a mediator between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan in reaching the DoP agreement signed in 2015 (Moore, 2016). As noted before, the DoP Agreement legitimized the dam's existence and imposed it as a *fait accompli* in the region, although it did not help resolve the crisis.

The UAE's role in obstructing the democratic transformation processes in Egypt and Sudan and its impact on the conflict cannot be overlooked. The interference of the UAE. caused a significant change in the course of events and the path of the conflict. The most crucial reason behind the Emirati support for Ethiopia is the geopolitical ambitions to increase its influence in the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa, specifically after the fall of Egypt as an influential regional player following the failure of the Arab Spring Revolution. Two axes were formed in the region after this revolution: While Iran, Turkey, and Qatar supported it, the UAE and Saudi Arabia were against it. Such geopolitical ambitions of regional and international powers contributed to obstructing cooperation between the conflicting parties to achieve their interests.

6.3.2 Geopolitical context and negotiations path

Understanding the region's political, security, and social context is critical to understanding how it affects political decisions regarding GERD and its impact on the government's discourse.

In a new round of negotiations started at Egypt's request in Sep 2019, months after negotiations stopped, the parties could not agree on the GERD again. Ethiopia rejected an Egyptian proposal regarding operating the GERD, claiming that GERD is a "sovereign issue" and that "no external forces" can interfere in managing and

operating it (Monitor, 2019a). After repeated failure of the tripartite negotiations, the region witnessed a political shift that changed the balance of power regarding GERD. Sudan witnessed widespread protests in Dec 2018 that led to the overthrow of Bashir's regime, which supported the Ethiopian dam in April 2019. The new Sudanese political administration announced from the first moment that its national interests were compatible with Egyptian national interests. It underscored its unwavering support for the Egyptian position regarding the GERD (El-Gundy, 2021b).

This significant change coincided with the outbreak of a series of violent protests in Addis Ababa that spread to the Oromia region of Ethiopia in Oct 2019. The activist and director of the Oromia Media Network, Jawar Mohammed, claimed on Facebook that security forces had tried to arrest him and pulled his guards from their posts. The Egyptian Government's discourse has also witnessed a radical change regarding the dam issue (HRW, 2020). Al-Sisi declared that the Nile's waters are "a matter of life and death" and an "existential issue" for Egypt, calling for international intervention (El-Bey, 2019). Upon the Ethiopian insistence on rejecting international mediation, the Egyptian government escalated the GERD issue, as it was at the top of the list of political issues discussed by Sisi during his speech in the general deliberations of the seventy-fourth session of the UNGA (El-Gundy, 2021b). Sisi expressed his country's readiness to reach "an agreement that achieves the common interests of the peoples of the Blue Nile River in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt" (El-Gundy, 2021b).

This resulted in international demands from significant powers to intervene to resolve the conflict between Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan. In Oct 2019, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov stated that Russia was "ready to mediate" between Egypt and Ethiopia because it had "excellent relations" with the two countries (Ramani, 2021). The Russian offer came two days after Egypt's FM accepted an invitation from the U.S.A. to host a meeting with Egypt, Sudan, and

Ethiopia in Washington. The US President Trump's administration also invited the three countries' foreign ministers to meet with the U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and the head of the World Bank Group to discuss the crisis. The three parties agreed to resume four-round negotiations under the supervision of the USA. and the World Bank. However, these negotiations soon failed, stumbling a new phase of negotiations.

After Ethiopia announced in Apr 2020 that it would begin filling the dam within several months before finalizing an agreement with Egypt and Sudan, Egypt submitted an official complaint against Ethiopia to the U.N. Security Council, describing the crisis as "an imminent threat to international peace and security." Upon a call from the president of the A.U., Cyril Ramaphosa, a new series of negotiations sponsored by the A.U. resumed, yet parties could not reach an agreement afresh. This was followed by the intervention of the Trump administration once again, taking procedural measures that changed the balance of power in favor of Egypt and Sudan against Ethiopia and thus the path of the conflict (El-Gundy, 2021b). The Trump administration decided in late Sept 2020 to reduce \$100 million in aid to Ethiopia due to its GERD dispute with Egypt and Sudan. Moreover, Trump warned Ethiopia that Egypt would blow up the dam if the crisis continued. He said, during a phone call with Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, "The situation is very dangerous because Egypt will not be able to live this way. They will end up blowing up the dam," adding, "And I said it, and I repeat it, loudly and clearly, they will blow that up" (Chothia, 2020). These statements were considered an American authorization to Egypt to take military measures to resolve the conflict. These developments were a clear representation of the success of Egyptian securitizing moves.

Several other events contributed to the escalation and complexity of the conflict, which transformed the language of the dialogue around the dam issue into a sharper language dominated by rhetorical securitizing moves coupled with non-rhetorical

securitizing moves. Intensifying securitizing moves and the interference of third parties, directly and indirectly, contributed to the escalation of tensions. See figure 6.2, figure 6.3, and figure 6.4 to understand the trajectories of conflicting parties' relations over the GERD.

The GERD dispute was about to turn into an armed conflict over the Nile waters. An armed conflict started in Nov 2020 in the Tigray region of Ethiopia involving the regional government of Tigray, led by the Tigray People's Liberation Front, with the assistance of the Ethiopian Federal Police and Regional State Police and the Eritrean Defense Forces. In addition, military clashes outbreaked between Sudanese and Ethiopian forces and Ethiopian-backed militias in the Al-Fashqa border area, which increased tension between the two countries.

These events contributed to the growth of cooperation between Egypt and Sudan until it reached its highest levels in 2021. Over and above, as the Ethiopian unilateral moves to fill the dam continued during 2021, Egypt and Sudan called on the U.N.S.C. to hold a meeting in New York to discuss the latest developments regarding the dam. A draft resolution submitted by Tunisia accompanied this meeting, the only non-permanent Arab member of the U.N.S.C., calling on the three parties to reach a binding agreement on the dam within six months. Indeed, the U.N.S.C. issued an official statement emphasizing the importance of reaching a binding agreement within a reasonable time frame. However, the stalemate continues amid the Ethiopian resistance to engaging international actors in the GERD issue and the Sudanese and Egyptian insistence on engaging international mediators to secure a tripartite deal regarding the GERD.

6.3.3 Egypt

6.3.3.1 Securitizing moves

The Ethiopian involvement in resolving its internal crises and border conflicts, political change in Sudan, Ethiopian-Sudanese border dispute, and American support for Egypt led to a shift in the balance of power in favor of Egypt. These four factors were the main game-changers of the power equation in the GERD issue in this phase. The geopolitical contexts, political transformations, and internal crises affected the governments' GERD discourse during this stage. The Egyptian approach toward the GERD shifted radically to securitization. The internationalization of the GERD discourse is a representation for targeting international audiences to get their acceptance for taking exceptional policy measures regarding the GERD to resolve the dispute and maximize their interests.

In this phase, the Egyptian officials used the five-legitimization strategy, including legitimization through emotions, hypothetical future, rationality, altruism, and the voice of experts. This strategy targeted to justify and legitimize the Egyptian use of exceptional measures, including the internationalization of the issue, conducting diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia, resorting to legal arbitration, or even military confrontation. It aimed to invoke emotions of fear among the audience by portraying the GERD as an existential threat not only to Egyptian water, food, energy, economic, human, and national security but also to international and regional security and stability. Egyptians also supported their claims with scientific data to ascertain how rational their stance on GERD is while how irrational and irresponsible the Ethiopian acts are. They also aimed to garner the audience's support by portraying themselves positively while criticizing Ethiopia.

In month 2019, Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi said, "I affirm that the Egyptian state, with all its institutions, is committed to protecting Egypt's rights in

the Nile waters" and "the Egyptian state will continue to take the necessary measures on the political level and within the framework of the international law to protect these rights" (Ahram Online, 2019). These phrases denote a significant policy shift of Sisi's government towards the GERD issue from de-securitization to securitization. The word "political" is used intentionally to affirm that the disagreements between the two countries are not merely technical agreements. Instead, they are political disagreements that need serious confrontation. The phrase "all institutions" indicates that the intervention of the military and the defense ministry is no longer an excluded policy option.

Indeed, during this phase, securitizing moves were accompanied by both implicit and explicit warnings to resort to military conflict options to put more pressure on Ethiopia to reach an agreement regarding the GERD. Such warnings made the GERD crisis so close to the violation phase. Most of the securitizing moves in this phase framed the GERD issue in the wider geopolitical context to garner the audience's acceptance of the Egyptian stance. Egyptian government further aimed to mobilize the support and resources of regional and international powers in favor of Egypt to facilitate taking exceptional decisions in case of complete failure to reach a consensus on the GERD.

In Oct 2019, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry remarked before the Arab Parliament's general session on Arab water security that "Despite Egypt's sincere wish to reach an agreement on the rules of filling and operating the dam, these efforts have not resulted in this hopeful agreement" (Aziz, 2019). The statement portrays Egypt as a responsible, cooperative international actor that pursues resolving the conflict through diplomatic means, mainly through negotiations. However, it also denotes an implicit critique of Ethiopian acts, conveying a sense of frustration from the status quo to the international community. He targeted getting support from the audience for the Egyptian stance on the GERD while getting them involved in the dispute to put pressure on Ethiopia. The FM added, "Even though

this unilateral declaration violates the rules of international law, which stipulate prior notification and the necessity of conducting environmental and impact assessment studies on downstream countries before the commencement of the project" (Aziz, 2019). This statement explicitly critiques the Ethiopian acts, highlighting that they contradict international norms. This portrays Ethiopia as an actor that disrespects universally accepted norms of cooperation and consensus-building among international actors.

Egypt aimed to garner support from the audience against Ethiopia to exert pressure on it to reach an agreement. Following the Washington meetings in Nov 2019, FM Shoukry said, "Egypt is seeking a balanced agreement that allows Ethiopia to generate electricity — the purpose of building the dam — without encroaching on Egypt's water rights and interests. Nile water is a matter of life or death for Egypt" (El-Bey, 2019b). Framing the Nile water as a matter of "life and death" for Egypt implies a securitizing move to deal with the GERD issue. This statement puts the GERD issue in the broader geopolitical context, considering it a threat to the state's influence in the region and its survival. Such a discourse attracts the international and domestic audience to GERD's implications on the region's stability, security, and power equation. The statement further depicts Egypt as an advocate for achieving mutual benefits and interests and for the fair usage of the Nile waters among riparian states. It tends to refute and thus delegitimize the Ethiopian accusation of Egyptian opposition to the GERD, perceiving Egypt as a party that avoids the fair distribution of the Nile water and wants to keep its hydro hegemony.

Shoukry further underscored that "International mediation is likely to give a boost to deadlocked talks over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam [GERD], but without all parties sticking to a strict timetable, we will return to the same vicious circle" (El-Bey, 2019b). This statement blames Ethiopia, accusing it of obstructing the trilateral negotiations. This is an attempt to justify the Egyptian calls for the intervention of international parties in the negotiation process. It also implies that

Egyptians insist on international mediation to pursue the GERD negotiations effectively and reach a consensus. It targets dispelling accusations of internationalizing the issue and depriving Ethiopia of its Nile water rights.

The Egyptian FM Sameh Shoukry also made another securitizing move in Mar 2020 during a meeting in France when he was delivering a message to his counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian on the latest developments of GERD. The FM called on France and the EU to "push Ethiopia to sign an agreement on the filling and operation of the dam to preserve security and stability in the African region" (Ahram Online, 2020c). He depicted the GERD as a threat to African security and stability. Delivering such a message to the EU, specifically through France, was an attempt by Egyptian officials to add geopolitical tension to the GERD conflict by persuading the French that the GERD endangers their interests in Africa. Egypt wanted to garner the support of more international actors for its GERD narrative.

Furthermore, the FM waned in May 2020, in a letter sent to the U.N.S.C. on the GERD issue following the failure of the U.S.A.-sponsored negotiations, that the current situation regarding the GERD crisis "potentially poses a serious threat to peace and security throughout the region" (Getachew, 2020). Again, the referent object for the GERD was portrayed as the African region's peace and security, bearing in mind that the Nile basin region is the great powers' gate for the Red Sea, where international trade chokepoints existed. This strategy is targeted to influence the international audience by protecting their interests. He also stated, "Ethiopia's overall objective was, and remains, the exercise of unfettered control over the Blue Nile, including by filling and operating the GERD without considering the interests of downstream countries" (Getachew, 2020). The statement further justifies the Egyptian complaints against Ethiopia, depicting Ethiopia as a self-interested, non-cooperative actor that disregards international norms regarding transboundary water management. Thus, it contributes to the instability of the whole region.

In Mar 2021, in a presidential meeting between Egypt and Burundi, Sisi described the GERD as an "existential" issue affecting "the lives of millions of Egyptian people." In another statement, Sisi further affirmed that "the water of the Nile is a red line" threatening those Egyptian authorities "will not allow its water rights to be compromised, and any undermining of Egypt's water [share] will have a reaction threatening the stability of the entire region." The phrases "red line" and "existential issue" were used deliberately to convince the regional and international community of how critical the GERD issue is (Chalhoub, 2021). The phrase "red line" implies that water is a non-negotiable issue for the Egyptian government, and endangering it violates the country's critical boundary. This suggests that any threat to the quality or quantity of Egypt's Nile water shares by the GERD will be considered a crucial existential threat that requires extraordinary policies. The statement further mentioned another referential object, "human safety in Egypt and Sudan," considering it under risk because of the GERD, justifying the country's indispensable rights to protect its national security and stability. It also reflects rising tensions between Egypt and Ethiopia that might force Egypt to go beyond securitization to violization of the GERD issues, such as bombing the dam or engaging in a war. This was underscored in Jun 2020, as the irrigation ministry said that Egypt reaffirmed that these measures are considered "essential" in any agreement that relates to an existential matter affecting the lives of over 150 million citizens of Egypt and Sudan (Morsy, 2020).

With the Ethiopian declaration during the first quarter of 2020, when the filling process of the GERD will start soon, Egypt repeatedly accused Ethiopia of violating international laws due to its continuous unilateral acts. In Mar 2020, Egyptian FM Sameh Shoukry said, "Ethiopia's ownership of the dam does not allow it to unilateral control of the vital Nile artery or to violate international law" (El-Bey, 2020b). In Mar 2021, commenting on the Ethiopian unilateral decision, Egypt's FM spokesman Ahmed Hafez said, "This is something Egypt rejects because of the threat it poses to the interests of the Egyptian and Sudanese peoples and the impact of such

unilateral measures on security and stability in the region" (Kandil, 2021). This was reiterated once more in another letter sent by Egypt to the U.N.S.C. in Apr 2021, calling the international community to persuade Ethiopia to halt its unilateral approach towards the GERD. Shoukry, commenting on the recurrent failure to reach an agreement on the GERD, stated that Ethiopia "has demonstrated a lack of political will to act as a responsible stakeholder and co-riparian in control of the survival and livelihood" of the Egyptians (Kandil, 2021d). He further pointed out that failing to reach an agreement will "constitute a serious threat to international peace and security" (Kandil, 2021d). This phrase depicts that global peace and security are under threat because of failure to reach a consensus on GERD. It escalated the GERD crisis, attracting the attention of the international audience by implicitly warning that Egypt may resort to unfavorable options to the great powers if left out of no other option. Egypt tries to mobilize support for exerting diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia to avoid risking the region's stability.

In June 2020, a referent object for the GERD was portrayed as international peace and security in the letter sent to the U.N.S.C. by Shoukry: "The responsibility of the Security Council is to address a pertinent threat to international peace and security, and certainly, the unilateral actions by Ethiopia in this regard would constitute such a threat" (AP, 2020). The Egyptian decision to take the issue to the U.N.S.C. indicates that they sought to internationalize the GERD issue and engage the world's major powers by persuading them that their interests in the region would also be endangered. Egyptians also targeted the regional powers whom Egypt sought their support. In Jan 2021, Egyptian FM Shoukry said that Egypt "will not allow it to be a hostage to the efforts of some to impose control and hegemony over the Nile River" (Barakat, 2021).

Egypt declared the GERD a real threat to its hydro-hegemony in the Nile River for the first time. Here, the referent object is Egypt's regional influence, endangered by the Ethiopian dam. This took the issue to a more critical level than in the past.

Following the Arab League Meeting in Doha in May 2021, Egypt's FM Shoukry underscored, "The Egyptian and Sudanese water security is closely linked to the Arab national security" (al-Khazen, 2021). The statement securitizes the water issue, referring to the GERD as a threat to Egyptian and Sudanese water security and to all Arab countries. This statement aims to mobilize the resources and attention of Arab states against Ethiopia's GERD project. Thus, it underscored the urgency and significance of Arab cooperation against Ethiopia to preserve their stability and welfare.

In Jun 2021, Egypt took the securitization of the filling process of the GERD to a new dimension (existential threat to the environment and local people) in this phase. The Egyptian Irrigation Minister Mohamed Abdel-Aty claimed that the Sudanese drinking water stations were contaminated and damaged due to the Ethiopian release of "muddy water" into the Nile before starting the first filling of the GERD without informing Egypt and Sudan. He claimed that this muddy water "caused a state of drought followed by floods" in Sudan (Shalhoub, 2021b). Here, another referent object was observed: GERD's impact on the quality and quantity of the water shared downstream, affecting the safety of lands, food, and humans.

The Egyptian Government's warnings to use force to protect its national security were also reiterated repeatedly throughout this period. Following the failure of the African Union-sponsored negotiations in Apr 2021, El-Sisi threatened Ethiopians, stressing that "there is no need to reach a level that you mess with a water drop of Egypt's [Nile] water because all options are open" (Shalhoub, 2021). El-Sisi used the phrase "all options are open", which was first used by the previous President Morsi, to ensure that resorting to a severe military confrontation for the Nile Waters is an acceptable policy option and not ruled out by policymakers. Moreover, In Jun 2021, following an urgent meeting for the Arab League in Qatar organized upon the request of Egypt, FM Shoukry underscored, "We will not compromise our water rights. We will use all the appropriate tools at the appropriate time" (El-Bey, 2021).

This statement implies that Egypt might not only resort to diplomatic means to resolve the conflict but also, the military confrontation policy option remains on the table. This was a message to the domestic people to garner their support for Egyptian decisions and for the international community to compel Ethiopia to reach a deal on the GERD with Egypt and Sudan.

As part of Egyptian efforts to securitize the issue and legitimize taking exceptional measures against Ethiopia by ensuring international and regional acceptance of this decision, Egypt used many discursive strategies such as legitimization through emotions, altruism, and rationality. These strategies were used to undermine the credibility of the Ethiopian viewpoints and acts while portraying Egypt as a victim of Ethiopian unfair acts. Thus, this facilitates the mobilization of the audience around the Egyptian narrative, ensuring the success of their securitizing moves.

Speaking before the parliament in Oct 2019, Egypt's PM Madbouly accused Ethiopia of acting unilaterally and retracting from all past agreements regarding the Nile water: "This unilateral decision was in violation of international agreements, and despite this fact, we choose dialogue to reach an agreement with Ethiopia" and "Ethiopia's radical positions represent a violation of the declaration of principles reached by the presidents of Egypt and Sudan and the prime minister of Ethiopia in Khartoum on March 23, 2015" (Essam El-Din, 2019). In this statement, the PM depicted the Ethiopian decision to start filling the dam as violating all of Nile Basin's international agreements, including the 2015 DoP agreement signed between the three parties. Describing the Ethiopian move as "radical," he also depicts Egypt as the aggrieved party. The phrase "despite we choose dialogue" further portrays the "narrative of injustice" constructed by the Egyptian government. It aims to construct a social reality in which Ethiopia's unilateral moves are perceived as illicit and perturbing, and thus, the Ethiopian decisions regarding the GERD should be delegitimized against the international community.

In Jan 2020, Egypt accused Ethiopia of intentionally exhibiting rigidity to compromise in the GERD negotiation. The Egyptian FM Shoukry said that Ethiopia's "deliberate intransigence aiming to impose *a fait accompli* on the ground and control the flow of the Blue Nile and operate the dam without taking any consideration of the water interests of the downstream countries" (Asmar, 2020). Using the phrase "impose *a fait accompli*" portrays Ethiopia as an inflexible party that intentionally carry out an irresistible decision such as filling the dam, thus providing no room for further talks or change. This portrays Ethiopia as the party that wants to disrupt the negotiations and cares only about its interests rather than adopting a win-win situation. The FM further described the Ethiopian statements in which it accused Egypt of obstructing the negotiations as being "misleading and distorting" and "totally inconsistent with the course of the negotiations" (Asmar, 2020). In these phrases, Egypt doubts Ethiopia's credibility and narrative regarding the GERD, leading the audience to question and doubt the reliability of the Ethiopian claims.

In Jun 2020, in a statement by the National Security Council, headed by President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi, Egypt asked for a defined timeframe for the GERD negotiations: "That is why it is important to have a timeframe for the talks, in order not to make the talks a new tool for stalling or evading the obligations of the Declaration of Principles of 2015" (Ahram Online, 2020). The statement accuses Ethiopia of using the negotiations to sidestep and delay the obligations stipulated in the 2015 DoP. In the statement, "Nevertheless, Egypt will participate in the technical talks to discover the political will to reach an agreement and prove Egypt's goodwill," he again portrayed Ethiopia as an obstructionist to the progress of the negotiations while stressing Egypt's good intentions despite that. Reacting to the Ethiopian recurrent statements that perceived the GERD issue as a matter of "national sovereignty," the Egyptian FM underscored in Jun 2021, "There is no sovereignty when it comes to an international river" (Morsy, 2021). This statement underscores a fundamental ideological rift between Egypt and Ethiopia, adheres to

the conventional concept of national sovereignty over natural water resources, and Egypt prioritizes the principles of international cooperation and the equitable, sustainable management of water resources in international rivers. Egypt's approach is to contextualize the GERD issue within the framework of collaborative management of water resources, enabling its intervention in the management and operation of the GERD. By highlighting these contrasting ideologies, Egypt positions itself as an advocate for universally accepted principles of shared and equitable water governance. In contrast, Ethiopia is portrayed as seeking to monopolize water resources.

The Egyptian government also sought to cast doubt on the dam's safety and the danger in the region. In Apr 2021, before the second filling of the GERD, the Egyptian Irrigation Ministry denied Ethiopia's claim that the dam was built by international standards and specifications, pointing to the changes that Ethiopia recently made to the dam's design. The Ministry also pinpointed the fact that Ethiopia claimed the construction of the GERD for electricity generation only affirming that the Ethiopian firmness to fill the dam without the installation of turbines denotes "that the first filling was carried out for media and political reasons not [for] technical ones" (Kandil, 2021b). In May 2021, the Egyptian FM also described the second filling of the dam as clear evidence of Ethiopia's "bad intentions" and efforts to undermine the role of the AU as a mediator to reach a deal. The Minister further described the continuous unilateral acts of Ethiopia as resulting in an "unbearable harm" and "forebode tensions and repercussions" that will bring rise to "tensions in the region and a quarreling relation and will cause instability in East Africa and the Horn of Africa" (Kandil, 2021c).

The phrase "the Horn of Africa" was used deliberately to attract the attention of the great powers in this region. Egypt wanted to view the GERD as an integral part of regional and international competition for the wealth of the Horn of Africa and for increasing influence in the region, particularly in the Red Sea, where the global trade

corridors are located. Thus, Egypt wanted to view the interests of regional and international major powers as a referent object for the GERD. It perceived the rise of the Ethiopian influence and its partners in the Horn of Africa, including the UAE., Russia, and China, as endangering the American and European interests in the Red Sea. The internationalization of this issue was done for two main reasons. Firstly, Egypt wanted to put more diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia to force the Ethiopians to sign a deal regarding the timings of the dam's filling process and the capacity of its reservoir. Secondly, Egypt wanted to legitimize taking an exceptional decision, such as bombing the dam or engaging in an armed conflict, by ensuring the acceptance and assistance of the leading international and regional powers.

In Sep 2021, A member of the Ethiopian negotiation team stated that Ethiopia would not sign any tripartite agreement without guaranteeing "its national interest and future development with regards to utilizing its water resources." Regarding this statement, the Egyptian FM stated, "The Ethiopian fallacies persist" and "This rhetoric is prevaricating and lacks credibility" (Ahram Online, 2021c). The phrase "fallacies" depicts Ethiopia as deliberately hindering the achievement of an agreement to maximize its interests by perpetuating misinformation and erroneous rationales to maintain the *status quo*. This tends to undermine the credibility of the Ethiopian discourse regarding the GERD against Egypt and Sudan while legitimizing the Egyptian discourse concerning the GERD.

6.3.3.2 Non-discursive securitizing moves

The discursive securitizing moves were accompanied by some non-rhetorical securitizing moves that strongly supported them. In late Nov 2020, a fight ensued in Ethiopia's Tigray after Abiy's government accused the Tigray People's Liberation Front, which controls the Tigray region, of holding illegal elections and attacking an Ethiopian military base to seize its weapons. This led to the Abiy Ahmed Government's decision to launch a military attack on the Tigray region to bring it

under government control. Tensions escalated inside Ethiopia, which led to the outbreak of a civil war. In late Oct 2020, during a meeting between U.S. President Trump and the leaders of Sudan and Israel that led to the normalization of relations between the two countries, President Trump told reporters, "It is a very dangerous situation because Egypt is not going to be able to live that way. They will end up blowing up the dam. Moreover, I said it, and I say it loud and clear -- they will blow up that dam. And they have to do something" (Monitor, 2020).

The Egyptian authorities were silent about responding to Trump's direct threat to Ethiopia that Egypt could blow up the dam, mainly after America authorized and legitimized this exceptional decision after the failure of a series of negotiations supervised by the U.S. and the World Bank. Nevertheless, at the same time, Egypt took advantage of the highly turbulent situation in Ethiopia and the Abiy Ahmed Government's preoccupation with the Tigray conflict, and it made some visits and signed several security and military agreements with riparian countries to strengthen its position. These non-discursive securitizing moves represent the country's readiness and policy shift to violization.

In November 2020, Egypt's Armed Forces Chief of Staff met with the Minister of Defense and the Sudanese Armed Forces Chief of Staff in Khartoum. Cairo and Khartoum agreed to strengthen joint military action in the fields of "qualification, training, border security, and military industries," and the two parties agreed to exchange military expertise. Sudan's Armed Forces Chief of Staff described this meeting as a "real leap" forward in the history of strategic relations between the two sides (Independent, 2020). This agreement was followed by joint Egyptian-Sudanese military exercises in the same month, called "Nile Eagles-1" (AlArabiya News, 2020). This exercise title indicates the connection between these joint military exercises and escalated tensions regarding the GERD between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia. Also, in Apr 2021, Egypt and Burundi signed a military protocol aimed at cooperation between the two countries in joint military training

and exercises and exchanging military experiences (SIS, 2021). In Mar 2021, Egypt and Sudan conducted joint military exercises called “Nile Eagles-2” (Ahram Online, 2021e).

In Apr 2021, Egypt and Uganda signed an agreement to exchange intelligence information between the two countries on a large scale and regularly. Moreover, in May 2021, Egypt and Sudan carried out joint military exercises called "Guardians of the Nile Protectors," in which the Egyptian and Sudanese land, sea, and air forces participated (Eleiba, 2021). The ground exercises took place in several areas, including Merowe, in which one of the largest Sudanese dams exists. A naval exercise also occurred in the Gibet area overlooking the Red Sea. The exercises were the highest coordination between Egypt and Sudan at the military and strategic levels. The name of the joint military exercises between Egypt and Sudan also proves how securitization reached its highest levels. In addition, Egypt and Kenya signed a defense cooperation agreement in May 2021. The agreement was followed by a statement from the Egyptian Government confirming that the two sides share the same challenges and threats to their national security, which necessitated military cooperation and the exchange of intelligence information on broader levels (Daily News, 2021). Likewise, in Oct 2021, just before the Sudanese coup, the Egyptian and Sudanese forces once again carried out joint military exercises called "Southern Guard-1" in Alexandria to exchange experiences and enhance military and security cooperation (Ahram Online, 2021e).

In conclusion, it can be said that the countries involved in the GERD dispute had been aware of the significance of the international audience, including major powers, neighbors, and international donors, especially regarding water securitization in non-democratic states. The GERD case demonstrates that it is more critical than confining the success of securitization to the acceptance of the domestic audience. This also denotes that even policymakers in non-democratic countries may resort to water securitization in cases such as an internationally significant

power is supporting this country rather than the other and in cases where the political situation in the opponent party is not stable in a way that the downstream state may tend to securitization. This also shows how geopolitical rivalry in a region may add an important dimension to a regional dispute, which may be about a severe change in power relations, creating an asymmetrical power relationship that encourages the securitization and opportunitization.

Securitization of the GERD discourse intensified following Sudan's political shift in December 2018, which led to a transitional government aligning with Egypt's stance on the dam. The issue also gained international attention, with the USA backing Egypt and Sudan and attempting mediation between Egypt and Ethiopia. The American authorization for Egypt to bomb the GERD coincided with political upheaval in Ethiopia as well as heightened regional and international competition over the Red Sea and Horn of Africa, rich in resources and crucial trade routes. This environment enabled Egypt to frame the GERD as a security concern both nationally and internationally during this period successfully. In addition, securitization is expected because of the bilateral disputes experienced during this period between Sudan and Ethiopia.

Another trigger for securitization is Ethiopia's recurrent rejection of international mediation and its unilateral acts, as well as repetitive procrastination during the trilateral meeting while continuing the dam construction. Egypt and Sudan perceived this as an Ethiopian strategy to "buy time" until the dam's construction and filling of the dam ended. This also proves that the intervention of neighbors (riparian states) and international actors in the issue did not prove its effectiveness. There are mainly two reasons behind the failure of international mediators or third parties to enhance cooperation among conflicting parties. Firstly, there is a prior bias towards one party at the expense of the other due to the overlap of national interests with regional interests and the complex nature of international relations. Secondly, the conflicting parties focus on achieving the most significant possible benefit in the

short term and prioritize achieving national interests instead of focusing on reaching a comprehensive agreement that guarantees fair and sustainable management of water resources, considering all social, political, economic, and natural damages and risks.

6.3.4. Sudan

The widespread Sudanese protests that began in Dec 2018 succeeded in the departure of Sudanese President Al-Bashir in Apr 2019. This major political transformation resulted in a change in Sudan's foreign policy that shifted its position on several critical regional issues, most notably the issue of GERD. Sudan, unlike Egypt, did not object to the construction of the Ethiopian dam since its inception but instead supported it, stressing the many benefits of the dam to Sudan. Sudan also considered the dam an internal matter for Ethiopia and declared that the downstream countries should not interfere in its management. However, the new transitional government that succeeded Al-Bashir officially announced its alignment with the Egyptian position.

In Jan 2020, Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok said, "Our stance on the Renaissance Dam is the same as Egypt's, and we are with [Egypt] in every step" and "Our interests align with Egypt's vision for the dam" (Ahram Online, 2020a). The Sudanese government further affirmed the Ethiopian sovereign rights regarding the dam by opposing the Ethiopian insistence on the unilateral management of the dam. Hamdok also said in an interview with the Al-Ahram newspaper that "there should be joint management" of the GERD to avoid the negative impacts of the dam on the downstream countries (Ahram Online, 2020b).

Sudan, for the first time, clearly declared that the GERD might inflict harm on it. This was an incomplete securitizing move as Sudan stayed silent about the threat's referent object, the Ethiopians' unilateral dam management. Although Sudan's

stance regarding the GERD changed during this phase, the discourse regarding the GERD revolved around the significance of resorting to negotiations and dialogue while avoiding the securitization of the discourse of the issue until the failure of the four-round negotiations sponsored by the USA from Nov 2019 to Mar 2020.

In May 2020, Sudanese FM Omar Qamar El-Din said that the Sudanese "fears" regarding the dam engulfed their "hopes." The usage of the legitimization strategy regarding invoking emotions is evident here. The PM Hamdok also raised his concerns regarding the dam and questioned the safety of the dam's design, saying that despite the benefits of the GERD, "There is always a danger that the dam could collapse, even if it is a small danger or probability; humans did not create this universe and any man-made thing is subject to even a small probability of collapse" (El-Gundy, 2020). In this declaration, he was targeting the triggering of emotions of fear regarding the GERD by undermining the credibility of the Ethiopian statements about the compatibility of the GERD with international standards. However, these securitizing moves were also coupled with an insistence on resolving the conflict through dialogue while avoiding the internationalization of the issue. The tendency of the Sudanese officials to portray themselves as "good" while the Ethiopian party in a negative way is apparent to legitimize the Sudanese new opponent stance for the Ethiopian acts. Thus, altruism strategy of legitimization was recurrent in that sense. This was combined with a rational strategy at this stage to portray Sudan as a rational and responsible party that cares about the stability and security of the region by supporting dialogue and effective cooperation. In Mar 2020, when the Arab League proposed a draft resolution that supported Egypt and Sudan against Ethiopia over the GERD dispute, Sudan declared its reservations about the dam, arguing that the resolution was not aligned with the interest of Sudan. Sudan rejected the resolution, warning that it may intensify the dispute, resulting in an "Arab-Ethiopian Confrontation" (Ahram Online, 2020c).

In June 2020, Sudan's Irrigation and Water Resources Minister Yasser Abbas said, "We do not want escalation. Negotiations are the only solution" (AFP, 2020). In fact, Sudan has never supported the non-peaceful solutions to the GERD dispute. In other words, the violization of the discourse was never a direct warning in the Sudanese GERD discourse. Even after the Sudanese American press conference where Trump warned Ethiopia that Egypt may resort to "bombing" the dam, PM Hamdok repeated the Sudanese support for the peaceful solutions to the dispute: "We support dialogue to resolve disputes and reach an agreement that grants all three countries the right to benefit from rivers and water as a natural right" (Ahram Online, 2020e).

Despite the recurrent Sudanese complaints to the U.N. and the U.N.S.C. against Ethiopia in Sep 2021, Sudan insisted on peaceful solutions. After placing a complaint GERD file before the U.N.S.C., PM Hamdok pinpointed his country's support to "any peaceful move or initiative that leads the parties to an agreement that meets the interests of them all" (Ahram Online, 2021c). The violization of the GERD dispute and resorting to military confrontation has never been a policy option mentioned in the Sudanese discourse regarding the GERD. The repeated visits between the Egyptian and Sudanese Armed Forces leaders, the bilateral agreements regarding enhancing military cooperation, and the four joint military exercises held between Nov 2020 to May 2021 confirm the opposite.

6.3.4.1 Securitizing moves

During this phase, the Sudanese policymakers securitized the discourse regarding the GERD to a significant extent. The Sudanese officials used the legitimization strategies of invoking emotions of fear regarding the security and stability of both Sudan and the whole world. They portrayed economic security, human security, national security, the environment, and regional stability and security as threatened by the GERD. This was further supported by the voice of experts to enhance the Sudanese claims with empirical data that will undermine the credibility of the

Ethiopian discourse. Thus, garnering support for the Sudanese stance on the GERD while delegitimizing the Ethiopian GERD discourse.

The Sudanese policymakers highly securitized Ethiopia's unilateral management of the GERD, posing it as a threat. Sudan criticized Ethiopia for starting the filling process without reaching an agreement regarding the definitions of “drought and floods”, the timings and full duration of filling, and how much the dam reservoir can be filled without inflicting any harm to the downstream countries. In March 2021, the Sudanese Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation Yaser Abbas said, "Ethiopia mistakenly believes that an agreement to fill and operate the dam would restrict its use of the Nile water in the future, while Sudan and Egypt affirmed their respect for Ethiopia's right to develop the use of its water resources in the future by the principles of international law" (Sudan Tribune, 2021a). Furthermore, in Feb 2021, PM Hamdoun said, "Ethiopia's plan to [execute] the second phase of the Renaissance Dam filling in July without an agreement among parties within the framework of international law, which ensures the safety of the [dam] operation and the exchange of information, would have a disastrous impact on Sudan."

During this phase, the Sudanese declarations regarding GERD included six main referent objects. Firstly, the Safety of the Sudanese people. Sudanese policymakers recurrently affirmed the potential harm of the GERD that would be inflicted on the safety of Sudanese households. In Feb 2021, PM warned that "Sudan does not accept the imposition of a fait accompli policy that threatens the safety of 20 million Sudanese citizens whose lives depend on the Blue Nile" (Kandil, 2021a). Secondly, the referent object commonly stressed in the Sudanese discourse is “national security.” In Apr 2021, Irrigation and Water Resources Minister Yasir Abbas warned that the Sudanese "national security" would be affected if Ethiopia insisted on its unilateral approach. Thirdly, the PM further denoted that the Ethiopian unilateral moves to fill the GERD before reaching a unilateral agreement would have "regional repercussions" (Shalhoub, 2021b), the third referent object for the GERD.

The fourth referential object is the loss of influence on the Sudanese state with the rise of Ethiopia's hydro-hegemony as a result of the existence of GERD. In May 2021, Sudanese PM Abdalla Hamdok, speaking to CNN in a videoconference interview, said, "Without that agreement, we will always be at the mercy of Ethiopia, which can give it today and close it tomorrow. This is why we are asking for a binding agreement within international law" (Sudan Tribune, 2021c). On the other hand, In Apr 2021, Irrigation Minister Yaser Abbas said, "All options remain open, including returning to the Security Council" he said (Sudan Tribune, 2021a). Although there is no direct referential to the possibility of launching a war or bombing the dam, the phrase "all options are open" did not exclude any policy option. Furthermore, In May 2021, during a meeting between the Sudanese FM al-Mahdi and the Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, the FM described Ethiopia as being "the Aggressor who buys time to inflict harm on others" for "its intransigence and refusal" to reach a deal with Egypt and Sudan (Sudan Tribune, 2021b). The statement implies a securitizing move that is near to violization of the GERD crisis. Describing Ethiopia as the "aggressor" implies that Sudan perceives Ethiopia as a country that threatens its national security and interests to a great extent. This suggests a justification for any exceptional policy or measure that might be taken against Ethiopia to protect the Sudanese security and stability. The statement further establishes Ethiopia as a country that avoids cooperation and uses negotiations as an opportunity to achieve its interests while endangering the interests of Sudan and Egypt. This tends to garner support and legitimize urgent acts, including international arbitration and military confrontation. Over and above, in May 2021, in a statement made by the Sudanese Political Forces, the country's biggest opponents representing the views of many Sudanese people, declared, "We reject the transformation of the GERD, which was built with bilateral support and cooperation, into an instrument of hegemony, and a political means for adjusting regional balances to achieve goals that go beyond the declared goals of the project" (Sudan Tribune, 2021d). This statement could be an example of how securitization

of an issue is endorsed by the public and succeeded in grabbing the public's attention to legitimate taking exceptional measures.

The fifth referential object is the negative impact of the GERD on the most critical irrigation and electricity-generating dams in Sudan. In April 2021, the Irrigation Ministry further stated that "This is a short period for taking preventive technical measures, showing the importance of reaching a binding agreement before filling the dam," stressing that this would increase the "pressure on the Sudanese electricity generation system," added the statement. (Sudan Tribune, 2021c). In addition, in Sep 2021, Sudan's Water Resources Minister Yasser Abas said that the dam's first and second filling processes negatively affected two Sudanese dams. He further said that the Government had to increase the height of "both Jabal Awlia and Roseires dams" by "1.5 meters," and they also reserved "1 billion cubic meters of water in the Roseires dam" as a precautionary measure. However, despite all the precautionary measures taken, the GERD's chief negotiator, Mustafa Hussein al-Zubair, affirmed, "Still the damage is expected although the filling is over. Per their announcement, they are supposed to fill the amount of 13.5 billion cubic meters unilaterally. Nevertheless, they could store only one-third of that, which is a considerable risk."

Zubair further stressed that these precautions were highly costly to the government. This denotes the sixth referential object, which is the impact of the GERD on the annual governmental budget in an already low-income country such as Sudan. In Sep 2021, Mustafa Hussein al-Zubair, Sudan's chief negotiator on the GERD, said, "We did a costly mitigation to reduce the damages that the government and individuals will face and suffer" (Amin, 2021). In Jun 2021, the Sudanese FM filed a complaint against Ethiopia to the U.N.S.C. He described the Ethiopian unilateral management of the GERD as endangering both international and regional peace and security. Al-Mahdi said, "Call on Ethiopia to stop unilateral filling the Renaissance

Dam, which will exacerbate the dispute and threaten regional and international peace and security" (Sudan Tribune, 2021g).

Following the failure of the tripartite negotiations, as well as the other rounds of negotiations under the auspices of the A.U., Sudan declared in Nov 2020 its unwillingness to engage in negotiations without the existence of international mediators. In Jun 2020, Sudanese Foreign Minister Asma Abdallah sent a message to the U.N.S.C. asking its members to discourage all parties from taking unilateral actions, including filling the GERD prior, before concluding a comprehensive agreement. (M. E. Monitor, 2020). That was the first time a Sudanese government tended to the internationalization of the GERD issue. In Nov 2020, in a message to the Ethiopian Irrigation Minister Seleshi Bekele, the Sudanese Irrigation Minister Yasser Abbas stressed that the "method followed in negotiating during the past rounds has proven to be unproductive." (Ahram Online, 2020e). By saying that, he referred to the non-interference of international mediators in the negotiations due to the recurrent rejection of Ethiopia, which adopts the policy of "African Solution for African Problems." As a result, In Mar 2021, Sudan submitted a message to the A.U. asking to hold a tripartite negotiation through a quadripartite mediation "to reach a fair and legal agreement that satisfies the three countries." (Sudan Tribune, 2021b). The quartet mediation included the U.S.A., the World Bank, the E.U., and the A.U. Furthermore, during a meeting held between the Sudanese FM Al-Mahdi and the U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan, Donald E. Booth, in Mar 2021, Al-Mahdi called on the U.S.A. "to engage in constructive negotiations that would lead to convincing Ethiopia not to fill [the dam] without the consent of the concerned parties." Al-Mahdi further stressed that the mutual trust between Ethiopia and Sudan was undermined due to "Ethiopia's unilateral actions"

However, Ethiopia rejected the intervention of international third parties in the negotiations. In the words of Sudanese Chief Mustafa Hussein Zubair, the Sudanese government perceived the recurrent rejection of international mediation as a way to

"buy time" (Sudan Tribune, 2021b). Moreover, in Apr 2021, the Sudanese Irrigation Minister Yasser Abbas Mohamed Ali said, "There are no logical reasons that justify Ethiopia's rejection of the principle of mediation. Perhaps there are other intentions to refuse in order to complete the second filling without an agreement" (Sudan Tribune, 2021d).

In Apr 2021, the Sudanese FM, for the second time, filed a complaint against Ethiopia to the U.N.S.C., briefing the failed A.U.-sponsored trilateral negotiation round and the reasons behind its failure to the U.N.S.C. The FM accused Ethiopia of harming Sudan intentionally. In a statement in Apr 2021, the FM said: "The briefing letter to the Security Council came after the Ethiopian intransigence that failed the Kinshasa talks sponsored by the African Union, and the insistence of the Ethiopian officials to harm Sudan by going to the second filling [of the dam] without a legal agreement." (Abdel-Men'em, 2021). Also in Jun 2021, Sudan renewed its complaint against Ethiopia to the U.N.S.C. asking it to force Ethiopia "to stop unilateral filling the Renaissance Dam which will exacerbate the dispute and poses a threat to regional and international peace and security." However, these complaints were dismissed by the president of the U.N.S.C., in Jul 2021, arguing that that the GERD is "outside the scope of the council's work."

6.3.5 Ethiopia

6.3.5.1 De-securitizing moves

During this critical phase, Ethiopian decision-makers adopted a discourse that tended to depoliticize and de-securitize the GERD issue, unlike Egypt and Sudan, which favored securitization policy. Ethiopia's policy was reflected in the GERD discourse of the Abiy Ahmed Government, which focused on three main issues. The most crucial one is the refusal to politicize the dam issue, repeatedly stressing that the dispute over GERD is technical and thus requires technical solutions. The

government depended on the five main legitimization strategies of their policy. In Jan 2020, following the last meeting in the series of four-round negotiations supervised by the USA, the Ethiopian Water, Irrigation, and Energy Minister Seleshi Bekele reiterated his country's insistence.

on reaching "technical solutions to technical problems" (Getachew, 2020a). In Dec 2019, Ethiopia conveyed its consternation upon the pro-Egypt resolution issued by the Arab Parliament, describing it as a "discriminatory" resolution in a letter sent from the Ethiopian Government to the Arab Parliament (Monitor, 2019). The Ethiopian dismay of the Arab Parliament's resolution was because of its call for Ethiopia to respect the Egyptian and Sudanese rights given to them by the 1959 Agreement. The letter depicts clearly the Ethiopian position on the GERD. In the letter, the Ethiopian House of Parliaments' speaker Tadesse Chafo, affirmed Ethiopia's resistance to the 1959 Agreement by stating that Ethiopia wanted to position itself as a policymaker independent of outside pressure and external influence: "Since Ethiopia is not a party to these Treaties, we are not bound by them under international law." The phrase "not bound by them under international law" stresses that Ethiopia is a sovereign state with the right to self-determination. Describing the Arab Parliament's resolution as "discriminatory" is an attempt to invoke the emotions of the audience towards what Ethiopia perceives as an unneutral and biased stance. This phrase is intended to convey that Ethiopia will not accept the intervention of an external force by no means. This includes managing the operation of the GERD or determining the timings and duration of its filling. Tadesse Further affirmed that the GERD is a "hydropower dam" and thus it will not "consume water" (Monitor, 2019).

These phrases depict the dam as only being constructed to generate electricity, not for irrigation purposes, as Egypt claims. This ideological framing was done to dispel and minimize the worries of the downstream countries regarding GERD, diminishing the international community's concerns. In this way, the Ethiopian

government is targeting the de-legitimization of Egyptian and Sudanese concerns regarding the GERD and thus de-securitizing the GERD issue to become a technical rather than geopolitical. The declaration of Tadesse that "By virtue of this Resolution, we see a discriminatory view to Ethiopia's critical rights to bring its population out of abject poverty by improving their access to electricity" targets the legitimization of the Ethiopian unilateral acts by grabbing the international community's attention to the Ethiopians' suffering from deprivation and lack of electricity infrastructure. In addition, the declaration shows a non-complete securitizing move in that it shows the GERD as Ethiopia's only applicable solution for eradicating poverty and achieving economic prosperity. Furthermore, since the signing of the DoP, the Ethiopian government has always depicted the negotiations as only meetings to solve technical issues. In Dec 2019, referring to negotiations on the GERD, minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy Seleshi Bekele portrayed it as only "technical meetings do not aim to discuss the legitimacy of the dam... what we have to do is find a solution to outstanding problems" (El-Bey, 2019). Through the GERD discourse, Ethiopia recurrently made a clear separation between its willingness to engage in negotiations and the legitimacy of the GERD, as the Ethiopian government insisted on its sovereign rights and thus legitimate rights to build dams in the Nile. In addition, reacting to Egypt's and Sudan's insistence to take the GERD dispute to the U.N.S.C. in July 2021, Bekele said, "We are committed to the AU-led process. There are some technical and legal issues that should not be politicized and should not be internationalized." (Sudan Tribune, 2021j). By implying that managing the GERD is a sovereign issue, the Ethiopian officials are trying to legitimize their unilateral acts by invoking emotions related to pride and self-determination, which are universally respected and advocated currently.

Over and above, drawing a link between the endangering regional security and stability as well as the internationalization efforts of Egypt and Sudan is an attempt to achieve legitimization for the Ethiopian perspective on the issue by provoking emotions of fear. It further combined this with a rationality legitimizing strategy that

depicted Ethiopia as a rational and responsible actor that seeks to enhance regional stability by avoiding the internationalization of the issue. In fact, they portrayed the internationalization of the issue, whether through involving third mediators or taking the issue to international arbitration as an irrational decision contrary to pursuing tripartite talks. Ethiopia utilized the securitizing efforts of Egypt and Sudan as an opportunity to legitimize their acts and policy choices.

In Oct 2019, responding to the Egyptian threats to resort to military options following the failure of negotiations, the PM Abiy Ahmed threatened to mobilize millions of Ethiopians to fight over the GERD. Ahmed warned, "If there is a need to go to war, we could get millions ready. If some could fire a missile, others could use bombs. But that is not in the best interest of all of us." (Al-Tawy, 2019). Indeed, this is not a threat to violization, yet it could be considered a deterrence policy, which leaders generally adopt to prevent other states from resorting to military options. The phrase "That is not in the best interest of us" reassures that Ahmed wanted to keep the military option away rather than the violization of the issue. Ahmed affirmed in another declaration, "We are capable of self-defense, but war is not a solution."

Another example of the intentional approach of the Ethiopian government to de-securitize the issue is that Ahmed pledged not to engage in any hostile ultimatum, reacting to Trump's threats of the possibility of Egypt's bombing the GERD. The Presidential Office announced in Oct 2020, "Nonetheless, occasional statements of belligerent threats to have Ethiopia succumb to unfair terms still abound" and "There are two facts that the world has certified. The first is that no one has lived in peace after provoking Ethiopia. The second is if Ethiopians stand united for one purpose, it is inevitable, they will triumph" (AFP, 2020b). These phrases denote that the Ethiopian government wanted to de-legitimize the use of force and de-securitize the GERD dispute by depicting the mere threats to use force as endangering the peace and stability of the whole region. Ahmed further used the deterrence policy

to persuade the international audience that the war decision would be a disaster for those who decided to launch the war, not for Ethiopia.

Similarly, Ethiopia wanted to justify its blatant rejection of the international mediation to engage in the tripartite negotiation by stressing two significant points in its discourse regarding the GERD. First, engaging the international powers in mediation intensifies the dispute and threatens the peace of both international security and stability. Ethiopia used this as a counterstrategy against securitizing moves exerted by Egypt and Ethiopia. The referential objects of those securitizing moves were the security and stability at both regional and international levels and the negotiations' success. After an Egyptian call for international mediation after the tripartite negotiations reached a stalemate in Oct 2019, the Minister of Water, Irrigation, and Electricity Seleshi Bekele instantly declined the call by saying, "Why do we need new partners? Do we want to extend [the negotiations] indefinitely?" (El-Bey, 2019a). With this phrase, Seleshi portrayed the intervention of international mediators in the negotiation process as a guarantee of prolonging the negotiations infinitely. Thus, it would ensure the inevitable failure of the negotiations. Ethiopia wanted to indirectly show to the international audience that the internationalization of the issue would lead to an *impasse*, which downstream countries are trying to avoid, as they say.

In May 2021, Ethiopian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ambassador Dina Mufti said that engaging the U.S.A. or the E.U. in the negotiations "will not be helpful" and "Ethiopia is committed to applying the motto of 'African solutions to African problems,' for the GERD negotiations" (Getachew, 2021). Again, Ethiopia reaffirms the unnecessary of internationalizing the issue. However, the government has accepted a regional mediator, the A.U. Therefore, the Government used these phrases to refute Egypt and Sudan's repeated accusations regarding Ethiopia's refusal to mediate. Thus, Ethiopia legitimizes its position of rejecting more mediators. Also, in Jul 2021, The Foreign Minister Demeke Mekonnen asserted that

"the unnecessary politicization and internationalization of the matter would contribute nothing but drag the negotiation process" (Sudan Tribune, 2021). Anew, Ethiopia portrayed internationalization and securitization as not a solution but rather a complication that will cause the protraction of the negotiation process.

Secondly, through discourse, Ethiopia leaned towards depicting the international mediation as biased to Egypt, mentioning the American experience, their threats to Ethiopia, and the prevention of Ethiopia from its financial aid. Ethiopia recurrently laid the blame on the USA for being biased. In Nov 2019, during the four-negotiation-rounds, Seleshi Bekele said, "We call upon the observers from the U.S. government and the World Bank to remain neutral in the course of the negotiations" (Tessema, 2019). The phrase "remain neutral" gives a message to the international audience that the Ethiopian rejection of international mediation is reasonable because they are biased toward the Egyptian narrative regarding the GERD. Again, in Feb 2020, reacting to the American statement that called for Ethiopia not to start the GERD filing before reaching a tripartite agreement, Ethiopia described it as "undiplomatic." The Foreign Minister Andargachew Gedu, said, "It is a big, big country in its diplomatic and other influence, and we do not expect from them such an undiplomatic statement." The FM further, in March 2020, described the statement as "an undiplomatic statement," stressing that it was "unacceptable" by the Ethiopian government (Getachew, 2020b). Over and above, in March 2021, responding to the Sudanese call for a quadripartite meditation, in statements to Ethiopian News agency, Ethiopian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Dina Mufti said, "The role of mediators is facilitating the talks, not spoon-feeding the process" (El-Gundy, 2021). The phrase "not spoon-feeding the process" denotes that Ethiopia portrays the intervention of the USA, the EU, and the World Bank, for whom Sudan asked, as "spoon-feeding" in the negotiations. The phrase "spoon-feeding" signals that these third parties never tend to facilitate the talks but presumptively intervene and dictate the terms of the agreements to the negotiation teams. This, afresh, supports the Ethiopian claims for the biased role played by third parties, legitimate

the Ethiopian disavowal of the international mediation against the Egyptian and the Sudanese narratives. Therefore, this facilitates the de-internationalization and de-securitization of the GERD dispute.

Indeed, The Ethiopian discourse surrounding the GERD was inundated by a legitimization strategy through emotions and altruism by which the Ethiopian government was proclive to show its acts as legitimate and good while downplaying those of Egypt and Sudan. In other words, it legitimized its unilateral acts by redirecting criticism to other parties. That is why Ethiopia has elaborately incorporated its total rejection of the 1959 Agreement into its de-securitization strategy regarding the GERD issue. In Apr 2020, The Ethiopian Water and Energy Minister Seleshi Bekele and one of the Ethiopian chief negotiators in the GERD negotiations accused Egypt of recurrently attempting to infringe on the Ethiopian natural rights to use the Nile water. Bekele said Egypt is always "trying to deny Ethiopia's right to utilize the waters of Nile." He added, "The Egyptians determinedly wanted to impose on us the colonial-era agreements" (Tessema, 2020 and Ares, 2020). Ethiopia positioned itself as the victim subjected to unfair scrutiny by Egypt during the negotiations. The phrase "colonial-era agreements" was used to de-legitimize the Egyptian-claimed rights over the Nile water and thus legitimize the Ethiopian stance and acts. The word "colonial" always reflects the injustices that were perpetrated by the most potent power over the weak powers, which is Ethiopia in this case. In May 2020, Gedu Andargachew said, "Ethiopia does not have a legal obligation to seek approval of Egypt to fill the dam," Gedu said. "Ethiopia has made extraordinary efforts to accommodate Egypt's unending demands and unpredictable behavior". (Monitor, 2020d). Gedu's statements denote that despite the exceptional efforts exerted by Ethiopia regarding the negotiations, Egypt has been making persistent demands, which Ethiopia perceives as unacceptable. This statement blames the failure of the negotiations on Egypt, accusing it of hindering the progress of the tripartite talks. In Jun 2020, following the Egyptian and Sudanese complaints to the UNSC about Ethiopia's "unilateral acts" regarding the GERD, the Ethiopian

FM Gedu Andargachew charged Egypt with being the uncooperative part. Gedu underscored, "any negotiations which could deny Ethiopia's right on fair utilization of Nile or any future plans to construct other projects is totally unacceptable." (Ahram Online, 2020). The last phrase again contains diverting criticism through which Ethiopia aimed to redirect the same accusation of being "unilateral" and "unfair" to Egypt. Gedu further accused Egypt of preaching the DoP agreement by resorting to the UN while continuing the negotiation with Ethiopia.

Egypt repeatedly charged Ethiopia with using the negotiations to "buy time" for the dam without a genuine intention for regional collaboration. Here, Ethiopia diverted to Egypt the same criticism by which Egypt blamed Ethiopia afresh. Responding to the accusations of the downstream countries about the Ethiopian unilateral decision being a breach of the DoP agreement, Seleshi affirmed the opposite. In Feb 2021, he said that the DoP "articulates that the filling will happen while the dam construction continues." The Water, Irrigation and Energy Minister Bekele added, "Filling of the dam is part of the construction" (Monitor, 2021a). The Ethiopian Government wanted to disseminate that the filling of the GERD had already been agreed upon by default when the three nations signed the DoP and agreed on the dam's construction.

Ethiopia also interwoven the altruism legitimizing strategy when discussing Sudan during this phase due to the Sudanese policy shift the researcher showed in the previous part. In Feb 2021, The Water, Irrigation and Energy Minister Sileshi blamed Sudan for the failure of the negotiation when Sudan called for a quadripartite mediation as a condition to resume the tripartite negotiation by saying, "Unfortunately, Sudan disrupted the process 7 times in 7 months." However, he reiterated that Ethiopia acted in "good faith means" contrary to Sudan and Egypt, which attempted to "bring unnecessarily complicated issues beyond GERD" and "Ethiopia has been insisting on continuing the negotiation to solve the issues since

we came to the AU platform" to refute Sudan's accusations of Ethiopia's complete rejection of mediation (Embassy of Ethiopia, 2021).

In addition, in April 2021, the Ethiopian FM further charged Egypt and Sudan of subverting "the AU-led process and taking the matter out of the African platform" though they sought to internationalize the GERD issue. The Ethiopian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Ambassador Dina Mufti denounced the Sudanese and Egyptian attempts to internationalize the issue, saying it is "only furthering a third-party agenda." However, he stayed silent on that third party he referred to in his speech. Over and above, Ethiopia doubted the Sudanese securitizing moves to the GERD dispute, saying that was why Sudan suddenly opposed the GERD following years of "lauding" it. (Getachew, 2021). In Apr 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a message posted on Twitter, "For years Sudan's officials have been lauding GERD's importance to deter flooding, regulate water flow for irrigation, remove a huge chunk of silt and sedimentation & provide cheap energy. How will the interest of Sudanese people be served by rejecting the filling of the dam?" The Ministry also accused Egypt of failing to recognize Ethiopia's "generosity and understanding" (Monitor, 2021d; MFA Ethiopia, 2021). These phrases targeted the conspiracy theory that Ethiopia tried to legitimate in this phase by depicting that the Sudanese concerns about the GERD are nothing but a political tool to serve a "third agenda." The FM Dina Mufti elaborated, praising Ethiopia for its "generosity and understanding to negotiate in good faith" which the downstream countries overlooked. He said, "There is no experience to compare with Ethiopia, which invited its downstream riparian nations to negotiate on its hydroelectric generating dam on a river it originates from its lands" and "Egypt failed to recognize Ethiopia's generosity and understanding to negotiate in good faith." Mufti further denounced the efforts of Egypt and Sudan to take the GERD dispute to the UNSC, describing their efforts as "eroding trust" between the three parties. It should be noted that both Egypt and Sudan denounced the Ethiopian approach to dealing with GERD several times, depicting it as diminishing mutual trust among the parties.

In Apr 2021, upon the Egyptian and Sudanese calls for international mediation, Ambassador Dina Mufti described these calls as an attempt by the two states to "maintain the unjust status quo and foreclose Ethiopia's water use upstream of the GERD" (Sudan Tribune, 2021). The phrase "unjust *status quo*" portrays Ethiopia as a country that was deprived of its water rights for many years while depicting Egypt and Sudan as maintainers of an inequitable establishment. This was done to delegitimize the Egyptian and Sudanese calls for conserving their historical water rights. Thus, Ethiopia suggests that all their calls to the international community against Ethiopia stem from their will to conserve the *status quo* for their interests. These statements show how Ethiopia used the discourse as a counter-hegemonic strategy to legitimate its stance on the GERD and de-securitize the GERD dispute for its interests. Shortly, Ethiopia wanted to prove to the international community that all the Egyptian accusations against Ethiopia and their concerns regarding the GERD were untrue. Therefore, the geopolitical securitization of the GERD by Egypt is done to perpetuate Egypt's hegemony over the Nile while depriving other countries of their rights to build a water infrastructure there.

6.3.5.2 Securitizing moves

Although the mainstream Ethiopian discourse adopted a de-securitization strategy to the dispute, there also exist some securitizing moves. The first referential object they stressed is the sustainable economic development of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government tended to securitize the GERD by posing the dam's demise or destruction as threatening Ethiopia's economic growth and sustainable development. In Mar 2020, Foreign Affairs Minister Gedu Andargachew said, "Ethiopia has full rights to its own natural resources to extricate citizens out of poverty" (El-Bey, 2020). This portrays GERD as a sanctuary for the Ethiopians, elevating them from the quagmire of poverty.

Over the past three decades, the three main Ethiopian ethnic groups (Tigrians, Amharas, and Oromo) have tried to strengthen their power over minorities in their regions, marginalizing millions of Ethiopians. High rates of poverty, increasing acts of violence, and political and economic marginalization of different ethnicities contributed to the disintegration of the state in the absence of a general sense of a solid national identity around which Ethiopians could unite, regardless of different ethnicities, nationalities, and religions.

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government attempted to build a state and form a solid national identity by converting the government to a federal one. This ensures that different ethnicities, religions, and nationalities obtain their economic and political rights by weakening the center's power and strengthening the federations. However, conflicts did not stop under federal rule, and the tendency among many Ethiopian ethnic groups to secede from the state increased. Therefore, the Ethiopian government took development as a solution to ensure the unity of the state and shape its new identity around achieving economic achievements that all Ethiopians share.

Indeed, the Renaissance Dam was at the forefront of these projects as a catalyst for building the Ethiopian nation by reducing poverty and raising levels of well-being. It was announced as not just an economic development project but a symbol of national unity and the sovereignty of the Ethiopian state. The Ethiopian state followed a financing model for building the dam that enables all Ethiopian citizens to contribute to the GERD's completion, constituting a sense of national solidarity and thus significantly enhancing the nation-building process.

Celebrating the dam's fourth anniversary, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom said the GERD is a "symbol of racial harmony" (Liyew, 2022). Moreover, in April 2021, Ethiopia's President Sahle-Work Zewde said, "The Renaissance Dam is a historic property of Ethiopians that is established [and] that is built by [them]"

sharing their wealth, time, work and knowledge." (Kandil, 2021c). Both Adhanom and Zwede tended to build up a sense of social solidarity based on the fact that it was mostly built by the financial contributions of the Ethiopians for the Ethiopians. Persuading the national audience that they have succeeded in achieving a tremendous and paramount national project such as the GERD enhances the sense of social cohesion and national unity. Along with the securitizing moves of the GERD discourse, the Ethiopian government applied other types of securitizations. Infrastructure securitization was one of them. In Jun 2020, The Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority banned all flights over the GERD. "All flights have been banned to secure the dam," the head of its civil aviation authority said.

6.4 Future of the Conflict

The GERD dispute among Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia has persisted for over a decade and has been characterized by failed negotiations and deep-seated disagreements. At its core, the crisis concerns that the GERD could diminish the Nile River's water flow, impacting Egypt and Sudan's historical water shares. Both countries already face water scarcity issues, with Egypt particularly vulnerable to potential exacerbation of its water shortage crisis. Egypt has historically anchored its stance on the Nile Water Agreements of 1929 and 1959. The 1929 agreement stipulates that no energy or irrigation projects can be constructed on the Nile's branches without Egypt's prior consent, while the 1959 agreement assigns Egypt an annual allocation of 55.5 billion cubic meters of Nile water. In contrast, Ethiopia argues that the GERD is crucial for its economic development and sustainability, denying any intention to harm downstream countries during the dam's construction and filling phases. A significant point of contention remains the timeline for filling the dam. Egypt and Sudan advocate for a longer filling period to mitigate potential reductions in their Nile water shares. Despite multiple rounds of negotiations mediated by entities such as the African Union and the United States, Countries could not reach a consensus regarding the GERD. Looking ahead, the immediate

challenges surrounding the GERD's filling, and construction are compounded by longer-term concerns exacerbated by climate change. Climate-induced water shortages and agricultural land desertification threaten to reduce water levels reaching Egypt's High Dam Lake, thereby impacting hydroelectric energy production. Thus, the GERD dam crisis is closely intertwined with both Sudan's and Egypt's national security concerns, posing significant threats to its water, food, and energy security, particularly worsened by the detrimental effects of climate change.

Four prospective scenarios are proposed regarding the future trajectory of the conflict. The first scenario involves returning to diplomatic negotiations to resolve the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) crisis between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia. Historically, Egypt has sought mediation from external parties, including the United States, to facilitate agreements. Under the Trump administration, the US mediated negotiations to reach a mutually acceptable agreement, which Ethiopia ultimately refused to sign. This led to accusations from Trump of Ethiopia acting in bad faith and resulted in the suspension of US aid to Ethiopia amounting to \$130 million as a punitive measure. However, the Biden administration has adopted a more neutral and diplomatic stance, rescinding Trump-era sanctions related to the dam dispute. Despite these diplomatic efforts, tensions persist between the Biden administration and the Abiy Ahmed government due to concerns over human rights abuses in Ethiopia's Tigray region. This could potentially lead to further sanctions against Ethiopia, significantly complicating US mediation efforts in the GERD crisis. Moreover, Ethiopia has resisted accepting American mediation again, citing perceived bias and asserting its sovereignty over internal matters, including the GERD project. According to the Declaration of Principles Agreement signed in 2015, mediation can only proceed if all three parties agree. This underscores the crucial role of mutual consent in external mediation efforts. While the US has supported Egyptian water security and encouraged diplomatic solutions during bilateral meetings with Egyptian officials, it has not actively facilitated negotiations between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia. The United States has also endorsed the

African Union (AU) as the most appropriate mediator for the GERD dispute, given previous failed attempts at mediation by countries like Congo and Algeria under AU auspices. Despite AU involvement, Ethiopia's reluctance to disclose comprehensive information about the dam's operations and potential impacts has raised concerns in Cairo and Khartoum, further complicating diplomatic efforts to achieve a comprehensive and mutually beneficial agreement.

The second scenario involves resorting to international law and the principle of international legality. In the context of the GERD dispute, Egypt has resorted to international legal avenues, mainly through the UNSC, to address its concerns regarding Ethiopia's unilateral actions. Egypt and Sudan lodged many complaints citing Ethiopia's commencement of dam filling without agreement from downstream countries, which it views as a violation of the principles of international law governing transboundary rivers. These principles emphasize the obligation of upstream countries to avoid causing harm to downstream nations' water rights. Despite both Sudan's and Egypt's appeals to the Security Council to enforce negotiations and address the issue diplomatically, Ethiopia did not comply, leading to a stalemate. The Security Council, backed by major powers including the United States, China, Russia, and France, asserted that the African Union (AU) is better suited to mediate the dispute among Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia. Egypt and Sudan initially could have invoked earlier Nile water agreements from 1929 and 1959, which granted Egypt veto power over projects on the Nile. However, Egypt relinquished this right with the 2015 Renaissance Dam Declaration, allowing Ethiopia to proceed with the dam's construction and filling. Moving forward, Egypt may consider leveraging the "principle of not causing significant harm" from the Declaration of Principles Agreement, which mandates collaborative efforts to mitigate any adverse impacts caused by the dam. This could involve international legal action against Ethiopia, though proving significant harm and negotiating compensation could be protracted and challenging without clear evidence of damages. In brief, Egypt's pursuit of international legal recourse underscores the

complexities of resolving transboundary water disputes through diplomatic channels, highlighting the tensions between upstream development rights and downstream water security concerns in the Nile basin.

The third scenario involves the consideration of military options as a potential solution to the GERD dispute by Egypt. Former US President Trump initially raised the idea of military action during a phone call with Sudanese President Hamdok in October 2020, where he expressed concerns over the situation and speculated on the possibility of Egypt taking drastic measures, including the destruction of the dam. Subsequently, Egypt and Sudan conducted joint military air maneuvers named "Nile Eagles 1," marking a significant military collaboration between the two nations. Egypt also entered into military cooperation agreements with Burundi, Uganda, and Sudan focused on training and border security, further indicating its strategic preparations. Despite these military posturings, Egyptian statements regarding the GERD issue have oscillated between warning tones and diplomatic overtures. Cairo has consistently emphasized its commitment to the 2015 Declaration of Principles regarding the dam and the importance of negotiation to achieve a fair resolution. Egyptian officials, including President Al-Sisi and the Foreign Minister, have reiterated the preference to avoid armed conflict and seek a binding agreement that addresses concerns while supporting Ethiopia's development. However, the prospect of Egypt resorting to military action against Ethiopia is fraught with significant practical and geopolitical challenges. While Egypt holds military superiority over Ethiopia, the lack of a direct land border necessitates air attacks that would require Sudan's airspace approval. Given the ongoing internal conflict in Sudan, exacerbated by external involvement such as support from the UAE, it appears highly unlikely that Sudan would support or engage in military options at this time. This is mainly influenced by the current Sudanese leadership's alignment with Ethiopia over Egypt, contrasting with elements of the Sudanese military supporting Egypt. However, the Sudanese military is deeply engaged in efforts to stabilize the country internally and restore governance. Furthermore, considering

the severe repercussions of the internal conflict in Sudan, it seems improbable that Sudan would pursue military confrontations with Ethiopia. This complicates any immediate military decision, as Egypt cannot unilaterally launch an attack without Sudan's consent, potentially leading to a complex and volatile situation. Adding to the complexity, Ethiopia's possession of advanced air defense systems, including Russian and Israeli technologies, presents a significant obstacle to any aerial attack. Ethiopia possesses the Israeli air defense system known as "Spider," which can launch two surface-to-air missiles. The system also features a surveillance radar capable of tracking 500 targets simultaneously (Saab, 2021). As the upstream country, Ethiopia also holds the strategic advantage of potentially disrupting the Nile's flow downstream, impacting Egypt and Sudan's water supply and quality, further complicating the military strategy. Moreover, Similarly, Egypt would need bombs equivalent in power to a "nuclear bomb" to demolish the dam. Since Cairo does not possess such bombs, it may only be able to destroy a relatively small part of the dam, which could slow down construction or delay the anticipated filling operations. However, it could not demolish the entire dam (Anadolu Agency, 2020T). Egypt's lack of capability to destroy the GERD without significant international support, possibly from superpowers like Russia or the United States, is crucial. However, current international diplomatic inclinations, particularly with the Biden administration's preference for diplomacy over military solutions, suggest limited external backing for military actions against Ethiopia, highlighting the need for strategic alliances. If Donald Trump returns to office following the next American presidential elections, there could be a shift in the approach toward supporting military options in the GERD crisis. However, given America's current involvement in the Israeli conflict in Gaza, pursuing military solutions is not advisable. This approach aims to prevent further escalation of conflicts in the already volatile Middle East and North Africa regions, thereby safeguarding American interests. Over and above, Egypt faces economic challenges and political instability internally, making a prolonged military engagement financially burdensome and potentially destabilizing. Sudan's internal political dynamics also

constrain its ability to provide substantial military support beyond existing cooperation agreements focused on training. While military options have been contemplated and preparations made, Egypt's approach to the GERD crisis remains cautious, emphasizing diplomatic efforts and negotiation while considering the complex regional and international ramifications of any military escalation.

The fourth scenario envisions cooperation among Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia, centered on fostering integrated and sustainable economic development. This cooperation would be motivated by the shared recognition of potential climate change impacts on the Nile basin countries. The scenario proposes reaching an agreement that compensates Egypt and Sudan for potential damages caused by the GERD. Additionally, it suggests establishing bilateral and trilateral commercial exchange agreements. For instance, Egypt and Sudan could purchase electricity at a reduced cost from Ethiopia in exchange for Ethiopia receiving agricultural products at competitive prices or other commercial benefits. This approach promotes sustainable regional peace and prosperity through enhanced economic integration.

The ongoing political deadlock among Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia will likely continue, with slim chances of resuming negotiations under the African Union's mediation. As previously analyzed, the disadvantages of a military resolution far outweigh any potential advantages for both parties, rendering it improbable that Egypt would opt for such a strategy. Moreover, the diplomatic initiatives pursued by Egypt and Sudan, including bilateral and tripartite negotiations, mediation attempts, and engagements in international platforms like the Security Council to pressure Ethiopia, have proven ineffective thus far. These efforts have yet to yield tangible outcomes or dissuade Ethiopia from progressing with the construction and filling of the dam.

6.5. Trajectories of conflicting parties' relations over the GERD:

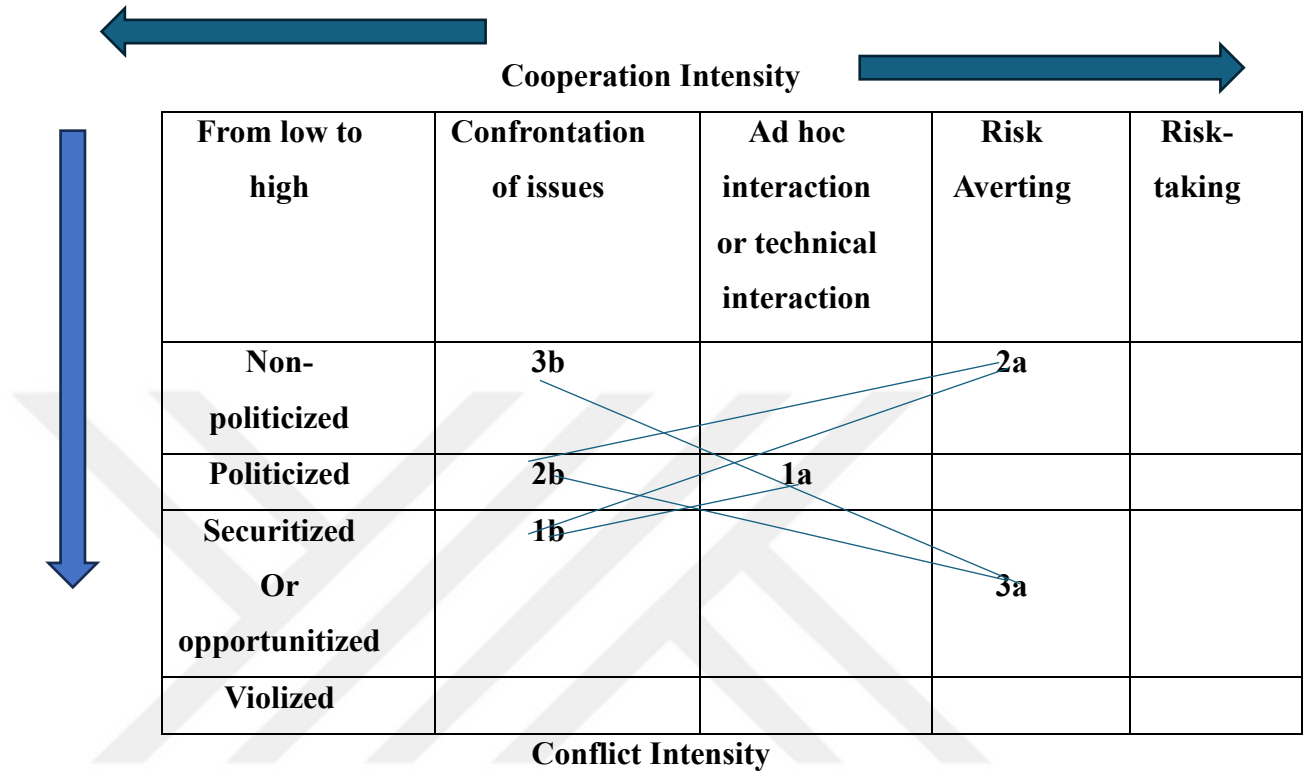
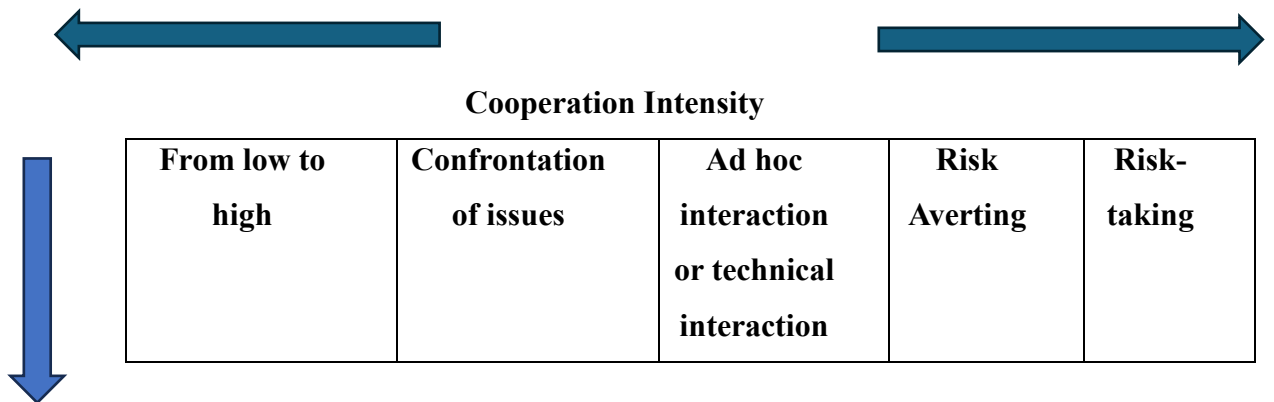


Figure 6.2. Trajectory of Sudan-Egypt relations over the GERD

Notes: 1. First Phase, 2. Second phase, 3. Third phase, 1a. Jan 2013-May 2013, 1b. June 2013-May 2014, 2a. May 2014-Jan 2016, 2b. Jan 2016-Dec 2018, 3a. Oct 2019-Oct 2021 3b. Oct 2021-Oct 2023.



Non-politicized		1a	2a	
Politicized		3b		
Securitized Or opportunitized	3a			
Violized				

Conflict Intensity

Figure 6.3. The trajectory of Sudan-Ethiopia Relations over the GERD

Notes: 1. First phase, 2. Second phase, 3. Third phase, 1a. Jan 2013-May 2014, 2a.

May 2014-Oct 2018, 2b. Jan 2016-Dec 2018, 3a. Oct 2019-Oct 2021 3b. Oct

2021-Oct 2023.

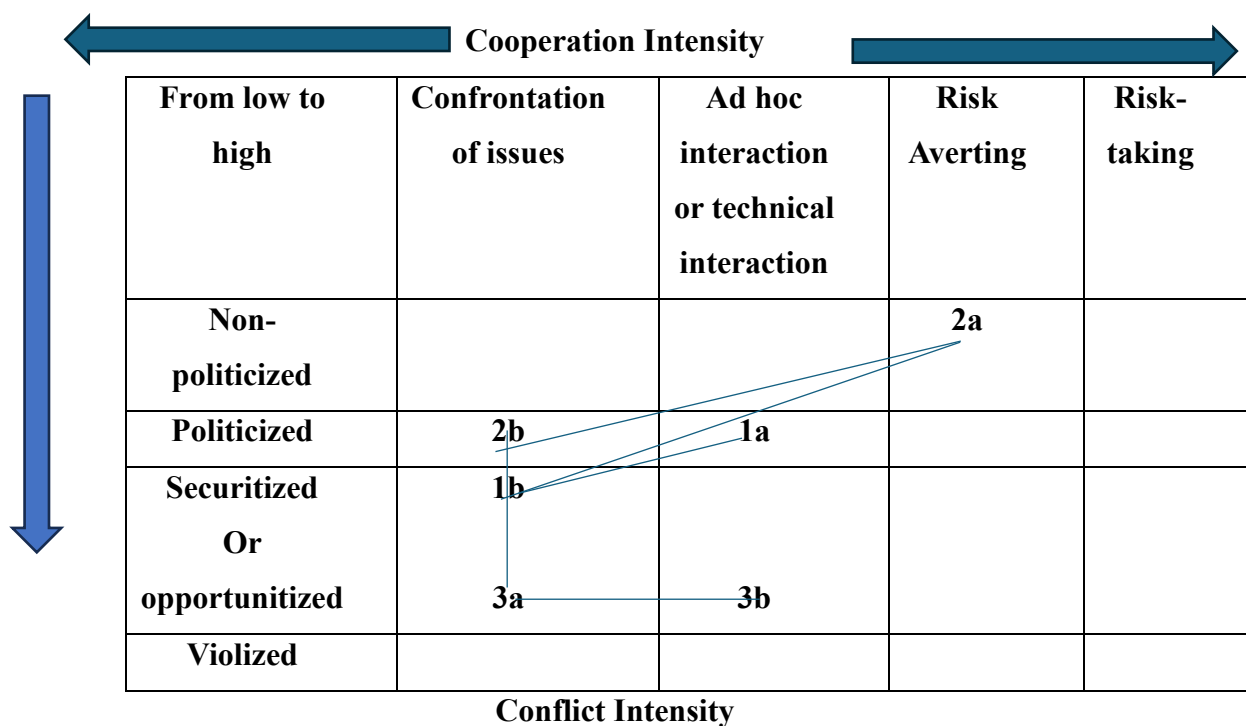


Figure 6.4. The trajectory of Ethiopia-Egypt relations over the GERD

Notes: 1. First Phase, 2. Second Phase, 3. Third phase, 1a. Jan 2013-May 2013, 1b. June 2013-May 2014, 2a. May 2014-Jan2016, 2b. Jan 2016-Oct 2019, 3a. Oct 2019-Oct 2021 3b. Oct 2021-Oct 2023.



7. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The dispute over Nile water resources has deep historical roots. Tensions between Egypt and Ethiopia reached a critical juncture in 2011 following Ethiopia's announcement of the GERD, which is projected to generate 6,000 megawatts of electricity. However, Egypt's focus on internal security amidst the aftermath of the Egyptian Revolution and subsequent political instability delayed comprehensive engagement with the dam issue during its initial announcement. Despite formal negotiations commencing in 2013 and concerted efforts to reach an agreement by 2015, a resolution to the GERD conflict still needs to be achieved. Tensions heightened as Ethiopia persisted in advancing dam construction despite studies highlighting potential adverse economic, political, and hydrological impacts on Egypt and Sudan. The protracted failure of negotiations prompted periods of securitization and de-securitization within a geopolitical framework among the three parties. A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan's discourse on GERD from Jan 2013 to Oct 2023 provides insight into how securitizing actors—presidents, prime ministers, key ministries, ambassadors, and negotiators—shaped and navigated the discourse. This analysis includes official statements that illuminate the complexities of securitization dynamics surrounding GERD, underscoring the nuanced interplay of local, regional, and international factors influencing the conflict's evolution. Using the securitization theory of Buzan et al. (1998) accompanied by Mirumachi & Allan's (2007) analysis approach specified for dealing with the dual nature of conflict in addition to Reyes's (2011) legitimization strategies attributed from the critical discourse analysis theory.

This thesis tries to answer three main research questions, which are crucial in understanding the GERD conflict's evolution, triggers, and future trajectory and exploring potential scenarios for its resolution or escalation: How has the intricate

and multifaceted GERD dispute evolved among Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia? What are the pivotal contextual triggers for the securitization/de-securitization of the GERD discourse, and when and how did they profoundly affect the nature of cooperation and conflict in the region? How will the dynamic and influential geopolitical, environmental, and diplomatic contexts shape the future trajectory of the GERD conflict, offering potential scenarios for its resolution or escalation?

Examining the discourse surrounding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) as constructed by the governments of Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia over the span of 11 years of trilateral negotiations reveals that a straightforward linear progression does not characterize the process of water securitization. Instead, it is influenced by several contextual factors that interact to trigger securitization at particular periods. This conclusion represents a foundational aspect of my thesis. Three distinct phases were identified in the government's GERD discourse, delineated by significant changes that prompted officials to either securitize or de-securitize the discourse on water. During the first phase (from Jan 2013 to May 2014), while Egyptian officials tended to securitize the GERD discourse, the Sudanese and Ethiopian governments mainly tended to de-securitize the GERD issue. During the second phase (from May 2014 to Oct 2019), the mainstream Egyptian, Ethiopian, and Sudanese discourse regarding the GERD demonstrated a de-securitization approach. The third phase (from Oct 2019 to Oct 2023) is characterized by the Egyptian Government's tendency to intensify securitization, especially from Oct 2019 to Oct 2023. On the other hand, the Ethiopian GERD discourse mainly implied a de-securitization approach and small securitizing moves. In contrast, the Sudanese Government approached the issue by conducting intensifying securitizing moves until the UAE.-backed military coup took place in Oct 2019, which brought about an internal war affecting the foreign policy of the country. The adjective "mainly" is deliberately used above to indicate the dominant policy of the governments, and it does not exclude the existence of other policies. For instance, while a government mainly pursues securitization policies, it may also

implement de-securitization policies to a certain extent in the same period. However, it should be noted that “the mainstream was de-securitization.” These phases illustrate the dynamic nature of securitization in the GERD discourse, influenced by the region's evolving political, economic, and environmental factors. In addition, the analysis revealed that policymakers employed various semantic and lexical strategies to portray themselves favorably while depicting their opponents unfavorably. Additionally, there was notable divergence in the selection of legitimization and delegitimization strategies due to varying ideological orientations, policy choices and objectives, and strategic aims. Understanding these phases provides insights into how perceptions of water security can shift in response to changing circumstances and diplomatic efforts aimed at conflict resolution.

The second conclusion of this thesis is about who is responsible for securitizing moves. Buzan et al. (1998) posited that securitization in the environmental sector typically occurs level and is conducted only by officials with direct relevance to the environmental issue. However, the findings of this study challenge this assertion, revealing that high-ranking national officials predominantly orchestrated securitizing moves during the negotiation process.

The third conclusion concerns the crucial roles de-securitization and securitization play in resolving water disputes. According to the experts of the theory, such as Daoudy (2007), Waever (1995), Fröhlich (2012), Leb and Wouters (2013), Froggatt (2013), and Zeitoun et al. (2013), de-securitization plays a crucial role in resolving water disputes by shifting the focus from dealing with the issue as a matter of national security, thus allowing them to cooperate and prioritize mutual interests. However, it is found in this thesis that despite de-securitization being conducted to a more considerable extent towards the GERD issue by all parties in the second phase, it could not resolve the dispute. Although de-securitization mitigated tensions initially, facilitating the resumption of negotiations and signing the DoP agreement, the tensions kept escalating, and even the negotiations stopped entirely

for two years. On the other hand, despite Egypt and Sudan heavily conducting securitization in the third phase targeting internationalization of the dispute, parties engaged in many negotiation rounds seeking to reach a consensus on the GERD.

The fourth conclusion pertains to the dual nature of water conflicts. Consistent with Mirumachi & Allan's (2007) and Craig's (1993, p. 15) debates, analyzing the GERD dispute proved that conflict and cooperation are distinct and independent concepts. In other words, cooperation does not inevitably represent the direct antithesis of conflict. Instead, cooperation and conflict could exist together yet with varying intensity. This indicates that securitization and de-securitization, which denote varying intensities of conflict, may coexist with different intensities of cooperation.

The fifth conclusion examines the effectiveness of cooperation as a means to mitigate and resolve water disputes. Analyzing the GERD dispute verifies what Daoudy & J. Kristin (2008) argue: cooperation may fail to catch up to anticipated levels when resolving water disputes. This further supports Daoud's (2004) argument that calls into question the paths of negotiation and signing agreements as representations of cooperation and one of the ways recommended to resolve water conflicts unless they achieve the goals and interests of all parties. Instead, they not only proved to be ineffective in resolving the GERD dispute but also contributed to the intensification of the conflict. This further ascertains Craig's (1993, p. 15) argument that signing agreements may only sometimes offer accurate portrayals of cooperation. Nonetheless, it does not necessarily promote cooperation or resolve water disputes; The DoP Agreement can be seen as failing to achieve cooperation and resolve the conflict, as it not only legislated the GERD's construction but also allowed Ethiopia to complete construction before reaching a consensus concerning the GERD. The agreement was supposed to set a condition for stopping the dam's construction until the required studies regarding the effects of the dam on the downstream countries were completed. This is to ensure that there are no serious adverse effects, which were confirmed by later studies, as the researcher explained

in the second chapter of the study. Also, Egypt and Sudan should have set a condition that imposes on Ethiopia not to start building the dam until the desired agreement is completed regarding determining the timing of filling the dam and its storage capacity in a way that does not negatively affect the downstream countries and achieves development for the upstream country. In the same manner, the negotiation process of the GERD case confirms Cascão and Zeitoun's (2010) argument. It validates that some forms of cooperation may have a negative impact, contrary to what some people believe, that all forms of cooperation will inevitably lead to resolving the conflict or to joint and sustainable management of water resources. This further substantiates Zeitoun & Warner's (2006, p. 445) argument, assuring that countries' insistence on continuing negotiations on the condition that their preferential position is not harmed or in a way that does not meet the interests of both parties obstructs the negotiations. Also, the failure of one of the conflicting parties to show flexibility in sharing data and negotiating makes cooperation useless and a reason for exacerbating the conflict between the riparian countries.

The sixth conclusion addresses the reasons behind the failure of cooperation among Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia. A profound investigation into the reasons behind the failure of cooperation and the recurrent stalemate of the negotiations, despite the party's insistence on solving the issue through dialogue and signing a binding agreement, has been done to provide a comprehensive understanding. First, increasing bilateral disagreements between Egypt and Ethiopia and between Egypt and Sudan in the second phase have contributed to the continuous failure of cooperation. Second, the parties are unwilling to compromise some of their interests to achieve a win-win situation. Thirdly, low mutual trust between conflicting parties results from low transparency and integrity in exchanging information. Fourthly, despite the near absence of securitization on the national level, the media made some securitizing moves at the local level. Although they were conducted to serve specific internal political purposes, their impact extended on a broader scale. Most importantly, the international and regional support for one party over the other to

serve broader geopolitical interests created an asymmetrical situation that undermined the willingness of the supported party to pursue benefit-sharing scenarios. This further proves that Nasr and Neef (2016) argue that power relations are not inherently static and stable. Rather, they undergo constant flux. This thorough investigation reassures the audience about the depth of the study and the researcher's commitment to revealing the root causes contributing to the conflict.

The seventh conclusion relates to the possibility of non-western and non-democratic regimes to conduct hydro-securitization and the reasons behind this policy choice. Furthermore, per Fischhendler and Nathan's (2013) argument, analyzing the GERD dispute showed that the securitization of water discourse is not static but dynamic, evolving in response to varying contexts. Contrary to what scholars claim, non-democratic countries never securitize water issues; the GERD case proved the exact opposite. Investigating the construction of the GERD discourse proved what Cote (2016) and Manon (2018) highlighted in their studies investigating Securitization in non-democratic countries. They claimed that securitization is embedded into a broader security narrative, existing alongside various speech acts that pursue different objectives beyond justifying the use of exceptional measures such as those assumed by Buzan et al. (1998) and what the Copenhagen school proposes. Furthermore, this validates Holm's (2003) claim, which assumes that despite the non-democratic countries' fear of Securitization to avoid inciting large-scale protests, they might securitize some issues to legitimize exceptional political decisions such as signing the DoP. The researcher also found that non-democratic regimes may conduct some cautious securitizing moves to challenge the discourse of the opposition against the government. Over and above, securitization was used to avoid triggering already-existent national demonstrations by linking them to the rise of the crisis, such as what the Egyptian government did when they linked the breakup of the Egyptian revolution and the Ethiopian decision to start the construction of the GERD during the second phase. They attempted to influence the audience not to engage in protests to avoid more significant crises and catastrophes.

In short, the government portrayed demonstrations as a tool to trigger crises that endanger the stability and security of the country.

The eighth conclusion concerns the contextual factors triggering hydro-securitization. Despite the combination of all the contextual drivers of securitization in the GERD dispute case study, the parties only resort to securitization in specific cases and not all the time. These contextual triggers that apply to the GERD case study include the contexts claimed by Fischhendler and Nathan (2013), Fischhendler (2015), Daoudi (2009) and Daoudi (2007) in their studies. These factors include Water scarcity, human vulnerability to natural disasters such as floods, human needs such as food security and human health, Sustainable development, a catastrophic event, an undiversified economy, and power asymmetry. Among many contextual triggers for securitization, the occurrence of a catastrophic event and power asymmetry proved to be the most influential contextual triggers for geopolitical securitization of water discourse. For instance, two catastrophic events were the main trigger behind securitization for the GERD issue in the first phase. The first event was the unilateral decision of Ethiopia to divert the Nile River bid as it built the GERD in May 2013. The second event was the Egyptian presidential meeting, which brought different Egyptian political party leaders together with the President to discuss the GERD issue. Furthermore, the researcher found that international support, financial mobilization, and geopolitical factors tend to foster the position of the riparian country as it provides the riparian country with a competitive edge. Such support is given to the weaker party; it will lean toward the securitization and opportunitization of the GERD issue, such as what happened with the Egyptian when it secured the support of the Trump administration and the Sudanese party to their claims. To give another example from the research on the impact of asymmetrical power relations on the discourse, Ethiopia's de-securitization approach in the first and second phases confirms what Zeitoun & Warner (2006, p. 445) argued regarding the impact of power relations on the way policymakers deal with water issues. They claimed that strong countries or

hydro hegemon typically tend to securitize water issues to control water resources. However, weaker countries, which are non-hegemonic riparian states, tend to de-securitize water issues and favor negotiations to enhance cooperation. During this phase, Ethiopia was the weakest party. Although Ethiopia is an upper-stream country, which puts it in a preferable position, Egypt still holds the hegemonic position in the Nile basin during this phase. As long as the construction of the dam is not completed, the situation will be in favor of the traditional hegemon, which is Egypt in this case.

The ninth conclusion of this thesis relates to the essential role of opportunitization in intensifying water disputes. Investigating GERD case proved Zeitoun's (2007) presumption that countries may tend to seek opportunitization in water disputes. Indeed, opportunitization might be considered a sort of securitization, yet it does not aim to legitimize taking exceptional measures. However, they seek to benefit from changing circumstances, such as political shifts, to enhance their interests and achieve strategic goals or to enhance their position in the negotiations. For instance, Ethiopia opportunitized from the Egyptian 2011 revolution to declare the construction of the GERD; it further sought to opportunitize from the political instability in Egypt before the 2013 coup to declare the diversion of the river bid to start the construction. It further exploited the opportunity for political change in Egypt and the ideological differences between Egypt and Sudan after the coup to enhance relations with Sudan in favor of the GERD. Opportunitizing from the excessive need of Sisi's regime to secure regime stability, the fall of Egyptian influence in the region, and the rise of Emirati influence, Ethiopia sought to achieve the UAE-sponsored DoP agreement. Ethiopia further exploited the opportunity of existent contentions between the international consultancy companies to continue the construction of the GERD without waiting for the impact studies to be released. On the other hand, opportunitizing from the political change in Sudan in 2019, the rise of rivalry between China and the USA over the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa, and the internal instability in Ethiopia, both Egypt and Sudan sought the

internationalization of the GERD dispute to exert pressure on Ethiopia. In conflict with Mohyeldeen's (2021) and Mehari's (2020) arguments and Consistent with Lawson's (2017) argument, the researcher validates that the intervention of third parties, whether it is countries such as the USA or international organizations such as the AU proved to be ineffective. It further contributed to raising the intricacy of the conflict and increasing the risk of it evolving into a violent conflict rather than promoting preventive diplomacy and enhancing cooperation. Over and above, the GERD dispute confirms the significance of the international audience, including major powers, neighbors, and international donors, especially regarding water securitization in non-democratic states, as the GERD case demonstrated that it is more critical than confining the success of securitization to the acceptance of the domestic audience. This also shows how geopolitical rivalry in a region may add a geopolitical dimension to a regional dispute, which may be about a severe change in power relations, creating an asymmetrical power relationship that encourages the securitization and opportunitization of the water dispute. In short, this further confirms Daoudi's (2009) study which concludes that power asymmetries have influenced upstream and downstream interactions, leading to bilateral or even basin-wide arrangements. The GERD case study demonstrates that traditional power elements, such as upstream positions and military or economic resources, are not the sole determinants of power. Instead, bargaining power plays a critical role in shaping dynamics among riparian states. Additionally, time emerges as a significant source of power, with interests evolving as political and security contexts change. Downstream or more vulnerable riparians can leverage their position to counteract power asymmetries, thereby impacting the dominant riparian's interests and limiting its alternatives.

The last conclusion concerns the future of the GERD conflict. The political stalemate among Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia is expected to endure, with little likelihood of renewed negotiations mediated by the African Union. Moreover, as previously discussed, the disadvantages of pursuing a military solution outweigh

any potential benefits for both sides, making it unlikely that Egypt would pursue such a course of action. Additionally, diplomatic efforts undertaken by Egypt and Sudan—through bilateral and tripartite negotiations, mediation attempts, and engagements in international forums such as the UNSC to pressure Ethiopia—have thus far failed to yield concrete results or deter Ethiopia from proceeding with the construction and filling of the dam.

In summary, this thesis contributes to literature by closing many research gaps. First of all, this thesis responds to the gap posed by Fischhendler and Nathan (2013) regarding the need for more research to be conducted to explore the drivers of securitization of security discourse, as well as more studies that reveal the effects of securitization on the potential for cooperation between riparian states. Similarly, it closes the research gap Fischhendler (2015) posited regarding water conflict studies. He stated that academia requires researchers to study the long-term and short-term effects of water securitization discourse. It further responds to the gap in the literature regarding conducting securitization studies in non-democratic countries, as it has been overlooked by the Copenhagen School of Securitization, which focuses only on democratic countries in its arguments. It further fills a gap in the securitization theory, which claims that the audience is an integral part of the success of securitization. However, it fails to explain how securitizing actors attempt to influence the public to achieve securitization successfully. The researcher, for the first time in academia, used the securitization theory of Buzan et al. (1998) accompanied by Mirumachi & Allan's (2007) analysis approach specified for dealing with the dual nature of conflict in addition to Reyes's (2011) legitimization strategies attributed from the critical discourse analysis theory. Through this combination, the researcher demonstrated how policymakers legitimize their political choices and delegitimize those of other parties. The thesis further closes a gap posited by Zeitoun and Warner (2010), who argued that more research must be conducted to understand how contextual factors affect water conflicts. The proposed contextual factors were as follows: water scarcity, the outbreak of war in a conflict

zone results in a change in power relations, support by regional countries or international powers, The political timing of negotiations, change in local political scenes, change in political circumstances such as signing a peace treaty or reaching an agreement.

The analysis of the GERD dispute reveals that while securitization did not escalate the Cold conflict into armed confrontation, it did exacerbate tensions. However, the principal driver behind escalation was not solely the securitization of the conflict but rather the impact of geopolitical rivalries on power dynamics among the conflicting parties. The intensification of the dispute stemmed from the convergence of interests among conflicting parties and regional and international stakeholders. Despite concerns about the downstream impacts of GERD—including water scarcity, food insecurity, economic stagnation, population growth, power shortages, economic diversity challenges, climate change-related disasters, and political instability—the potential for conflict persists. Additionally, the fluid nature of power dynamics, as evidenced by upcoming political events such as the American elections or changes in leadership in Egypt, Sudan, or other international actors, could shift the balance and potentially provoke military conflict. Therefore, collaborative efforts are essential to achieving a sustainable resolution to the GERD conflict that considers all risks, including those posed by climate change. While climate change may not be the primary catalyst for this conflict, as demonstrated in the researcher's findings, it has contributed to its intensification. Ultimately, addressing the water scarcity issue in Africa necessitates a holistic approach that goes beyond viewing securitization as the sole trigger for interstate armed conflict, recognizing the broader socioeconomic and environmental complexities at play.

In conclusion, based on these findings, it is evident that there is a compelling need for targeted policy interventions to address the GERD. Therefore, the following policy recommendations are proposed: First, Egypt should shift away from exclusively relying on the 1959 Agreement, which Ethiopia dismisses as a colonial-

era imposition, towards advocating for a fair redistribution of Nile waters among all riparian countries. This should be pursued under the framework of the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (1997), ensuring equitable water rights for all nations involved. Secondly, Recognizing the challenges of halting Ethiopia's dam-filling operations, Egypt should focus on negotiating a comprehensive and binding agreement under the auspices of the African Union. Egypt could propose postponing the filling period to coincide with flood seasons rather than the rainy season, potentially mitigating downstream impacts. International support, including from European institutions, could be sought to facilitate these negotiations, emphasizing the need for compensation for Egypt and Sudan to address anticipated risks. Thirdly, Egypt can leverage regional and international platforms to garner support for its stance on the Renaissance Dam issue. While avoiding military actions, Egypt should highlight the destabilizing consequences of conflict in an already volatile region, which could jeopardize the interests of major global powers. Additionally, Egypt should underscore the implications of climate change, emphasizing how the dam exacerbates water scarcity and agricultural desertification, potentially leading to mass migrations to neighboring regions and Europe. Emphasizing the urgency of resolving the crisis collectively while outlining the mutual benefits of a fair and comprehensive agreement will be crucial in garnering international backing. Fourthly, all Nile Basin countries, including the parties to the conflict, must establish committees or joint bodies to manage the Nile water. So that these bodies can facilitate the negotiation processes regarding the Renaissance Dam dispute in the first place. Nevertheless, one of its tasks must be to enhance regional cooperation between the Nile Basin countries by developing comprehensive agreements to manage the Nile waters fairly and sustainably so that it considers the management of crises and disasters resulting from climate change and reducing them to preserve water, food and environmental security for all Nile Basin countries. Fifthly, a regional legal system that guarantees all Nile Basin countries the right to use water somewhat must be developed. It also guarantees the possibility of resorting to

arbitration in water disputes while enforcing those policies and provisions on the parties to the dispute. Sixthly, all parties to the conflict must be transparent in sharing information with other parties and rebuild trust between them to facilitate cooperation. Seventhly, the parties to the conflict must implement a policy or approach to sharing common benefits. The benefit-sharing approach to resolving a water dispute in the Mekong River Basin has been used before. The Mekong River Committee was established, which included the conflicting parties. The committee facilitates the exchange of information and data regarding the dam dispute. Cooperation has also been strengthened among individuals through joint studies, assessments, and strategic water resource management planning. The committee also studies the potential impacts of water infrastructure projects before building them. The committee also conducts assessments of these projects' environmental, social, and economic impacts, preventing adverse impacts. Parties to the GERD dispute can benefit from the experience of the Mekong River dispute. This approach also facilitates cooperation by reducing damage caused by dams and providing practical solutions that achieve all parties' interests. For example, an economic agreement that allows both parties to the conflict to import products from the other party at competitive prices in exchange for waiving part of their water rights could be concluded. Thus, the country reduces its water needs in exchange for importing food at a low price. However, this requires conducting studies and activating diplomatic efforts to ensure continued cooperation. Finally, regarding solving the water scarcity dilemma, the researcher presents some recommendations to the countries under study to help them alleviate the severity of the problem. Both Egypt and Sudan must increase investment in water infrastructure. These funds will be used to renovate wastewater treatment plants and improve water distribution networks and storage facilities, reducing the volume of leakage or evaporated water. Second, countries must invest in technology and encourage water recycling and use. Such as treating wastewater and recycling it to make it suitable for irrigation or drinking again. Countries like Sudan have vast amounts of seasonal rainfall annually. However, they do not get all of it due to the lack of advanced rainwater

collection systems. Therefore, they must invest in the use of advanced rainwater harvesting systems. Third, Egypt and Sudan must encourage the use of so-called gray water. Gray water refers to the water used daily by citizens for bathing or washing dishes, for example. This water has many uses that will help reduce water demand. Countries must spread awareness among citizens to reduce water waste and encourage rationalization of consumption. Countries must form a national committee to supervise coordination between various state sectors to ensure equitable distribution of water resources. These recommendations aim to guide Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia towards a strategic approach that prioritizes diplomatic negotiations, international cooperation, and advocacy for equitable water management while minimizing risks of conflict escalation and addressing broader environmental challenges.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Information

Rahmet Elfikhi

Academic Background

Bachelor's Degree Education: Beykent University, Bachelor's degree in International Relations (EN). (High Honors), (GPA: 3.96 AA).

Post Graduate Education: Master's Degree in Energy and Sustainable Development. (GPA: 3.87 AA). specialized in energy security and geopolitics, climate change and sustainable development.

From September 2022 to June 2023, I pursued a Diploma in Research and Think Tank at Al Sharq Academia in Istanbul, Turkey. This diploma, accredited by the American Accreditation Association, provided a comprehensive education in research methodologies and think tank operations. I graduated summa cum laude with a distinguished score of 96.6%, earning the third position in my graduating class.

Foreign Languages: English — Full Professional proficiency, Arabic — Native, Turkish — Full Professional Proficiency.

Work Experience

KHAS Center for Energy and Sustainable Development (Sep 2022 – May 2023): I began as a long-term intern and later transitioned to a research assistant role at the KHAS Center for Energy and Sustainable Development. During this period, I organized an international

conference for students centered on energy and sustainable development. My responsibilities included editing and proofreading manuscripts from researchers submitted for the conference. In addition, I had the honor of collaboration with Prof. Dr. Volkan Ş Ediger and three more researchers on an academic report titled "Natural Gas Exploitation in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Holistic Approach," which was published by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation.

Justice and Democracy Forum (2018 – 2023): At the Justice and Democracy Forum, I assisted in organizing and reporting on five conferences over several years. This role involved various organizational and reporting tasks, contributing to the smooth execution and documentation of events.

SETA Think Tank (2019): I undertook a long-term internship at SETA Think Tank with a focus on The Politics Today Newspaper & Energy Department. Initially, I worked as a long-term intern at The New Turkey (now Politics Today) for four months, where I handled tasks exclusively in English. I then completed a two-month internship in the Energy Department, where Turkish was the primary language. My responsibilities included compiling reports on breaking national and global news, crafting in-depth news pieces and analyses, developing scripts for YouTube videos, transcribing content from Turkish and English, and conducting literature reviews. I also assisted in coordinating the journal's annual budget and recommended new writers and researchers for analysis and opinion articles. These experiences honed my skills in news reporting, analysis, content creation, and editorial coordination.

Al-Sharq Academia (Jul 2021 – Nov 2021): As a long-term intern at Al-Sharq Academia, I worked part-time focusing on proofreading and coordinating PowerPoint templates for all courses. My role involved ensuring accuracy and consistency in content presentation in Arabic.

Al Masar Studies Think Tank (Aug 2020 – Dec 2021): At the Al Masar Studies Think Tank, I served as a research assistant and a member of the editorial team for the Egyptian reports project “Dafater Masriya.” I contributed by writing monthly political reports on Egyptian affairs for a year and participated as a researcher in a project focused on writing a book about former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, which was published in 2023.

