

Beyond GERD: Hydropolitical, Hydrological, Technological and Investment (HHTI) Imperatives for Sustained Economic Cooperation

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Abstract

The ongoing tripartite negotiation among Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan is necessary to resolve the current filling and operation aspects of GERD to ensure equitable and reasonable utilization of the shared resources. However, the notion of the current disagreement between Egypt and Ethiopia on GERD on two or three technical and legal articles is mischaracterization of the larger issue. While Ethiopia would not like to be locked into an agreement that curtails its future development aspiration in the Nile with a binding agreement, Egypt suspects Addis Ababa would embark on upstream irrigation development diminishing its current water use from the Nile. This mistrust and lack of genuine stands on facts and science to settle sticking points in the negotiations has been time consuming and exhausting. This paper attempts to provide investment based broad perspectives for a functioning basin-wide agreement in the Nile basin 1) Any hydropolitical engagements in the Nile basin shall work towards objectively codifying 'equitable and reasonable utilization' concepts enshrined in the UN water conventions, which is also part of the CFA and GERD negotiation. 2) Sustaining agreements require implementation of regional scale joint water resources development and management. New agreements without substantive joint regional projects do not motivate countries to make the next step of institutional mechanism. Past studies indicate there are potential hydrological and technological possibilities to access unused and unaccounted water resources through joint assessment, development and large-scale investment throughout the basin. 3) Smart agricultural technologies are essential to unlock unaccounted and wasted water from large scale irrigation systems in the basin. Studies indicate with proper technologies and knowledge, as much as 40 billion cubic meter (BCM) of water can be saved from Egypt irrigation system alone. While moving forward with objectively defined cooperation agreement facilitates joint regional investment, cooperative water management and enhances economic collaboration, delaying cooperative agreement complicates conclusion of future agreements due to changing hydropolitical dynamics associated with continued unilateral socio-economic growth and climate change/variability. The Nile countries should engage beyond GERD negotiation for concurrent implementation of hydropolitical, hydrological and technological possibilities to encourage objectively

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defined equitable and reasonable utilization of the Nile resources with regional investment being at the center of cooperation agreement. This paper explores the issues in one grand Nile scheme for sustainable development and management of the basin.

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