

# Recent Developments in the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and Its Effects on Ethiopia-Egypt Relations: Somalia as the Epicenter of Conflict

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## Abstract

This paper examines the recent developments surrounding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and its implications for Ethiopia-Egypt relations, with Somalia emerging as a central point of the conflict zone. Egypt's historical involvement in Middle East conflicts, particularly regarding the Gaza conflict, highlights its significant role in regional diplomacy. However, Egypt's stance on the GERD reveals a contradictory position: while it remains relatively passive in supporting Palestinians nearby, it emphasizes its historical rights over the Nile and simultaneously supports Somalia which is both geographically distant yet strategically relevant. This dynamic raises questions about Egypt's motivations and priorities.

Ethiopia, grappling with internal challenges, must effectively navigate these complexities to counter external threats. The current situation necessitates a shift in Egypt's approach; rather than clinging to historical claims; it should adopt a win-win principle that promotes equitable resource sharing from the Nile River. The methodology employed in this study primarily involves news analysis from various media outlets, providing a comprehensive understanding of the evolving dynamics surrounding the GERD and its broader implications for regional relations. By exploring these interconnections, this paper aims to illuminate the complexities of Ethiopia-Egypt interactions and identify potential pathways toward resolution amidst escalating tensions.

**Key words:** Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), Ethiopia-Egypt relations, Somalia, resource sharing, regional diplomacy

## Introduction

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has become a significant source of tension between Ethiopia and Egypt, profoundly influencing their bilateral relations. The GERD is located in Ethiopia's Benishangul-Gumuz region, near the Sudanese border, and it plays a crucial role in Ethiopia's socioeconomic development and national energy needs. Egypt, as a downstream nation heavily dependent on Nile waters for agriculture and drinking supply, views the dam as a significant threat to its water security. Sudan occupies a strategic position between the two, facing both potential benefits from the dam's electricity generation and risks related to flooding. Although Somalia is not directly adjacent to the Nile, its involvement highlights broader regional security concerns, particularly regarding resource management and the potential spillover effects of tensions between Ethiopia and Egypt. Understanding these dynamics is essential for comprehending the complex interplay of interests among these nations in the context of ongoing geopolitical conflicts.

This paper explores recent developments related to the GERD and their implications for Ethiopia-Egypt relations, with Somalia emerging as a central conflict zone. The Nile River is shared by ten countries, including Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia, but in 1959, Egypt and Sudan signed an agreement that allocated the river's water resources exclusively to themselves, leaving limited rights for other riparian states. For Ethiopia, constructing the GERD is a crucial strategy to meet its developmental needs and assert its rights over the Nile. However, this initiative has escalated disputes involving Egypt and Sudan, as Egypt fears that the dam will reduce its access to essential water resources.

Historically, Egypt has played a vital role in Middle Eastern conflicts; however, its silence regarding the situation in Gaza raises questions about its influence in regional diplomacy. This stance appears contradictory, as Egypt seeks to uphold its historical claims over the Nile waters while simultaneously supporting Somalia a nation that is geographically distant but strategically significant for regional stability. The deployment of Egyptian troops in Somalia is perceived as

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part of a broader geopolitical rivalry with Ethiopia regarding the GERD. As Ethiopia faces internal challenges, it must navigate these complexities to counter external threats effectively. The current situation necessitates a shift in Egypt's approach; instead of clinging to historical claims, it should adopt a win-win principle that promotes equitable resource sharing from the Nile River. This perspective is essential for fostering cooperation and ensuring long-term stability in the region. Applying a discourse model approach reveals that the discussion surrounding Ethiopia's internal challenges and Egypt's need to revise its resource-sharing strategy is intricately connected to various elements, including structural, contextual, intentional, and interactive factors. By examining these dimensions, we can gain deeper insights into the broader implications for regional cooperation and stability amid ongoing challenges.

## Research Methodology

This study primarily involves news analysis from various media outlets, providing a comprehensive overview of the evolving dynamics surrounding

the GERD and its broader implications for regional relations. The qualitative analysis involves examining the language, tone, and framing used in news reports to understand how issues are presented to various audiences. The approach is both multifaceted and comprehensive, addressing the complex interplay of geopolitical dynamics, historical context, and the various interests of the involved parties. By examining these interconnections, this paper aims to clarify the complexities of Ethiopia-Egypt interactions and propose potential pathways toward resolution amidst escalating tensions.

### Data Collection

**News Analysis:** The primary data sources for this study include articles from reputable newspapers and international media outlets. This approach ensures a diverse representation of viewpoints and insights into the ongoing tensions between Egypt and Ethiopia related to the GERD.

**Digital Media Monitoring:** In addition to traditional print media, the study incorporates digital news platforms, allowing for real-time updates and a broader understanding of public sentiment and media framing surrounding the issue.

**Content Analysis:** A systematic content analysis is conducted to identify key themes, narratives, within the news coverage. This includes coding articles based on specific categories such as diplomatic relations, military actions, and regional security concerns.

### Egypt's Role in the Middle East Conflicts

Egypt has historically served as a mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly during periods of heightened violence. The recent escalation following the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, has positioned Egypt in a pivotal role. The Egyptian government is apprehensive about a possible influx of refugees from Gaza into its territory, especially in the Sinai Peninsula, which could worsen existing security issues.

In light of the conflict in Gaza, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has advocated for allowing humanitarian aid into Gaza while firmly rejecting any proposals to transfer Palestinian refugees into Egypt. This position underscores Egypt's intent to uphold its sovereignty and internal stability while

also addressing humanitarian needs. Egypt has opened the Rafah crossing to facilitate aid but remains cautious about permitting large numbers of refugees to enter (Al-Anani 2020).

Egypt's diplomatic initiatives include proposing a ceasefire plan developed in collaboration with Qatar. This plan seeks a phased release of hostages held by Hamas alongside Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention. However, the effectiveness of these efforts is hindered by the complex realities on the ground and the differing interests of regional actors (Al-Anani 2020). Currently, Egypt's role in the Gaza conflict appears limited to calls for humanitarian assistance, leading to perceptions among its Arab counterparts that Egypt is an unreliable partner. By not adopting a more assertive position on this matter, Egypt claims it is prioritizing assistance to Somalia, a member of the Arab League. This strategy has faced criticism, as many argue that Egypt should be more actively involved in resolving the humanitarian crisis in Gaza instead of focusing on its engagement with Somalia (The Soufan Center 2023; Harb 2023).

### Egypt's Dispute with Ethiopia on GERD

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has been a significant source of tension between Egypt and Ethiopia. The Nile River is crucial for Egypt's water supply, providing approximately 95% of its freshwater resources (Mbaku 2020). As Ethiopia continues to fill the dam unilaterally, Egypt perceives this as an existential threat to its water security. Recently, significant developments have occurred regarding the Nile River and its management, particularly with the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA), also known as the Entebbe Agreement. On October 13, 2024, the CFA officially came into force after South Sudan's accession, which was a critical step in establishing a legal framework for equitable water resource management among Nile Basin countries (Khazen 2024). The agreement allows upstream nations to implement projects along the Nile without requiring consent from downstream countries like Egypt and Sudan, which has led to renewed tensions. Egypt's Irrigation Minister has called for a reconsideration of the CFA, emphasizing that it undermines Egypt's water security, as the Nile provides over 98% of its freshwater resources. This situation highlights ongoing conflicts and differing interests among the Nile Basin states, particularly as

they navigate issues related to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and its implications for regional cooperation (Chang 2024).

The dispute over the Nile River has its roots in colonial treaties that granted Egypt and Sudan rights to the river's waters while excluding upstream countries like Ethiopia from negotiations. The 1929 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and the 1959 agreement between Egypt and Sudan established their dominance over the Nile waters (Mohyeldeen 2021). However, Ethiopia contends that these treaties are outdated and do not reflect its rights as a sovereign nation (BBC News 2023).

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The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has been a focal point of regional discussions and negotiations since its inception. The dam, located on the Blue Nile River, is designed to significantly enhance Ethiopia's electricity generation capacity and is poised to become the largest hydropower facility in Africa, with a capacity of 5,150 megawatts and a reservoir capacity of 74 billion cubic meters (Addis Insight 2024; Basheer et al. 2021).

Ethiopia presents several key arguments to justify the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project. Firstly, the GERD is viewed as essential for meeting the country's economic and development

needs, particularly in addressing its acute energy shortage. With over 62% of Ethiopians lacking access to electricity, the dam is expected to generate more than 5 giga watts of hydroelectric power, significantly increasing Ethiopia's electricity generation capacity and facilitating plans for 100% electrification by 2025 (Al-Anani 2022). Additionally, the GERD is projected to enable Ethiopia to become a major electricity exporter, potentially earning up to \$1 billion annually from exports to neighboring countries such as Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, and Kenya (Al-Anani 2022).

Moreover, the dam is anticipated to enhance agricultural irrigation and mitigate flooding, which has historically posed challenges for communities along the Blue Nile. By regulating water flow, the GERD aims to improve agricultural productivity and create numerous job opportunities for Ethiopian farmers (Al-Anani 2022). Ethiopia also argues that the construction, filling, and operation of the GERD represent its sovereign rights over its natural resources. The country contends that colonial-era treaties granting Egypt and Sudan significant rights over the Nile's waters are outdated and do not reflect Ethiopia's rights as a sovereign nation (Al-Anani 2022). Ethiopia emphasizes its willingness to engage in negotiations regarding the dam's operation while asserting that it seeks a cooperative approach that benefits all Nile Basin countries. Ethiopia continues the filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) amid ongoing negotiations. As of July 2024, Ethiopia has initiated the fifth filling phase, which is expected to conclude in early September. This phase aims to raise the dam's middle wall to a height of 640 meters, allowing the reservoir's capacity to increase from 41 billion cubic meters to approximately 64 billion cubic meters (Tawil 2024).

Ethiopia commenced the filling of the GERD in July 2020, which has been conducted in several stages: First Stage (July 2020): Approximately 4.9 billion cubic meters (bcm) of water were captured. Second Stage (July 2021) The total volume increased significantly. Third Stage (August 2022): The reservoir volume reached about 21.5 bcm. Fourth Stage (August 2023): The total water volume reached approximately 41.53 bcm (Addis Insight 2024).

The filling process has raised concerns among downstream countries, particularly Egypt and

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Sudan, regarding potential impacts on their water supplies. Ethiopia asserts that the dam will not drastically disrupt downstream flows and emphasizes its benefits for regional energy security and economic development (Basheer et al. 2021).

The filling strategy has been contentious due to its implications for water management in the Nile Basin. Studies indicate that while Ethiopia aims to utilize the dam for energy generation, it must also consider the hydrological impacts on downstream nations (Ali et al. 2023).

The lack of a comprehensive agreement among Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan regarding the dam's operation and filling has led to ongoing tensions and negotiations since the dam's construction began (IDOS Research 2021).

Despite the lack of a legally binding agreement with downstream countries Egypt and Sudan, Ethiopia maintains that the dam will not significantly disrupt their water supplies. The current water flow at the dam is about 300 million cubic meters per day, projected to rise to around 600 million cubic meters per day by August (Addis Insight 2024).

Negotiations regarding the filling and operation of the GERD have been ongoing since construction began in 2011, but no consensus has been reached. Both Egypt and Sudan have expressed concerns over potential impacts on their water security, particularly during drought conditions (Basheer et al. 2021).

As tensions escalate, both countries have taken their grievances to international forums like the United Nations. Egypt has lodged complaints regarding Ethiopia's unilateral actions in filling the GERD reservoir, claiming they violate prior agreements (Abdu 2024). Ethiopian officials have dismissed these claims as unfounded allegations and accused Egypt of attempting to maintain a monopoly over Nile waters (Abdu 2024).

The situation remains precarious as negotiations have repeatedly stalled since they began in 2011. Recent rounds of talks have failed to produce a binding agreement on how the dam should be operated during periods of drought or reduced water flow (BBC News 2023).

### **Egypt's Self-Contradictory Position**

Egypt views stability in Somalia as essential for regional security and has engaged in diplomatic efforts to support peace initiatives while addressing humanitarian needs (Al-Anani 2020). However, Somalia is geographically distant from Egypt, raising questions about why Egypt prioritizes this relationship over its immediate concerns with Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda, which directly impact their security due to their neighboring relationships. From the Egyptian perspective, remaining silent on the Gaza issue while actively protecting Somalia—a member of the Arab League—appears paradoxical and self-contradictory to many observers.

In stark contrast to its muted response to the Gaza conflict, Egypt has actively engaged in Somalia, signing a military cooperation agreement that includes deploying troops as part of an African Union peacekeeping mission (Ali 2024). This move is seen as part of Egypt's broader strategy to enhance its influence in the Horn of Africa amid rising tensions with Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

Egypt's recent military cooperation with Somalia includes plans to deploy thousands of troops as part of a revamped African Union-led mission. This deployment aims to bolster Somalia's stability amid ongoing tensions with Ethiopia, particularly over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project, which Egypt views as an existential threat to its water security. The Egyptian government perceives its military presence in Somalia as a means to counterbalance Ethiopia's influence and

secure its interests in the Nile River basin (Addis Standard 2024; Al Jazeera 2024; Karr and Borens 2024; Ali 2024)

In August 2024, Egypt and Somalia signed a defense pact aimed at bolstering security cooperation between the two nations. This agreement was formalized during a visit by Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to Egypt and is described as a “historic” pact that underscores their commitment to combat international terrorism (Dhaysane 2024). Under this pact, Egypt plans to send up to 10,000 troops to Somalia as part of a new African Union-led peacekeeping mission, marking Egypt's first significant military involvement in the region since the early 1960s (Amin 2024).

The defense pact not only focuses on military support but also includes provisions for training Somali forces to strengthen their capacity to combat terrorism (Sudan War Monitor 2024). However, this military involvement raises concerns about escalating tensions with Ethiopia, especially given the historical context of conflict over water resources related to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) (Amin 2024).

The military engagement in Somalia is perceived as a strategic maneuver to counter Ethiopia's growing influence in the Horn of Africa, particularly following Ethiopia's agreement with Somaliland to establish a naval base (Asem 2024). This deployment aims to deter potential Ethiopian encroachment and enhance Somalia's military capabilities against threats such as al-Shabaab (Fides News Agency 2024).

Ethiopia remains vocal about recent developments in Egypt, particularly because the Horn of Africa is a more pressing concern for Ethiopia than it is for Egypt. The tensions in this region, especially between Ethiopia and Somalia, are exacerbated by Egypt's military support to Somalia, including arms shipments and a defense pact. This military cooperation raises alarms in Ethiopia, which views it as a direct threat to its national security and stability in the region (France 24 2020; Amin 2024).

Ethiopia's foreign ministry has expressed significant apprehension regarding the potential for weapons supplied to Somalia to fall into the hands of militant groups like Al-Shabaab. The ongoing military dynamics indicate that Ethiopia is prioritizing

its security interests in the Horn of Africa over its relationship with Egypt, which has been strained due to disputes over resources like the Nile River and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) (Brookings Institution 2022; Karr and Borens 2024).

Egypt's recent foreign policy decisions reflect a complex interplay of regional dynamics, particularly in light of its involvement in Somalia and its stance on the ongoing conflict in Gaza. While Egypt has maintained a relatively muted response to the recent war between Israel and Hamas, it has taken assertive actions in Somalia, seemingly contradicting its position as a member of the Arab League.

As these geopolitical tensions unfold, Ethiopia's focus on the Horn of Africa underscores its perception of regional security as paramount compared to Egypt's broader interests (Soufan Center 2024).

The military pact signed between Egypt and Somalia includes provisions for military training and support aimed at combating terrorism and enhancing Somalia's national security capabilities (Amin 2024). Egypt's involvement in Somalia is partly motivated by its desire to counter Ethiopia's growing influence in the region, particularly following Ethiopia's recent agreements with Somaliland, which Somalia claims threaten its territorial integrity. This engagement reflects Egypt's strategic interests in asserting its presence in the Horn of Africa, especially as tensions rise between Somalia and Ethiopia. By strengthening ties with Somalia, Egypt aims to create a buffer against perceived threats from Ethiopia, which has been expanding its influence through military and diplomatic initiatives (Ali 2024; Amin 2024; Al Jazeera 2024).

Egypt views its engagement in Somalia as a means to bolster its security interests against perceived threats from Ethiopia. In August 2024, Egypt signed a defense pact with Somalia that includes deploying troops as part of a new African Union-led Support and Stabilization Mission (AUSSOM). This mission aims to replace the current African Union Transition Mission (ATMIS) and is focused on peace-building and capacity building for Somali civil servants (Amin 2024). The agreement marks Egypt's first contribution to an African Union peacekeeping mission in Somalia, signaling a

renewed commitment to regional security (Ali 2024). By supporting Somalia militarily, Egypt aims to establish a foothold near Ethiopia's borders, potentially deterring any actions that could jeopardize Egypt's water security related to the Nile River (Amin 2024). This strategy reflects a broader shift towards a more assertive Egyptian foreign policy after years of relative disengagement from African affairs. However, this stance is unacceptable to Ethiopia, as the situation in Somalia primarily concerns Ethiopians and other nations in the Horn of Africa. Furthermore, Egypt's participation in peacekeeping missions in the region is seen as potentially destabilizing, providing opportunities for extremist groups like Al-Shabaab to acquire weapons and pose further threats to regional security (Ali 2024; Amin 2024). The opposition is not only from Ethiopian side but also from local people in Somalia. Many locals view the arrival of Egyptian troops as a threat to national sovereignty and regional stability (EBC, 2024). This public sentiment can influence economic stability; if protests escalate into violence or civil unrest, it could further deter investment and disrupt local markets.

The deployment of Egypt in Somalia is considered by many as a threat to national sovereignty. Local leaders and community representatives have voiced their concerns that Egyptian troops could undermine the progress made by Ethiopian forces in stabilizing the region and combating threats from militant groups like Al-Shabaab (EBC 2024). The perception that Egypt is attempting to exert control over Somali affairs has fueled resentment and distrust among the populace. Moreover, there are concerns that Egypt's involvement is not purely humanitarian but rather an attempt to extend its influence in a region where Ethiopia has traditionally played a stabilizing role. As tensions between Ethiopia and Egypt escalate over issues such as the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), many Somalis fear that Egypt's military presence could transform Somalia into a battleground for proxy conflicts between these two nations (Karr and Borens 2024).

The local opposition in Somalia to Egyptian involvement is driven by several key concerns. Many Somalis view the presence of Egyptian forces as a direct threat to their national sovereignty and regional stability. Protests have erupted across major cities, with demonstrators holding signs

that read "We Don't Need Egypt!" and "We Need Ethiopia!" This sentiment reflects a widespread belief that replacing Ethiopian troops with Egyptian forces could jeopardize the fragile security gains achieved in the fight against Al-Shabaab militants (EBC 2024; Hiiraan 2024).

Local leaders, including those from the Hudur District, have expressed strong support for the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), which they believe have made significant sacrifices to ensure the safety of their communities. They argue that introducing Egyptian troops could disrupt the overall security of the region and expose vulnerable populations to renewed violence (Horn Observer 2024). Additionally, there is a historical context that informs this opposition; many Somalis recall Egypt's past support for clan militias during the 1990s, which led to conflict and suffering in their communities (Horn Observer 2024). Egypt's recent decision to deploy troops to Somalia is poised to significantly impact the stability of the Horn of Africa. This military engagement, part of a broader defense pact with Somalia, has escalated tensions with Ethiopia and could lead to a range of geopolitical consequences for the region.

Egypt's current foreign policy reflects a complex balancing act between regional security interests and historical commitments as a leader within the Arab League. While its silence on the Gaza conflict raises questions about its commitment to Palestine, its active engagement in Somalia demonstrates a strategic pivot aimed at bolstering national security against perceived threats from Ethiopia. Egypt's decision to deploy troops to Somalia is driven by several strategic and geopolitical factors. This move reflects Egypt's intent to enhance its influence in the Horn of Africa, counter Ethiopia's growing power, and address security threats in the region.

Ethiopia has expressed significant concern over Egypt's military buildup in Somalia, perceiving it as a national security threat. The presence of Egyptian troops could escalate tensions, especially since Ethiopian forces are also stationed in Somalia as part of the ATMIS (Karr and Borens 2024). This dynamic creates a precarious situation where both nations may find themselves in direct confrontation. Egypt views its engagement in Somalia as a strategy to bolster its security interests against perceived threats from Ethiopia. However, this stance is

unacceptable to Ethiopia, as the situation in Somalia primarily concerns Ethiopians and other nations in the Horn of Africa. Furthermore, Egypt's participation in peacekeeping missions in the region is seen as potentially destabilizing, providing opportunities for extremist groups like Al-Shabaab to acquire weapons and pose further threats to regional security (Ali 2024; Amin 2024).

The local opposition in Somalia to Egyptian involvement is rooted in several significant concerns. Many Somalis perceive the deployment of Egyptian troops as a threat to their national sovereignty, fearing that it could undermine the progress made by Ethiopian forces in stabilizing the region and combating threats from militant groups like Al-Shabaab (Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation 2024). Local leaders and community representatives have voiced their apprehensions that the presence of Egyptian forces might disrupt the security landscape and lead to increased instability. Additionally, there is a growing sentiment among the populace that Egypt's involvement is an attempt to exert control over Somali affairs, which has fueled resentment and distrust towards Egypt (Asem 2024; Ali 2024). This perception is further exacerbated by Egypt's military agreements with Somalia, which many view as a shift in regional power dynamics favoring Egypt at the expense of Somali sovereignty.

Egypt's military cooperation with Somalia can also be interpreted as an attempt to exert political pressure on Ethiopia regarding the GERD negotiations. By enhancing its military footprint in Somalia and strengthening ties with Mogadishu, Egypt seeks to build alliances with Ethiopia's neighbors and create leverage against Addis Ababa (Ali 2024). This strategy reflects a broader Egyptian ambition to reassert its influence in African affairs after years of relative disengagement.

What the Somali Federal Government fails to understand, or perhaps reacts to emotionally in its response to Ethiopia, is that Egypt's military involvement is intended to support Somali forces against threats such as Al-Shabaab. However, this involvement may also destabilize Somalia itself. The deployment of Egyptian troops could provoke local opposition, as some Somali factions might view these forces as foreign occupiers rather than liberators (Ali 2024). This internal dissent

risks undermining the authority of the Somali government and complicating efforts to establish peace and stability in the region.

The deployment of Egyptian troops in Somalia is viewed as a potential threat to the authority of the Somali Federal Government (SFG). The SFG's choice to phase out Ethiopian forces while inviting Egyptian troops has created divisions within Somali politics, raising concerns about national sovereignty and the legitimacy of foreign military presence. Critics argue that this shift could deepen internal divisions and further fragment Somalia's political landscape.

Egypt's troop deployment marks a significant change in its foreign policy, reflecting its strategic interests in countering Ethiopian influence and addressing regional security threats. However, this move carries substantial risks that could destabilize not only Somalia but also the broader Horn of Africa. Increased tensions with Ethiopia may lead to military confrontations, complicate local governance in Somalia, foster proxy conflicts among local actors, and disrupt ongoing peace efforts. Therefore, Egypt's actions require careful management to avoid worsening an already volatile situation.

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Additionally, Egypt's military cooperation with Somalia is seen as part of a larger geopolitical strategy aimed at countering Ethiopia's influence in the region. This alignment has heightened tensions between Somalia and Ethiopia, complicating diplomatic relations and raising the possibility of conflict. There are concerns that Egypt's involvement may not only destabilize Somalia but also draw it into a larger regional rivalry that could have detrimental effects on its fragile political situation.

Recent developments regarding the Nile River and its implications for the riparian countries, particularly South Sudan, have been shaped by escalating tensions over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). The newly established Nile River Basin Commission (NRBC) is tasked with addressing the contentious issue of equitable water use among Nile Basin states. This comes in the wake of the Agreement on the Nile River Basin Cooperative Framework (CFA), which took effect on October 13, 2024. The CFA aims to resolve disputes over Nile water resources within six months, amidst heightened geopolitical tensions in the Horn of Africa. (Okello 2024).

The CFA emphasizes the right of each Nile Basin state to use the waters within its territory and outlines principles for equitable and reasonable utilization. It aims to replace colonial-era treaties that primarily benefited Egypt and Sudan by recognizing the rights of upstream countries (International Water Law Project, 2024). The agreement establishes the Nile River Basin Commission (NRBC) to facilitate cooperation and manage shared water resources effectively. This commission is intended to enhance collaboration among member states in sustainable development and conservation efforts (Nile Basin Initiative, 2024). The CFA requires ratification by six countries to enter into force officially. As of October 2024, five countries have ratified it, with South Sudan being the latest to join. However, Egypt and Sudan have expressed strong opposition to the agreement, arguing that it undermines their historical rights to Nile waters (Khazen 2024). The CFA officially came into force on October 13, 2024. Following this development, Egypt has called for a reassessment of the agreement, emphasizing that it allows upstream countries to undertake projects without downstream consent, which they view as detrimental to their water security (Chang 2024).

## **Resolving Internal Conflicts in Ethiopia to Address External Threats due to GERD**

The current conflict in Ethiopia is characterized by a complex interplay of internal strife and external pressures, particularly in the context of rising Egyptian influence. Following the Tigray War, which lasted from November 2020 to November 2022 and resulted in significant loss of life and displacement, Ethiopia has been grappling with renewed violence involving militia groups from the Amhara and Oromia regions. This resurgence of conflict began in 2021, coinciding with the escalation of tensions during the Tigray War, as the Ethiopian government sought to consolidate control over regional security forces and combat ethnic violence (Council on Foreign Relations 2025).

In this context, Ethiopia's ability to counter Egyptian influence hinges on its success in resolving these internal conflicts through peaceful means. The Ethiopian government has faced criticism for its handling of regional militias and ethnic tensions, particularly as it has engaged in military confrontations with former allies in Amhara and Oromia (Council on Foreign Relations 2025). The ongoing violence not only undermines national stability but also complicates Ethiopia's diplomatic efforts to address external threats, including those posed by Egypt's military involvement in Somalia.

Moreover, Ethiopia's strategic maneuvers, such as signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Somaliland for access to ports, have heightened tensions with Somalia and further strained Ethiopia's regional relationships (Biyenssa 2024). As Egypt strengthens its military ties with Somalia, it risks exacerbating Ethiopia's internal divisions and diverting attention from critical issues that need resolution within the country.

To effectively combat Egyptian influence and stabilize its position in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia must prioritize dialogue and reconciliation among its diverse ethnic groups. This approach would not only foster national unity but also enhance Ethiopia's diplomatic leverage in regional affairs. Peaceful resolution of internal conflicts is essential for establishing a cohesive front against external pressures and ensuring long-term stability in the region.

Ethiopia's ability to counter external influence largely depends on its success in resolving

these internal conflicts peacefully. The Ethiopian government has faced criticism for its handling of regional militias and ethnic tensions, especially as it has engaged in military confrontations with former allies in Amhara and Oromia (Council on Foreign Relations 2025). The ongoing violence not only undermines national stability but also complicates Ethiopia's diplomatic efforts to address external threats, including those posed by Egypt's military involvement in Somalia.

Additionally, Ethiopia's strategic actions—such as signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Somaliland for port access—have heightened tensions with Somalia and strained its regional relationships (Biyensa 2024). This agreement allows Ethiopia to build a naval base and use the port of Berbera, which has angered Somali leaders who view Somaliland as part of their territory. As Egypt strengthens its military ties with Somalia, it risks exacerbating Ethiopia's internal divisions and distracting from critical issues that need resolution within the country. Ethiopia's concerns are compounded by fears that Egypt's involvement could embolden opposition groups or insurgents within its borders. The situation requires careful management to prevent further destabilization in the region.

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Ethiopia should adopt a multifaceted approach. First, fostering national unity is crucial; this involves promoting a sense of national identity among the diverse ethnic groups within the country to mitigate internal divisions. Strengthening diplomatic relations is also essential; Ethiopia should actively engage with regional and international partners to build coalitions that support its interests. Additionally, enhancing military readiness is important; investing in defense capabilities while ensuring that military strategies align with diplomatic efforts can help deter external threats. Public awareness campaigns can play a significant role as well, educating citizens on issues related to water security and regional dynamics, which can garner public support for government initiatives.

Ethiopia must prioritize dialogue and reconciliation among its diverse ethnic groups to combat external influence and stabilize its position in the Horn of Africa. This approach would foster national unity and enhance Ethiopia's diplomatic leverage in regional affairs. Peaceful resolution of internal conflicts is essential for establishing a cohesive front against external pressures and ensuring long-term stability in the region.

### **Egypt role in stabilizing the current situation with Ethiopia**

From Egypt's perspective, shifting public attention towards the Nile issue is no longer a sustainable approach to solve the internal situation. There is a pressing need for a strategic pivot towards dialogue with Ethiopia, aimed at fostering mutual development and addressing the ongoing Nile River conflict. Engaging in constructive discussions is essential for Egypt to redirect public focus from domestic challenges and build a cooperative relationship with Ethiopia (Al-Anani 2020). However, Egypt's involvement in Somalia's affairs is increasingly viewed as counterproductive and may ultimately backfire on its own interests. The Egyptian government must learn from historical precedents, such as the experiences of U.S. soldiers in similar geopolitical contexts, to avoid repeating past mistakes that could complicate its regional strategy (Ali 2024).

To stabilize the current situation with Ethiopia regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), Egypt should consider several strategic recommendations. First, Egypt should prioritize

diplomatic engagement by actively participating in negotiations with Ethiopia and Sudan, fostering a collaborative dialogue that emphasizes mutual benefits and regional stability. This could involve seeking mediation from neutral third parties or international organizations to facilitate discussions.

Second, Egypt can enhance its public diplomacy efforts to effectively communicate its concerns regarding water security with Ethiopia. By raising awareness of the potential impacts of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on its water supply, Egypt can garner support from both Ethiopian citizens and the international community while also addressing domestic concerns.

Moreover, Egypt should explore economic cooperation initiatives with Ethiopia, focusing on shared interests such as trade, infrastructure development, and environmental sustainability. By creating interdependencies, both nations may find common ground that mitigates tensions.

Additionally, Egypt must invest in regional partnerships with other Nile Basin countries in addition to Ethiopia to create a united front that advocates for equitable water resource management. This coalition can help and ensure that all parties have a voice in negotiations and work for mutual interest.

Lastly, addressing internal challenges within Egypt, such as water management and agricultural efficiency, will strengthen its position in negotiations. By demonstrating effective domestic policies that maximize water use, Egypt can bolster its credibility in discussions about the GERD.

By implementing these strategies, Egypt can work towards a more stable and cooperative relationship with Ethiopia concerning the GERD.

### **Western Involvement in Resolving the Current Conflict between Ethiopia and Egypt**

The GERD represents a transformative project for Ethiopia but poses significant challenges for trans boundary water management in the Nile Basin. Continued dialogue and cooperation among the riparian states are essential to address shared concerns and ensure sustainable management of this critical resource.

In the conflict between Ethiopia and Egypt, Western nations can play a significant role in

resolving their dispute, provided they remain impartial and genuinely aim to address the concerns of both countries. At the same time, the West must seriously consider Egypt's involvement in Somalia, which may be intended to either combat or create a psychological threat to Ethiopia. The current situation poses various challenges for Western interests, including geopolitical stability, counterterrorism efforts, water security, and humanitarian concerns.

The escalating tensions between Egypt and Ethiopia could destabilize the Horn of Africa, a region already fraught with conflict. The West has a vested interest in maintaining stability to prevent humanitarian crises that could arise from further conflicts (The Soufan Center 2024). Additionally, Egypt's military support in Somalia may inadvertently empower extremist groups like Al-Shabaab if it is perceived as foreign interference. This could complicate counterterrorism efforts in the region, which are also a priority for Western nations (Ali 2024).

The assertion that former President Donald Trump was attempting to mediate between Egypt and Ethiopia regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is indeed partial. Trump's comments during a press conference in October 2020 suggested a dramatic stance, implying that Egypt might resort to extreme measures against the dam. He stated, "It's a very dangerous situation because Egypt is not going to be able to live that way... They will end up blowing up the dam" (France 24 2020). This statement not only reflects Trump's frustration with Ethiopia's actions but also indicates a lack of a balanced diplomatic approach.

Trump's involvement was characterized by his close alignment with Egypt, particularly under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. He had previously agreed to mediate talks concerning the dam, which had been a source of escalating tension between Egypt and Ethiopia since its inception in 2011 (Amin 2024). However, the mediation efforts ultimately faltered, with Trump himself acknowledging that Ethiopia "broke the deal" that had been arranged (France 24 2020).

This context underscores the complexities of U.S. involvement in the Nile River dispute, where Trump's rhetoric may have inadvertently

heightened tensions rather than fostering constructive dialogue. The situation illustrates how geopolitical interests can complicate mediation efforts, particularly when one party feels threatened by another's developmental projects.

Ethiopia's reaction to former President Donald Trump's remarks about the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) was one of strong condemnation and concern. Following Trump's suggestion that Egypt might resort to blowing up the dam, Ethiopian officials expressed outrage at what they deemed reckless incitement of conflict.

Ethiopia's Foreign Minister summoned the U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, to seek clarification on Trump's statements. He stated that such comments "neither reflect the longstanding partnership and strategic alliance between Ethiopia and the United States nor are acceptable in International Law governing interstate relations" (Ethiopian Embassy 2020). Gedu, the former Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, further emphasized that Ethiopia would not succumb to threats against its sovereignty and would remain committed to trilateral negotiations under the African Union framework.

Additionally, Ethiopia's Consul in Istanbul criticized Trump's remarks as irresponsible and indicative of a lack of understanding regarding the situation. The Ambassador reiterated Ethiopia's commitment to a peaceful resolution based on cooperation and equitable utilization of the Nile's resources (Ethiopian Embassy 2020). Former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn also condemned Trump's comments on social media, asserting that Ethiopia would not be intimidated by such statements.

Overall, Ethiopia viewed Trump's remarks as a dangerous escalation that undermined diplomatic efforts and threatened regional stability.

## Conclusion

Egypt's position in the current Middle Eastern conflicts is shaped by its historical role as a mediator, its geographical significance concerning water security with Ethiopia, its engagement in Somalia for regional stability, and its leadership within the Arab League. As tensions continue to escalate across the region, Egypt must navigate complex domestic pressures while striving to maintain its strategic alliances and address humanitarian concerns arising from ongoing conflicts.

Egypt's dual approach remaining largely silent on the Gaza conflict while actively engaging militarily in Somalia highlights contradictions within its role as a member of the Arab League. While Egypt seeks to present itself as a leader advocating for Palestinian rights, its actions in Somalia suggest a prioritization of national interests over collective Arab solidarity.

This contradictory stance could have significant implications for Egypt's relationships within the Arab League. Many member states expect stronger leadership from Egypt regarding Palestinian issues. However, by focusing on military engagement in Somalia and maintaining a cautious approach toward Israel, Egypt risks alienating it from other Arab nations that are more vocally supportive of Palestinian rights (Al-Anani 2020).

Ethiopia must address its internal conflicts to prevent foreign exploitation, while Egypt should engage with Ethiopia based on mutual benefit. Additionally, Western nations need to play an impartial role in facilitating a resolution to the disputes between the two countries. In summary, Egypt and Ethiopia should seek a peaceful resolution to their differences, focusing on creating a win-win situation for both parties.

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