

**Committee:** Security Council

**Issue:** The Nile river dispute

**Student Officer:** Spyros Kontos

**Position:** Deputy President

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## **PERSONAL INTRODUCTION**

Dear delegates,

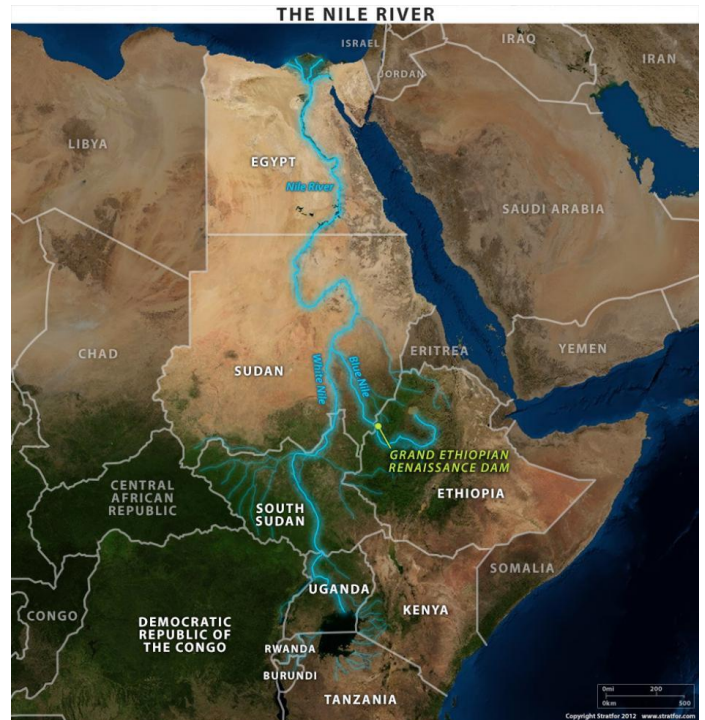
My name is Spyros Kontos and this is the second year I've been doing M.U.N. I love M.U.N. because it involves finding real solutions to real problems and because it greatly contributes to the understanding of the logic behind many controversial issues. However, above all I love M.U.N. because of its similarity to the real world. The Nile River Dispute is an interesting topic and I expect the most fruitful debate from all. Hopefully, this study guide will help you but don't forget to make your own research. Let this study guide serve as a first step to guide you on your search of information. For any questions don't hesitate to email me at [skontos2003@acg.edu](mailto:skontos2003@acg.edu) .

Kind regards,

Spyros Kontos

## TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia has recently taken on and finished one of the most ambitious and controversial projects in the world. The creation of the “High Dam”, as it is called, that is the largest project of its kind in Africa and one of the largest in the globe. In fear of it interfering with the flow of the Nile river, downstream nation Egypt strictly opposes the creation of the dam. Both countries use past treaties to justify their claims while at the same time claiming that the treaties they didn’t sign, the ones the other country uses that is, are illegitimate. Egypt can at the moment do nothing to stop the creation of the dam other than military action which further emphasizes the importance of solving the using diplomatic means.



#1 The Nile river

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Treaty

A treaty is an official and formally concluded agreement between 2 or more states.

### Hydroelectric powerplant

A hydroelectric powerplant consists of turbines that use water flow in order to produce electrical energy.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### The Egypt-Ethiopia war (1874-1876)

The Egypt-Ethiopia war was a war between the Khedive of Egypt and the Ethiopian Empire. Seeing the trend of European colonialism in Africa led by Isma'il Pasha, the khedive of Egypt that was under the reign of the Ottoman Empire at the time, sought to expand its power, grounds and influence over Africa. Recognizing the power of the Nile, Egypt quickly started expanding alongside the river. After expanding up to

the grounds of modern North Sudan and Eritrea, Egypt started preparing for the war against the much larger in numbers Ethiopian Empire. In order to prepare for the invasion Ismail hired experienced European and confederate soldiers from the civil war and heavily invested in high quality equipment. 1874 the tensions broke and the invasion by Egypt begun, and later ended in failure.

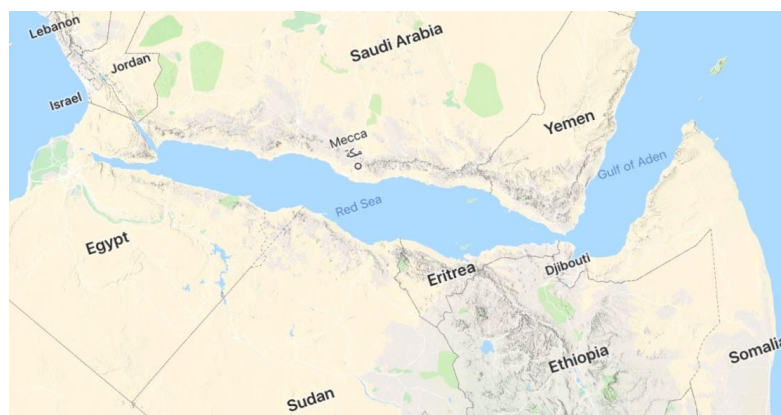


*#2 These are the Egyptian grounds before the first invasion*

Two years later there was a second effort taking place with the same result. Amongst the aftermath of the failed military campaigns was the rise of a local faction called the Mahdist movement that revolted and took Egypt's authority over Northern Sudan. Egypt lost most of its new exploits over the following years. The Mahdist movement was a threat to the Ethiopians too however, which would be the reason for British and Italian intervention that would later lead to the colonization of the region.

### **Effects of Hydro-electric power plants on water streams**

Dams usually are associated with three main negative effects, loss of wildlife, flooding and reduction of flow, most of which take effect while the dam's reservoir is filling up. Because Ethiopia wants to start power production as soon as possible, they are planning to fill it up at a rate high enough to fill it in 3 years while a feasible solution that doesn't affect the flow of the river would be 6 or 7 years. The consequences of filling the reservoir in 3 years even if Ethiopia takes parameters



towards wildlife safety, is that over 250 kilometers of land upstream will flood and the water that goes through the dam will have significantly lower flow. However, on the other hand, the dam can release water when there are water shortages and theoretically at least, take in more water in cases of water surpluses.

### Colonialism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its effects on African state aggression

Colonization of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Africa mainly consists of European explorers and colonizer countries, the most noteworthy of which are Great Britain, France, Portugal, Netherlands, Italy and Spain. European colonialism can be separated into three waves. The first one has to do with Spain, Portugal and the Ottoman Empire. In the second wave the domination of Africa by Great Britain was evident. The third and final wave also called “New Imperialism” effectively divided Africa between the most powerful European countries through the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. These countries are Great Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Italy, Belgium and Spain. Before the colonization of Africa, the continent was developing in all areas: economy, population etc. The real purpose of the colonization was to exploit the physical, human, and economic resources of the continent. The colonizers did however make significant improvements in transfer and trading infrastructure the greatest example of which being roads. That colonialism was a sign of European expansion in the area to the independent African countries and signaled a reach for their strongest possible establishment in region. This served as a great incentive for the beginning of the Egypt-Ethiopia war. The end results were more aggressive relations between African countries. The remnants of the colonialist influence still remain today in the form of bad relations and European values. That same colonialist influence however has been the driving factor between the beginning the continuing of negotiations.

The delimitation agreement, an agreement not even made for the Nile River Dispute, focusing on territorial issues instead, is the first official document addressing the dispute. In article 3 it's clearly stated that Ethiopia is prohibited from building any structure that would “harm” the flow of the Nile river. According to this treaty, the dam is illegal, since it's reservoir filling process will temporarily although considerably slow the flow of water downstream of gathering Nile. Ethiopia



#3 Map depicting the European spheres of influence over African countries

opposes the said agreement claiming that it was signed only between Ethiopia and Britain, without Sudan having signed the treaty. This point is however baseless since that kind of logic would invalidate the borders of nearly all of modern Africa. The argument of a said country not having signed a treaty thereby making the treaty baseless has been used for many of the following treaties as well, taking for example the 1959 Nile waters agreement or the more recent Nile Initiative Framework Convention of 2009. Successful agreements have been made such as the Cairo cooperation Framework of July 1993 and the Nile Basin Initiative. However, they have been very generalized and have so far proven unsuccessful in solving the issue even if they have contributed into making considerable improvements.

### **Reasons for Egypt's opposition to the dam**

Along with the history of aggression between Egypt and Ethiopia and the bad relations between the two countries, Egypt opposes the dam for fear of its effects to the stream of the Nile. Egypt already experiencing water shortages, believes that they cannot afford being dependent from Ethiopia for their water supply. The dam will give control to Ethiopia over the flow of the river downstream and if they don't use it in a way that does not harm the water stream (as stated above), which they have not incentive of doing so, Egypt would have to suffer the consequences in the form of a limited water supply that would consequently translate to health issues, heavy reductions in agriculture production that would severely harm the country's food production and economy. Also important to mention is that Egypt has a dam of its own. That would mean that even if Egypt could delay the consequences of Ethiopia's irresponsible filling of the dam, but that would mean that Egypt would later have to fill the dam up again, further worsening the effects of irrigation on Egypt.

## **MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED**

### **Egypt**

The importance of the Nile to Egypt is profound throughout history. Egypt has the historical and generally the strongest claims to the river despite being downstream. They started the Egyptian-Ethiopian war and were under Ottoman rule while doing so. Today Egypt is worried that Ethiopia's power source project will allow the said nation to control the control of the river or for whatever reason disrupt it, thereby greatly limiting their already limited water supply and making them suffer the immediate economic consequences.

### Ethiopia

Because of their advantageous geographical location upstream of the river Ethiopia demands a higher share over the Nile's water supply. Ethiopia along with planning to become a middle-income country also expects a great population increase over the following years and thereby need more energy. That is the reasoning behind the creation of one of the largest water dams ever made. Claims that the previous deals Egypt uses to support their claims to the river weren't signed by Ethiopia and are thereby not recognized.

### Sudan

Strongly supports Ethiopia and benefits from the dam because it will provide the country with a year-round ability to use the Nile's waters, something not previously physically possible. That would be because the part of the Nile they can use doesn't have enough tilt (that is supposed to create flow) to supply the country's water needs all year long, instead causing massive water shortages.

### United Kingdom (UK)

Largely involved in the negotiations of the countries over the issue because of their colonization of Africa of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Has also served as a representative of Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika (modern Tanzania) and Sudan during the talks that resulted to the 1959 Nile Waters Agreement.

### TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1863	Ismail'il asha becomes ruler of Egypt This event signals the start of Egypt's expansion policy
1867	Egypt has occupied the grounds of modern-day north Sudan
1874	First Invasion of Ethiopia by Egypt (Turns out unsuccessful)
1875	Annexation of Darfur
1876	Second Invasion (Turns out unsuccessful again)

1952	Egypt decides to build “The High Dam” in the Nile This happens in order to support Ethiopia’s future economic development and increase in population
1959	1959 Nile Waters Agreement
1993	The Cairo cooperation Framework of July 1993
1999	The Nile Basin Initiative
2009	The Nile Basin Initiative framework convention

## RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

### 1959 Nile Waters Agreement

Agreement signed between Egypt and the United Kingdom that represented many African states not however including the Ethiopian government. The agreement gave Egypt the right over 55.5 billion cubic meters of Nile water annually and Sudan 18.5 billion cubic meters respectively.

### The Cairo Cooperation Framework of July 1993

In the Cairo Cooperation Framework of July 1993 between Egypt and Ethiopia both countries pledge not to implement water projects harmful to the interests of the other. Also pledged was that both countries would consult over projects to reduce the waste and increase the flow of the waters.

### The Nile Basin Initiative (1999)

The initiatives purpose is to bring to get together all Nile Basin countries in order to achieve cooperative development of the Nile river, sharing of socioeconomic benefits and finally promotion of regional peace and security.

### The Nile Basin Initiative Framework Convention (2009)

Not yet having been agreed upon by all Nile Basin countries, this convention remains controversial. It hasn’t been signed by the Egyptian government with the Egyptians showing no sign of doing so in the short future. Justifications for their refusal are that Egypt can and will not approve any new framework that would challenge its

VETO powers over projects that would harm its allocation and the right over 55.5 billion cubic meters of water from the Nile annually.

### **PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE**

There have been many treaties, some more successful than others but none of them reaching their final goal. Some haven't been signed by Ethiopia and others by Egypt leading to said countries refusals to accept the terms on the said treaties. More recent attempts challenge Egypt's rights over 55.5 billion cubic meters of water by the Nile and its ability to VETO projects that raise concern over the rivers flow, rights that Egypt has made clear that they will not allow to happen.

### **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

The issue with the previous attempts is that they all done give any motive to the other side to accept the treaties and instead try to worsen and limit their neighbors' rights over the Nile. In order for any diplomatic solution to be feasible the terms on the treaties will have to be in an acceptable form all sides in order for negotiations to take care of the rest. A creation of a treaty that recognizes the present distribution of water between the countries that claim rights over the Nile and the VETO power of these countries over projects that could harm the flow of the river. The creation of a UN body that supervises the activities of these countries over the river and ensures of their obedience concerning signed treaties. In order to give incentive instead of just using brute force, a common fund between the Nile-bordering countries could be founded with the goal of collectively funding and supporting large and controversial projects that will benefit all countries proportionately to their activity. In this case for example where Ethiopia has funded the creation of the dam, the other nations could for an amount of time be responsible for the upkeep costs and receive 90% of the money they spend in doing so, in the form of electricity. That way all countries benefit from the creation and preservation of the dam as well as the good relations between them. Additionally, implementing regulations that will also be enforced by the appropriate UN body that regulate the use and filling up of the dam. Finally, in order to preserve the low of the river all year long, the release of a set amount of water during certain times of the year.



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