

EGYPTIAN NEGOTIATIONS ON THE FILLING AND OPERATION OF THE GRAND ETHIOPIAN RENAISSANCE DAM PROJECT

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Abstracts

Egypt is negotiating with Ethiopia regarding the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Nile River. This research employs Negotiation theory combined with the role of power and Transboundary Water Interaction concept to understand the negotiation process Egypt carried out. The research findings show that Egypt, using its power that comprises material, bargaining and ideational power, tries to maintain its hegemony in the region. Egypt succeeded in inviting third parties such as the US, World Bank and UNSC in the negotiation process. Political dynamics in the region and internal instability after the 2011 Egyptian Revolution influenced Egypt's strength in its negotiations with Ethiopia. Thus, the interaction is related to contest and compliance. The development of GERD in Ethiopia is seen as a contest for the hegemonic situation, while Egypt is trying to create compliance with Ethiopia. Egypt seeks to create compliance with the status quo through some mechanisms: coercive, utilitarian, normative, and ideological hegemonic. Although the two countries compete with and obey each other, they still collaborate and negotiate to resolve the GERD problem. The interaction between these two during the negotiation process can be categorized as a neutral interaction with low conflict – low cooperation category.

Mesir melakukan negosiasi dengan Etiopia terkait pembangunan Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) di atas sungai Nil. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori Negosiasi yang digabungkan dengan peran power dan konsep *Transboundary Water Interaction* untuk mengetahui proses negosiasi yang dilakukan Mesir. Hasil temuan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Mesir berupaya mempertahankan hegemoninya di kawasan dengan menggunakan power-nya (*material power, bargaining power, dan ideational power*). Mesir berhasil membawa pihak ketiga seperti AS, Bank Dunia, dan DK PBB ke dalam proses negosiasi. Dinamika politik di kawasan dan ketidakstabilan internal pasca Revolusi Mesir 2011 telah mempengaruhi power Mesir dalam negosiasi dengan Ethiopia. Sehingga interaksi kedua negara di kawasan adalah *contest and compliance* dimana pembangunan GERD oleh Ethiopia dilihat sebagai *contest* situasi hegemoni sedangkan Mesir berusaha untuk menciptakan sebuah *compliance* kepada Ethiopia. Mesir berusaha menciptakan sebuah *compliance* terhadap status quonya melalui mekanisme: *coercive, utilitarian, normative, dan ideological hegemonic*. Meskipun kedua negara melakukan *contest and compliance* tetapi tetap menjalin kerjasama dan negosiasi untuk menyelesaikan permasalahan GERD. Interaksi kedua negara selama proses negosiasi dapat dikategorikan ke dalam interaksi netral dengan kategori *low conflict – low cooperation*.

Keywords: Egypt; Ethiopia; GERD

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Introduction

In the 21st century, the Nile River has been a source of prolonged conflict and political tension between the two main basin countries: Egypt and Ethiopia. Each country has the desire to meet its national demands under limited water resources. Egypt, as a hegemonic state, seeks to maintain its historical rights in the region by securing the available water supply for its growing population. On the one hand, Ethiopia, as the largest contributor to the flow of the Nile from the country's highlands, is trying to increase its share of water to facilitate economic development (Elimam et al. 2008, 3; Turhan 2021, 10). Both countries view the Nile River as a major water resource because recently each country is faced with

important issues such as population growth, industrial and agricultural development, climate change, and water pollution. They put great pressure on the Nile River and make the Nile the main source of water in the area (Yihdego et al. 2020, 276). Competition for fresh water in the Nile increased when Ethiopia announced the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) in 2011. GERD is set to be one of the largest dams in Africa, with a total cost of USD 4.8 billion. The dam is located on the Blue Nile River, near the border between Ethiopia and Sudan. It aims to create a reservoir with a volume of more than 73.8 km³ of water and 6,000 megawatts of electricity. Therefore, this gigantic dam is expected to help transforming the Ethiopian economy through the provision of cheap electricity, irrigation systems, and sustainable storage capacity to protect the country from floods and droughts (Tan et al. 2017, 6).

The unilateral announcement issued by Ethiopia shocked Egypt because the launch of the GERD project occurred in the midst of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Many references state that political alliances are able to influence many things (Wendry et al. 2020, 215). Hence, this adds to the challenge of maintaining the hegemonic position in the region (Salomon & Berlin 2021). For centuries, Egypt has safeguarded its strategic interests in the Nile River through the signing of treaties in the colonial era in 1929 and 1959. The two agreements regulated the rights of Egypt and Sudan regarding the water of the Nile River by stipulating the regulation that imposes 55.5 billion m³ of water per year on Egypt and 18, 5 billion m³ of water per year on Sudan. The agreement also prevents infrastructure projects of upstream basin countries that could potentially threaten the flow of water to downstream countries. These agreements did not only guarantee Egypt and Sudan's share of the Nile waters, but also provided recognition of natural and historic rights in the waters of the Nile (Siraw 2023, 425).

In the midst of the complexity of the Nile River problem, negotiation efforts involving some countries occurred. Intensive meetings and deliberations were held by Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan, the culmination of which was the signing of the agreement on March 23 in 2015 in Khartoum, Sudan. This agreement, named the Declaration of Principles (DoP), was signed by the representatives of each country, with the aim of reducing tensions and increasing cooperation in water sharing. In short, the DoP emphasizes the Nile River as a source of livelihood and

development for the people of the three countries by prioritizing equality in water distribution and use. However, the agreement failed to guarantee Egypt's exclusive rights. Apart from that, Ethiopia also cannot make a commitment not to endanger Egypt's Nile waters after the GERD dam is completed (Mekonnen 2018, 266). Ethiopia continues to intensify its negotiations so that the dam does not harm its historic agreement (Andualem et al. 2021, 102). The debate peaked in 2019 when GERD construction had reached 76 percent and moved on to the reservoir filling stage for a trial dam. In July, 2020, Ethiopia announced that it would start the first phase of filling and starting the operation of GERD. The previous study described how the negotiation over the GERD has not changed the debate about sharing water and benefit of the Eastern Nile. Thus, Egypt needs to adapt their water policies to meet the expectation after GERD era (Tawfik 2016, 574). Kasimbazi affirmed that the outstanding issues to be resolved include drought mitigation, binding agreement, dam safety and dispute resolution (Kasimbazi & Bamwine 2021, 61).

Another previous study gives a different perspective regarding the complexity of cross-border water use, factors that can cause cross-border water conflicts, and efforts to resolve conflicts. Every country needs water resources to meet its strategic needs. These water needs are very diverse, such as domestic needs, cultural practices, food production, industry, energy and navigation. However, available water resources can change over time and space due to climate change and global economic growth, causing water demand to increase and resulting in reduced water supply. Every country that is at a crisis level is starting to secure its water resources. This can then lead to potential conflict because the water they obtain is transnational water that comes into contact with other countries. Petersen-Perlman et al. define transnational water conflict as an act of verbal, economic, or military hostility between stakeholders to compete for available water resources. When a country's interests clash and tend to be expansionist in one river, there is a high possibility that conflict will occur. Water conflicts are more likely to occur between countries whose water security is threatened. Each country will strive to secure available water resources and ensure sustainable access to sufficient water supplies of acceptable quality for the well-being of society, the economy, and the environment. In conclusion, this research explains that every country has the opportunity to cooperate and avoid conflict. To overcome the risk of conflict, the parties can build organizations/institutions or sign joint

agreements. Both of these are successful strategies in resolving and preventing water conflicts. Likewise, the involvement of third parties in conflict resolution efforts can provide three types of intervention fields, namely diplomacy, economics and stakeholders (Petersen-Perlman et al. 2017).

The next article describes the perspectives on GERD in three major basin countries, namely Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan. From Ethiopia's perspective, GERD is considered a symbol of modernity, development, hope and poverty alleviation. The dam, which is the largest hydroelectric project in Africa, will not only meet the country's needs but will also be exported to neighboring countries. This will strengthen Ethiopia's plans to become a middle-income country by 2025. According to the Ethiopian Government, this project will benefit countries in the river basin region. The construction of the GERD has influenced political dynamics in the region and has become a source of controversy between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan. As countries located downstream of the Nile River, Egypt and Sudan are highly dependent on the Nile River for agricultural, industrial and household purposes. Egypt sees GERD as a threat to its water supply. On the one hand, there has been a shift in alignments in Sudan. Sudan, which initially rejected GERD, later accepted the project because it would benefit from GERD (Yihdego et al. 2017).

The last article discusses tripartite dialogue and diplomacy between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan concerning the development of the GERD. Following Ethiopia's unilateral action in launching GERD construction on the Blue Nile in April, 2011, a series of negotiations between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan has taken place. Negotiations were conducted primarily to address concerns surrounding the initial filling and operation of the dam as well as the potential for the dam failure. More specifically, negotiations were conducted to ease Egypt's concerns about its water supply. GERD is described by Egypt as a threat to the national water security. Meanwhile, Sudan approved the construction of GERD because it believed it would gain major benefits from the dam in the form of stable flow of the Nile, electricity and flood control. Various tripartite mechanisms to overcome problems surrounding GERD were then established to increase dialogue and cooperation. Abtew and Dessu highlighted four important diplomatic events carried out by the three countries to improve dialogue and cooperation. The four diplomatic events are (1) the International Panel of Experts (IPoE) in 2012, (2) the

signing of the Declaration of Principles (DoP) in 2015, which is a big step towards open cooperation and diplomacy in the Nile waters and the GERD, (3) ministerial level meeting, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Water and Irrigation of each country to discuss the implementation of the DoP agreement and approve the IPoE recommendation to conduct a review regarding GERD on December 27-29, 2015, and (4) an agreement to launch the study of water resources and hydroelectric power plant simulation assessment, to be carried out by two French engineering consultants, Brl Group and Artelia on October 27, 2016 (Abteu & Dessu 2019, 131).

For this reason, this paper discusses more about Egypt's negotiating efforts with Ethiopia in the process of filling out and operating the first phase of the GERD and the interactions that existed between the two countries in the region and during the negotiation process. It also focuses on the perspective of the Egyptian state in negotiating with the Ethiopian state regarding the development of the GERD. The reason is that Egypt does not want to lose the existence and image of the Nile River as the hallmark of Egypt since it will be detrimental to Egypt in the future. To maximize the research, researchers use Negotiation theory combined with the role of power and the concept of Transboundary Water Interaction to understand the negotiation process carried out by Egypt. The authors focus the research on the time period of 2015-2020. Even though the authors mention Sudan, they exclude this country in the analysis of this research.

Research Method

This paper uses a qualitative approach to examine the Egypt's strategy in negotiating with Ethiopia in the filling and operation of GERD phase I. It also aims to examine the interaction between the two countries on the Nile River with the data collected from primary and secondary sources. This analysis is carried out using Negotiation theory combined with the role of power and the concept of Transboundary Water Interaction to understand how the negotiation process was carried out by Egypt. This research uses a framework to explain Egypt's strategies and actions in defending the Nile River. The theory used is the Transboundary Water Interactions (TWI) theory of Mark Zeitoun and Naho Mirumachi, which discusses how tensions between countries that touch each other over shared waters can lead to conflict or cooperation. Mirumachi

explained that cooperation and conflict are an inseparable unity, or in other words, both conflict and cooperation coexist. Tensions over shared waters are too complex to describe in phrases like "*the absence of war does not mean the absence of conflict*". The idea that cooperation and conflict coexist is well understood by anyone who has survived a relationship. Zeitoun and Mirumachi see that conflict is not always depicted as a "bad" thing, and cooperation is not always depicted as a "good" thing. Zeitoun and Mirumachi prefer to discuss interactions between countries because they are considered more adequate to capture the reality of relations and hydro-political dynamics in shared river areas. Thus, they can conclude that the interactions between countries is in the direction of good or bad cooperation or even leading to conflict (Zeitoun & Mirumachi 2008, 299).

The TWI concept shows that transnational water interaction is a political process that is subject to the will of power. Zeitoun and Mirumachi argue that hegemonic states can often determine the outcome of mutual water interactions, either for unilateral gain or collective good because the power they possess is very sufficient. The power used in the TWI concept is the same as what has been previously explained, using the four dimensions of power explained by Mark Zeitoun and Anna Cascao. With these four dimensions of power, there are two options that are most frequently used by hegemonic countries, either looking for ways to weaken opponents or equalizing the position. Hegemonic countries tend to have a greater ability to exploit the strengths of opposing parties to determine the outcome of ongoing interactions. A hegemonic country will defend its prerogatives through superior strength in a negotiation or diplomacy situation. Therefore, cooperation that exists in shared waters does not all have a "good" face. On the contrary, it can function to perpetuate conflict rather than resolve it. In the end, relations between countries are only seen as attempts done by each country to hide the tensions rather than building full cooperation (Zeitoun et al. 2011, 166).

The TWI concept expresses the nature and magnitude of interactions between countries that have shared water resources, which are categorized in terms of negative, neutral and positive interactions. The explanation of the term, mutual water interaction, as explained in the Zeitoun and Mirumachi journal article is provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Types and faces of Transboundary Water Interaction

Characterization of interaction nexus (TWINS)	Types of interaction	Examples of interaction	Potential driving forces
Low conflict – High cooperation	[positive interaction] Cooperation on equal terms; Cooperation across a broad range of issues; Tensions reduced through deliberative processes	Putting in place and exercising principles (i.e. equitable use, no harm); creation of transboundary regimes; negotiation of a treaty based on IWM; conclusion of an effective treaty (Kistin)	Benefit sharing / expanding the pie Reduction of environmental uncertainty
Low conflict – Medium cooperation	[neutral interaction] Narrow cooperation (cooperation on select issues); Token cooperation; Mild verbal expressions of conflict	Joint pollution management; joint infrastructure; benefit-sharing based on agreements; creation of RBOs	Economic / development goals Issue linkage
Low conflict – Low cooperation	[neutral interaction] Minimal or no interaction; Ad-hoc cooperation; Self-interested cooperation; Tactical functional cooperation; Unstable cooperation	Minor information exchange; technical commissions or meetings	Mutual distrust Improvement of international reputation
Medium/High conflict – Low cooperation	[negative interaction] Securitized conflict; Coercive cooperation; Dominative cooperation; Violent conflict	Contained conflict; negotiation of treaties not based on IWL; resource capture; unilateral environmentalism (Fischhendler)	Sharing of resources Changes in power symmetry Control of resources

Results and Discussion

Egypt's Negotiation Process with Ethiopia During the Process of Building the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) development is vulnerable to a number of concerns that create tension and conflict between Ethiopia and the downstream basin countries. The main issue of concern is that it will endanger water security and have a negative socio-economic impact on downstream basin countries. The duration of filling the reservoir determines the amount of water supply that will be reduced from the Egyptian and Sudanese portions of water each year. Egypt is expected to lose about 10-15 billion m³ of water supply from its annual share of 55.5 billion m³. This will directly have an impact on the agricultural sector and a decrease in the water discharge that is accommodated by Aswan High Dam (AHD), causing problems in the production of hydroelectric power plants. Apart from that, when entering the dry season, the flow of the Nile River will automatically experience a

decrease in water discharge, and it will affect the supply of Nile water accommodated by Egypt (Donia & Negm 2019, 30). Thus, during the filling of the reservoir and during the operation of the dam, water management is a major issue of conflict that has not been resolved even though trilateral negotiations have been ongoing since 2011.

After Ethiopia's unilateral action in formalizing the construction of the GERD, Egypt asked Ethiopia to suspend the construction of the dam until a study regarding the impact of the dam for the downstream basin countries was issued. In 2012, Ethiopia responded to an Egyptian request to undertake a study on the GERD project. Egypt and Sudan agree with Ethiopia's proposal to form an International Panel of Experts (IPoE). IPoE is the first milestone in the negotiation process, in which the three parties agreed to form a cooperation panel with the aim of identifying the impact of GERD development for downstream basin countries (Salman 2016, 9). The IPoE study report issued on May 31, 2013, concluded that the GERD complied with international design criteria and standards, codes, guidelines, and appropriate practices. However, the IPoE report lacked sufficient attention to the impact of GERD on downstream basin countries. Therefore, the IPoE recommended one to carry out two more in-depth studies on the effects of dams on Egypt's and Sudan's water quotas as well as on environmental and socioeconomic impact assessments for the two countries. Egypt agrees with the IPoE recommendation and requests to conduct a re-study regarding GERD. However, Ethiopia refused to re-study and continued GERD project (Abteu & Dessu 2019, 136).

The three countries (Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia) realized that trilateral talks on GERD were fruitless. Every cooperation and negotiation forum has never found any solution to resolve disputes. Ethiopia has announced that it will start charging the GERD during the upcoming rainy season in 2020. Egypt's last resort is to invite the US and the World Bank to mediate the debate to resolve the impasse. In November 2019, the three countries agreed to continue the negotiations with the participation of the US and the World Bank as observers (Wolde & Habte 2020, 7). The meeting held on January 15, 2020 was an important point in the development of the GERD negotiations. The three countries agreed to issue a joint statement regarding the agreement on filling out and operating the GERD. At least six main points were put forward, including: charging is carried out in stages by taking into account the conditions of

the Blue Nile River and its potential impact on downstream basin countries, the charging is carried out during the rainy season, Ethiopia's request to produce power plants early, long-term operational impact GERD for Egypt and Sudan, drought mitigation measures, and establishing mechanisms to resolve disputes. This Joint Statement is also a joint agreement regarding the process of filling in and operating the GERD. However, when the time was set for signing the agreement, Ethiopia announced that it was withdrawing from the signatory process (Yihdego et al. 2020, 270).

On May 1, 2020, Egypt brought the GERD issue to the UN Security Council by stating that GERD had the potential to become a serious threat to peace and security in the region. Egypt emphasized that filling the dam unilaterally as performed by Ethiopia would cause losses to the downstream basin countries. The move came after negotiations between the three countries stalled as Ethiopia withdrew from signing an agreement made with the US and the World Bank and urged to continue filling the dam. Ethiopia responded to Egypt's letter by sending a letter to the UN Security Council on May 14, 2020 and affirming its right under international law to utilize the Nile water for its national development. It also claims that GERD development is a sovereign and has the legal right to use the Nile water. According to Ethiopia, GERD is a very vital project for its national development and has great potential for cooperation in the region (Yihdego et al. 2020, 272). Ethiopia asked for the GERD problem to be resolved in a regional forum by declaring "*African solution to African Problem*". As a response to this, African Union handled the negotiations. However, before reaching an agreement, Ethiopia unilaterally decided to carry out the filling and operation of the GERD phase 1 in July, 2020. The processes of Egypt negotiations are briefly explained in Table 2 (Wolde & Habte 2020, 17).

Table 2

Egypt's Negotiations on GERD process of building performed by Ethiopia

Year	Egypt Negotiation
2011	Egypt asked Ethiopia to suspend the construction of the dam until a study regarding the impact of the dam for the downstream basin countries was issued.
2012	Ethiopia responded to an Egyptian request to undertake a study on the GERD project. Egypt and Sudan agree with Ethiopia's proposal to form an International Panel of Experts (IPoE).

2013	<p>The IPoE study report issue was published.</p> <p>The IPoE recommended the act of carrying out two more in-depth studies on the effects of dams on Egypt's and Sudan's water quotas and on environmental and socioeconomic impact assessments for the two countries, and Egypt agrees to this but Ethiopia refused to re-study and continued GERD project.</p> <p>Ethiopia announced that it will start charging the GERD during the upcoming rainy season of 2020</p>
2019	<p>The three countries agreed to continue the negotiations with the participation of the US and the World Bank as observers</p>
2020	<p>January 2020: The three countries agreed to issue a joint statement regarding the agreement on filling out and operating the GERD, but when the time was set for signing the agreement, Ethiopia announced that it was withdrawing from the signatory process</p> <p>May 2020: Egypt brought the GERD issue to the UN Security Council by stating that GERD had the potential to become a serious threat to peace and security in the region. Ethiopia responded to Egypt's letter by sending its own letter to the UN Security Council on May 14, 2020.</p> <p>Before reaching an agreement, Ethiopia unilaterally decided to carry out the filling and operation of the GERD phase 1 in July, 2020.</p>

Egypt's Negotiations with Ethiopia Involving the Role of Power

Egypt succeeded in negotiating by utilizing its strengths (material, bargaining, and ideational power). Domestic political turmoil greatly influenced Egypt's decision-making towards the negotiations on the Nile River. To win the negotiations, downstream countries tend to use material power in the form of economic power, military threats and international support to gain more control over water. From an economic perspective, Egypt's post-revolutionary economy has recovered even though it has not fully recovered. After the initial revolution, Egypt's annual GDP fell from 5.1 percent in 2010 to 1.8 percent in 2011 and remains below pre-revolution levels, averaging 2.1 percent in 2013 (Abdou & Zaazou 2018, 60–61). Egypt's economic growth has increased since the economic revolution in 2016. The economy grew at a rate of 5.6 percent from 2019. This economic increase came from the ICT, oil and gas, tourism, trade, infrastructure and property sectors (African Development Bank 2021). Egypt has long played a central political and economic role in the African and Middle East regions. With its current economic development, Egypt

has begun to dare to use power in the economic field by providing economic assistance to the basin countries. It continues to support its position in the region and rejects the development of GERD (Abteu & Dessu 2019, 168).

Concerning the military strength, after the 2011 revolution, Egypt tried to maintain its public image by reducing its military actions. From the military perspective, Egypt is ranked 13th out of 139 countries in 2021, falling from its 9th position in 2020. In terms of military strength, Egypt has a total of 450 thousand active personnel equipped with capable weapons such as helicopters, tanks, and others (Global Fire Power 2021). So, it is not surprising that the Egyptian military is known to be very strong and unrivaled. This is caused by several factors, such as the country's history and military politicization (Spring 2020). During the negotiation process, Egypt has frequently threatened to take military action if Ethiopia does not comply with the negotiations and agreements that have been formed. It is written in a fragment of the statement issued by Mohammed Morsi on June 11, 2013. He conveyed the message that "all options are open" (Batrawy 2013). Likewise, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi released a fragment of a statement on November 18, 2017, which said that "Egypt considers Nile water a matter of life or deaths" (Mumbere 2017). Both statements could imply military action to ensure that Egypt's water security is not compromised by other basin countries.

Meanwhile, in terms of international support, Egypt has great influence in the region. The acknowledgment of the British about Egypt's institutional status quo in the region by declaring "historic water rights" of Nile is an early stage of international support that Egypt has received (Darwisheh 2021, 12). During the GERD negotiation process, Egypt invited external actors such as the US, the World Bank, the UN Security Council, and even the Arab League to put diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia. Egypt's success in bringing the US to the negotiating table is a major achievement because the US really provides support to Egypt. While appearing to be biased and pro-Egyptian, the US has exerted appropriate diplomatic pressure to support Egypt's position in the negotiations (Z. Yihdego et al. 2020, 240).

The next one is bargaining power, which refers to the actor's ability to control the rules of the game and set the agenda. Egypt's success in bringing the US and the World Bank to the negotiating table, as observers, is an important part of Egypt's efforts to play bargaining power. The

negotiations took place under the auspices of the US and the World Bank really became an important point in trilateral negotiations in the region. Ethiopia's position that is weaker than Egypt's, with unclear negotiation directions, prompted the US to force Ethiopia to compromise the process of filling and operating the GERD. Ethiopia's agreement on the participation of the US and the World Bank as observers brings Egypt one step closer to realizing its goal of having a third party involved in the GERD negotiations (Wolde & Habte 2020, 24). The US is pushing Ethiopia to finalize the agreement it has negotiated with the three countries. However, when it was time to finalize the deal, Ethiopia withdrew from the deal it had made, and the US reopened a threatening statement to withhold some 130 million foreign aid to Ethiopia (Pemunta et al. 2021, 2).

Meanwhile, ideational power is the ability to shape, impose, and manipulate perceptions and ideas about the Nile River. In fact, there was a knowledge gap between the other basin nations that allowed Egypt to have a monopoly on the dissemination of knowledge about the Nile. Thus, Egypt can impose its ideas and narratives on the relevant countries as well as determine the agenda, discourse and timing of negotiations and projects in the Nile basin (Darwisheh 2021, 12). Through this power, Egypt applies securitization tactics, which depicts water as a matter of national security to uphold its hegemony by mobilizing regional and international support against countries that threaten the Nile waters. This was proven in the letter it gave to the UN Security Council. Here, Egypt tried to describe the situation of the country's water crisis by making the Nile River the only source of water and stating that projects carried out by Ethiopia could threaten its water supply (Z. Yihdego et al. 2020, 237).

Ultimately, the involvement of the US, the World Bank and the UN Security Council in the negotiation process has provided a golden opportunity for Egypt to push Ethiopia on the path that Egypt wants. The support given by the US and the World Bank may have caused the three riparian countries to almost reach an agreement if only Ethiopia did not withdraw from signing the agreement. Egypt's efforts in bringing the US, the World Bank, and the UN Security Council to the negotiation process have been a part of a negotiating strategy to force Ethiopia not to fill the GERD. It also wants Ethiopia to start electricity production through the involvement of stronger third parties, superpowers and international organizations. It is also clearly designed to force Ethiopia to accept

Egyptian and US terms without its free will (Z. Yihdego et al. 2020, 252). However, political dynamics in the region and internal instability have affected Egypt's power during its negotiations with Ethiopia. In the end, Ethiopia continued to fill in and operate GERD stage 1 in July, 2020.

Egyptian and Ethiopian Interactions on the Nile River Using the Concept of *Transboundary Water Interaction*

The existence of an asymmetrical relationship in the region was the beginning of an asymmetrical interaction between Egypt and the other basin countries that has existed for centuries. The water of the Nile River became very vital for Egypt. Nile River water has been a major source of water supporting agriculture, energy, industry and domestic needs, from the time of ancient Egypt to the present day. Egypt knows very well that the Nile River provides many benefits to the countries it crosses, especially for its own country. However, Egypt has a difficult geographical position because it is located on the lower reaches of the river. On the other hand, the source of the Nile River's flowing water is outside the territory of the country. Thus, with its strategic importance on the Nile River, since colonial times, Egypt has signed agreements between several parties to regulate quotas and the distribution of river rights. The agreement that mostly binds Egypt's dependence on and control over the Nile River is the Nile Waters Agreement in 1929 and 1959 (Okoth-Owiro 2004).

On the other hand, Ethiopia is a non-hegemonic country that agrees to the situation. However, since 2010, Ethiopia has slowly risen and challenged the Egyptian status quo with counter-hegemonic actions. Ethiopia challenged the hegemony of Egypt by taking various steps not only to fight over the status quo, but also to try to transform it. The result of the opposition is aimed at obtaining a fair distribution of water resources. In conducting a contest against the status quo of a hegemonic state, at least three contest mechanisms are needed: (1) coercive, (2) leverage, and (3) transformative. As a country that wants to do a contest, it needs power. Usually the power used is influential power and challenging power (Zeitoun et al. 2017, 281).

As a hegemonic country, Egypt seeks to maintain compliance in the region and plays various mechanisms to maintain its status quo. It has also created compliance for other basin countries to submit to its power using various mechanisms, including: (1) coercive, (2) utilitarian, (3) normative, and (4) ideological hegemonic. Basically, the ability to achieve compliance

cannot be separated from power. With the state power, the hegemonic countries can achieve and maintain compliance within their control (Zeitoun et al. 2017, 278). There are four forms of power used in cross-country water conflicts: (1) geographic power, (2) material power, (3) bargaining power, and (4) ideational power. Using this power, the hegemonic state can automatically regulate the distribution of water and strategies for using it as well as determine the allocation, planning and management of shared water resources (Warner & de Man 2020). The authors describe the compliance mechanism carried out by Egypt to maintain its hegemony in the region in the following paragraph.

First, it is coercive compliance. Egypt's use of coercive mechanisms did not change until the 21st century. Egypt uses undercover operations aimed at weakening its political rival, military or hydraulic apparatus. For example, Egypt conducts covert operations to prevent Ethiopia from exploiting Blue Nile resources by funding terrorist groups to undermine Ethiopia's national security. Apart from that, the action that is often carried out by Egypt is war rhetoric. It is often used by Egyptian leaders by threatening military action over the construction of a dam on the Nile River (Tekuya 2016). Recently, to restore Ethiopia's compliance with the Egyptian status quo in the region, Egypt provides fund for ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia that involves Amhara, Oromo and Benshangul-Gumuz regions. It would affect the development of GERD (Abteu & Dessu 2019, 30).

Second, it is utilitarian compliance. In using this mechanism, Egypt has long manipulated the trust of donors to strengthen its control over water resources. In the 1980s and 1990s, many Egyptian officials were able to occupy political positions at the World Bank, thereby contributing to the establishment of the operational direction of the World Bank. They refuse to disburse loan funds to basin countries that wish to develop their water resources by developing hydraulic projects. In addition, Egypt successfully blocked an African Development Bank loan to Ethiopia to build a dam project, alleging that the project would reduce the flow of the Nile River (Tekuya 2016). The result shows that Ethiopia used its own funds and received little help from China to build the GERD project.

Third, it is normative compliance. This mechanism is used for signing an agreement to institutionalize the status quo. It can be a tool used to the advantage of the hegemonic state. In the case of the Nile River, the agreements are the 1929 and 1959 Nile Waters Agreements. These

agreements have formed institutional practices on the Nile River and made other basin countries subject to these agreements (Tekuya 2016). In the case of the GERD negotiations, Egypt signed the DoP which was used as a roadmap for negotiations and kept Ethiopia in compliance with the legal articles agreed in the DoP (Salman 2016, 12).

Fourth, it is ideological hegemonic compliance. This mechanism is performed by forming or playing a discourse related to water resources. For example, Egypt provides a different perspective on its water supply situation to its own people, international donors, and competitors or other basin countries to reduce external pressure on its status quo (Tekuya 2016). Using this mechanism, Egypt applies securitization tactics.

For a long time, Egypt has been the main hegemonic country in the Nile waters area through a number of compliance mechanisms it has implemented. Egypt was required to create broader compliance when Ethiopia decided to contest Egypt through the development of GERD. It has become clear that two processes can exist in cross-country river interactions, namely contest and compliance (Zeitoun et al. 2017, 277). In this case, Egypt and Ethiopia are seen as hegemonic and non-hegemonic powers. GERD development carried out by Ethiopia can be seen as a contest of hegemony situation. This counter-hegemonic step can be the start of a contest period through the following mechanisms: coercive, leverage and transformative. As a hegemonic country, Egypt tries to create compliance with its status quo through the following mechanisms: coercive, utilitarian, normative, and ideological hegemonic (Zeitoun et al. 2017, 278).

Hence, it can be concluded that interaction still occurred in the region even though the two countries conduct contests and compliance. They still cooperate and negotiate to resolve the GERD and the Nile River problems. Cooperation that occurs between the two countries cannot be said to be good cooperation. According to Zeitoun and Mirumachi, they see that conflict is not always described as a "bad" thing, nor is cooperation always described as a "good" thing. They also classify interactions in the region by three values: positive, neutral, and negative. According to the author, Ethiopia and Egypt is in neutral interaction with the category of low conflict - low cooperation. This type of neutral interaction is described by very minimal cooperation that is carried out only for the interests of the country itself and that seems unstable (Walschot & Katz

Egypt and Ethiopia correspond to the neutral value type. It indicates that the two countries do not heed the conflict but cannot set aside their interests to reach a mutual agreement.

Conclusion

This research describes the Nile River, which has been a source of prolonged conflict and political tension between the two main basin countries: Egypt and Ethiopia. The establishment of the GERD in Ethiopia has changed the political and diplomatic landscape in the Nile River basin, leaving Egypt concerned about threats to the status quo and its water security. Egypt has implemented several strategies to maintain the status of the Nile River, starting from trilateral negotiations regarding the filling and operation of the GERD. In the negotiation process, Egypt tried to use the power, including: material, bargaining and ideational power. With this strength, Egypt succeeded in bringing together third parties, such as the United States and the World Bank, to negotiate and bring the GERD and Nile River issues to the UN Security Council. However, political dynamics in the region and internal instability affect Egypt's strength in the negotiations involving Ethiopia. In the end, Ethiopia continued to fill and operate GERD phase I.

The interactions described on this conflict are contest and compliance. Even though the two countries compete and obey each other, they still collaborate and negotiate to resolve the GERD and Nile River problems. The Nile River negotiations in Egypt provides new knowledge about the role of rivers for the country, such as people's needs, trade routes and conflicts. So, it needs government strategies and policies to protect the rivers. Apart from that, rivers are also national borders like the borders of Indonesia and Timor Leste. For future researchers, it is suggested to look at the Indonesian government's efforts to use rivers as national borders. It will be very interesting to see how the government utilizes rivers as state borders and maintain security in border areas since it is known that many crimes frequently occur in state border areas.

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