

# Conflicts in the Nile basin history essay



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The Nile is the longest river in the world, it is 6860 km long, it is supplied by two great river systems, the 1st one is the White Nile (in the Lake Plateau) which is surrounded by Kenya, Uganda, Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Burundi; and the other one is the Blue Nile (in Eritrea and the Ethiopian highlands); while in the north there are Egypt and Sudan that receive their water from the previously mentioned sources.

The Nile River had a great role in making history on its banks, a lot of civilizations and nations were made on them; The Nile Basin consists of 10 nations which are: Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi with a total population of three hundred millions and it is expected to be doubled in the next twenty five years, the basin itself is 3, 000, 000 Km square that covers about 10% of the African continent area; There is no doubt that with the increasing of population, the water requirement is also increased in addition to the water that is needed for agriculture and energy production.

It is may also be important to know that all the basin nations are really poor maybe the poorest in the world (except for Kenya and Egypt) and that poverty increases rates of disease and starvation.

According to the terms of the agreement that was made in 1929 between Britain (the colonial power of Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya, Egypt and Sudan have the absolute right to use 100% of the Nile's water, while in 1959 there was another one between Sudan and Egypt.

Since 1992 a lot of efforts were exerted to push the basin nations towards development and cooperation, and finally in 1999 there was the

establishment of the NBI (Nile Basin Initiative), it was developed by the World Bank, Canadian International Development Agency and the United Nations Development Programme, it was established to decrease the tension between those nations and to help them to develop and gain regional stability by controlling and planning the water resources all together.

Any management of any river basin in the world is complex, while the Nile Basin may be considered to be the most complex one because of its history of poverty, sacrifices, wars and insecurity, and on the other hand, the rapid and non-stoppable population growth on its banks that surely increases water and energy requirements, and that is why the NBI must have a great role in managing all those challenges and ensure the cooperation between all the nations.

Recently the conflicts became even more aggressive between the Nile basin nations when 4 Nile nations which are Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Uganda have together signed an agreement that allows them to use more amounts of Nile waters in development projects and irrigation, meanwhile Egypt and Sudan didn't agree and they convinced Burundi, Eritrea, Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya of not signing on that agreement.

## **Discussion:**

The Challenge:

The Nile Basin consists of 10 nations which are: Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi with a total population of three hundred millions and it is expected to be doubled in the next twenty five years, the basin itself is 3, 000, 000 Km square that

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The River Nile is 6672 km long and it is the second longest river in the whole world, and it is supplied by 2 main sources, the first one comes from Lake Victoria and forms the White Nile that passes through Uganda and ends in Sudan while the second source is in the Ethiopian highlands and forms the Blue Nile that meets the White Nile at Khartoum then it continues northward to pass through Egypt and ends into the Mediterranean Sea.

The River Nile for Egypt is everything; People in Egypt has always been connected to the Nile from the day of their birth till the moment of their death; Historically, in the fifth century B. C. Herodotus described Egypt as the gift of the Nile, and after Nasser built the dam at Aswan, the connection was reinforced more and more, Egypt depends mainly on the River Nile as a water supply and with the rapid increase in population, the water demands become more.

In 1929 an agreement was held between Britain and Egypt and another one in 1959 that was held between Egypt and Sudan, both have given the downstream nations their natural right of the Nile's waters, construction of dams was approved and the water was divided as follows: Egypt has forty eight billions cubic meters, Sudan has four billions, and thirty two million will end into the Mediterranean Sea; now that was acceptable then because the rest of the upstream countries were not developed, and their population was relatively low, today those countries need to develop and they need to

develop new projects and construct dams and that would be a high threat to the downstream nations as the downstream nations want to renegotiate about the old treaty, on the other hand, Egypt has refused to renegotiate and considers its share of water a natural right and became prepared for any military action as Egypt is known as the most powerful military power in Africa.

Egypt receives 97.5% of the Nile's water and Sudan receives 77%, however, it is very important to make clear that the water distribution between the Nile Nations is fair because of the following:

The 7 upstream nations are located in humid areas they have rainfall average range from 1250 to 1500mm annually, on the other hand it is 500mm in Sudan and Eritrea while it is not more than 15mm in Egypt annually.

Egypt's climate is hyper arid with high temperature that will cause rapid evaporation and will definitely cause marked losses of water resources in Egypt.

The upstream nations receive about 1500 billion cubic meters every year while on the other hand Egypt receives only 85 cubic billion meters every year and that equals 5-7% of the total water resources.

The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI)

In 1999 the Nile Basin Initiative was established and developed by the World Bank, CIDA, and the UNDP, it was established in order to decrease the

conflicts and the tensions between the Nile basin nations and help them to cooperate and develop the water resources of the Nile.

It was supported by a lot of donors including Denmark, Canada, Germany, Japan, Finland, Italy, Norway, the UK, the Netherlands, the US, Sweden, the African Development Bank, GEF, FAO, the World Bank and UNDP.

The NBI has stated that they can make successful 100% development that will definitely lead to more food and energy production, development of industry, development of transportation, and other regional activities development.

The projects of the NBI include fishing projects, management of water, management of the floods, reduction of the pollution, and finally controlling the waterborne diseases.

Management of water resources is considered to be a very complex process in any river basin, and if you realized that the Nile basin has always been characterized by poverty, water scarcity, huge population, and long history of wars and insecurity then you will understand how complex and difficult it can be.

NBI knew that cooperative development is the only way for the greatest results and maximum benefits to all of the Nile's basin nations, the NBI provides the shared vision and a base for cooperative development, and its primary objectives are:

Developing the water resources of the Nile Basin in an equitable way in order to ensure:

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Security

Prosperity

Peace

Ensure the optimal use of the Nile Basin water resources

Ensure joint action and cooperation between all the Nile Basin nations

Eliminate poverty and enhance economic renaissance

Transforming the plan into action and the dream to a fact

Conflict in the Nile Basin

In Entebbe, Uganda, 14-2-2010, 4 upriver nations which are Ethiopia, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Uganda have started and signed an agreement that allows them to have more management of the Nile waters to use them in development projects and irrigation.

That agreement was made while the negotiations with the downstream nations were standstill; on the other hand the reaction of the downstream nations was not sending any delegations but they have used diplomacy in convincing Burundi, Kenya, Eritrea, and Congo not to sign on that agreement.

The 7 upstream nations now consider the old treaties unfair and demand more water to be used for irrigation and development projects.

Egypt cleared that cooperation between the Nile Basin nations is the only way to achieve maximum benefits and that the upstream nations can make better use of the water resources they already have (rainfall), however, the upstream nations are threatening that they would sign another agreement that will exclude Sudan and Egypt and distribute the Nile waters in a new way; that agreement is considered to be a death sentence to all the Egyptians, and that was what made Egypt announce that it will take whichever action may be found necessary to secure its share in the River Nile.

Another important fact to be mentioned is that Israel is participating in building dams in Uganda on the Nile waters and that increases the worries and the tension of the Egyptians.

It is matter of time for Sudan and Egypt to specify their reaction against that new agreement, and they have to make a serious act to protect their rights of the Nile's water; every country has to pay everything to protect its national security.

Solutions and recommendations:

Basin nations are depending on each other, they are all linked to the River Nile, if Nile nations have cooperated and managed Nile waters all together, synergy will be created between them and conflicts between them will be resolved, and regional stability and development will be achieved; That could only happen if all the Nile nations have reached a legal agreement between all of them based on trust, shared interest, and common bond.



Collaborative management will help in reaching peace between all the Nile nations, because if we managed to share water, the struggle for life will disappear, and battles between tribes, clans, families, neighbors and nations will also disappear.

The Basin Nations must know that natural resources (water) can bring peace and cooperation instead of fighting each other, they can use that water to build new culture and new developments.

Another useful solution is to take into consideration the opinions of the public including farmers, women, different organizations, and fishers.

Finally there must be management schemes that determine the rightful share of water for each country according to its needs and in order to help all the Nile nations to use the Nile's water today and in the future with easy accessibility and based on the shared interests and the broad participation.

## **Conclusion:**