

Conflict Resolution and Cooperation over Blue Nile Water Resources Projects

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Abstract

Water conflict can be viewed as a competition over scarce freshwater resources that can lead to hard political tensions. Conflicts can appear in many different settings on the local level, between sectors of one country, between upstream countries and downstream countries or between upstream and downstream users. It can be due to lack of water, increased demand or mismanagement. Water conflict is an important issue for people's survival and livelihood. In this article we focus on the possibility of cooperation between Sudan and Ethiopia, the benefits and risks of integrated win-win projects on water resources management between the two countries. Interviews were done with researchers, academics, consultants and experts working for their governments on water issues. The 50 Ethiopian and 50 Sudanese experts saw lack of funding as one of the key challenges, and better relations, trade, and transport as main benefits of joint water development projects between the two countries. The paper examines the implications of Ethiopian water resources development for Sudan. One of the main conclusions from our research is that Sudan and Ethiopia can enhance cooperation through step-by-step projects shared between the two countries. Ethiopia can be regarded as the main provider for hydropower, and Sudan as the main provider for agriculture and marketing. On the institutional side, the Nile Basin Initiative is still a "very soft" institutional framework, allowing for project-by-project activities. Yet there are signs that it is clarifying framework questions (about 85% have been agreed on) and therefore slowly becoming more capable in coordinating water resource development in the Nile Basin.

Keywords: Cooperation, Water Conflict, win-win projects, Nile River, Sudan, Ethiopia

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