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COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, ART, AND HUMNITIES

SCHOOL OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

“Hydro-Diplomacy and Strategic Communication: A Case study of the Ethio-Sudan-Egypt
Trilateral Dialogue on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (2019-2024)”

A RESEARCH PAPER SUBMITTED TO ADDIS ABABA

UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MA THESIS

By

HANNA DEMISSIE

STUDENT ID GSE / 2621/15

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION, EXTENSION CLASS

APRIL 2025

Addis Ababa Ethiopia

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby affirm that the research work presented under the title “Hydro-Communication Challenges and Opportunities: An Analysis of the Trilateral Dialogue on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) Between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt (2019–2024)” is my original contribution. It has not been submitted to any other institution nor published. Elsewhere. All sources consulted or quoted have been properly acknowledged through appropriate referencing.

I take full responsibility for any errors or oversights in the content of this thesis.

Hanna Demissie

Signature

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

April 16, 2025

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by **Hanna Demissie**, entitled:

“Hydro-Communication Challenges and Opportunities: An Analysis of the Trilateral Dialogue on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) Between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt (2019–2024)”

has been submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master’s Degree in Journalism and Communication. It complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and scholarly quality.

Name	Role	Signature	Date
Dr. Abdulaziz Dino	Advisor	_____	_____
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ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
CBMs	Confidence-Building Measures
CFA	Cooperative Framework Agreement
DoP	Declaration of Principles
DHCP	Digital Hydro-Communication Platform
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
IPoE	International Panel of Experts
JMCM	Joint Media Coordination Mechanism
MW	Megawatt
PR	Public Relations
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
THDCTF	Trilateral Hydro-Diplomacy Communication Task Force
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USA	United States of America

Abstract

This Thesis explores the dynamics of hydro-communication in the context of trilateral dialogue between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) from 2019 to 2024. The research investigates how water strategy communication serves both as a mechanism for conflict mitigation and a strategic tool for advancing national interest in geopolitical sensitive Nile Basin. Using qualitative content analysis, the study analyses official statements, media narratives and regional diplomatic engagements to assess how communication strategies shape the negotiation process and influence stakeholder positions.

The thesis explores the role of regional and international actors, the framing of water security and sovereignty, and the impact of historical grievances and identity-based narratives on diplomatic outcomes. Finding suggests that while hydro diplomatic as enables temporary de-escalation and recurring engagement, fundamental asymmetries in power relations and competing national discourses have prevented the establishment of a lasting cooperative framework. The study highlights how strategy communication -through both official diplomatic and public messaging has been employed to manage perception, influence international opinion, and reinforce national legitimacy

Ultimately, by focusing the GERD case the research contributes to deeper understanding of transboundary water governance and the interplay between discourse power and negotiation it underscores the importance of inclusive dialogue trust building and transparent communication in resolving complex international water disputes. The finding offers practical insights for policy makers. Diplomats and scholars engaged in hydro-diplomacy conflict resolution and regional cooperation.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction:

Hydro communication refers to the exchange of information, dialogue, and negotiation processes between stakeholders involved in the management of shared water resources. It encompasses technical, diplomatic, and public communication aimed at addressing disputes, fostering cooperation, and ensuring equitable and sustainable water resource management.

Cascão and Zeitoun (2010) highlight that communication in hydro-politics plays a dual role: it can either exacerbate conflicts through the dissemination of opposing narratives or facilitate cooperation through dialogue and trust-building mechanisms. Effective hydro communication involves transparency in data sharing, inclusive dialogue processes, and the establishment of shared norms for engagement.

Hydro-communication encompasses the examination and implementation of communication strategies pertaining to water resources, role of communication in shaping political discourse related to water, impacting decisions regarding its management, distribution, and conservation, frequently within the frameworks of environmental sustainability, social justice, and international relations.

This study seeks to analyse the communication problems and opportunities in the trilateral discussions involving these three nations from 2019 to 2024. The study will largely examine how communication tactics have either intensified conflicts and tensions or aided in their resolution.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has emerged as a crucial issue in the diplomatic and political relations between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. Concerns have emerged regarding the fair distribution of Nile River resources, water security, and national interests owing to this dam, the largest hydroelectric power project in Africa. Discussions and interactions among the three states have become increasingly vital for shaping the future of regional hydro-politics and the joint utilisation of the Nile's resources. This is because to the GERD approaching completion.

Hydro communication denotes the utilisation of aquatic technology or systems to provide communication, primarily in subaqueous settings. This domain includes several methodologies and instruments for conveying data or messages across water, including sonar, acoustic waves, and hydrophones. Hydro communication is essential in sectors such as marine research, underwater exploration, naval defence, oil and gas exploration, and environmental monitoring, where conventional radio-frequency communications fail due to the absorption and scattering of electromagnetic waves in aquatic environments

1.2 Background of study

Water a fundamental resource for human survival, development and ecological balance, has historical been a source of cooperation and conflict. In trans boundary river basins, where water resource cross political boundaries, disputes often arise over control, and usage .one of the most geopolitically sensitive and strategically significant trans boundaries rives is the Nile (ABAY) which sherd by 11 countries in Africa.

The recent contraction of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) a massive hydropower project in Africa imitative by Ethiopia on the Abay (Nile) Rever in 2011. Promising transformative development for Ethiopia the dam has also reshaped regional politics and reignited long standing tensions among Ethiopia Sudan and Egypt

The GERD symbolize Ethiopia's aspirations for energy security and development ,while Egypt and Sudan have expressed concerns over its potential impacts on downstream water flow and national water security .Since 2011 and more intensively between 2019-2014,the three countries have complex and often contentious negotiations These interactions have evolve in to a cas study of hydro-diplomacy the use of diplomatic tools to address water conflicts and strategic communication where narratives ,framing and public messaging shape both domestic and international perceptions

Whaile legal and technical negotiations have dominated much of the discourse Surrounding GERD Communication in its forms has emerging as a powerful yet under examined force in shaping the course of trilateral relations. The period between 2019 and 2024 has been especially critical, marked by intense diplomatic exchanges, public messaging campaigns, media battles,

and efforts at regional and international mediation. Despite numerous rounds of negotiation and mediation by bodies such as the African Unions and United Nations, the three nations Ethiopia Sudan and Egypt have struggled to reach a comprehensive, binding agreement.

Countries that share trans boundary rivers, such as the Nile, Ganges, or Colorado River, must negotiate water allocation while considering the requirements of agriculture, industry, and local communities. Hydro-political communication comprises negotiating procedures, media portrayals, public diplomacy, and advocacy initiatives that influence the perception and resolution of water issues globally, as noted by Waterbury (2002) Understanding the relationships among nations, local communities, and international organisations is essential as they address water-related concerns, ranging from the management of shared resources to the prevention of disputes over water.

1.2.1. Elements of Hydro-Communication GERD Dispute Context: 2019–2024

With a projected capacity of more than 6,000 MW, Ethiopia's Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is the biggest power plant in Africa having started construction in 2011. Situated on the Blue Nile, a significant tributary of the Nile River, it is Ethiopia has much economic potential from the dam, but it also causes conflict with Egypt and Sudan both of whom rely mostly on the Nile for water.

Though Sudan also stands to gain from more controlled water flows, Egypt is worried about the possible reduction of its share of Nile water since it depends so much on the river for 95% of its water supply. The Roseries Dam in particular may affect the flow of water into its own reservoirs. Asserting that Ethiopia must maximise the river's economic potential, it has presented the project as a necessary component of its national sovereignty and progress.

1.2.2. Trilateral Dialogue Process 2019–2024 2019–2020: Rising Tensions and First Negotiations

- Starting Tensions: The GERD project's formalisation in the late 2000s sparked a diplomatic conversation, but as Ethiopia started building the tensions grew. Seeking assurances for their water rights, Egypt and Sudan had expressed serious worries about the filling and operation of the project by 2019

- US-led Mediation (2019–2020) Under the cover of the United States and the World Bank, the three countries engaged in talks to heal their divisions in the last months of 2019 and early 2020. Though Egypt and Sudan expressed discontent with some of the deal, the Washington negotiations resulted in a tentative agreement in early 2020 that described processes for the filling of the dam.

Ethiopia maintained on its right to move forward with the dam's filling free from major limitations, claiming that, should the project be properly organised, it would not significantly affect countries downstream. 2020–2021: Rising tensions as Ethiopia starts to fill the dam
A diplomatic issue resulted from Ethiopia beginning to fill the GERD reservoir in July 2020. Claiming it broke earlier agreements on the dam's filling, Egypt and Sudan also condemned this unilateral action.

Rhetoric and Regional Tensions: Egypt's rhetoric grew harsher as President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi warned that it will not tolerate any compromise of its water rights. Sudan voiced worries on the possible effects on its own flooding and dams. African Union Mediation (2020): The main process mediator turned out to be the African Union (AU). Nevertheless, Ethiopia and Egypt stayed at conflict over the technicality of the dam's functioning and the filling schedule, therefore the mediation attempts were mainly fruitless.

This backdrop of high stakes diplomatic reveals that more than legal framework or hydrological data the ability or frailer to communicate openly, convincingly and constrictively has significantly influenced the Perspecta for cooperation. communication strategies adopted by each nation as well as their respective media environments and public narratives, have either escalated mistrust or opened opportunities for dialogue.

In this context this study explores Strategic communication as a critical variable in the management of transboundary water disputes, using the GERD as a case study .it situates hydro - diplomacy n ot only in corridors of negotiation room but also in how states frame their national interests. Manage public perceptions, engages third parties, and leverage regional platforms.as water security intensifies and climate uncertainties loom. understanding how communication can

serve as both a bridge and a barrier becomes not only timely, but essential for sustainable governance and peacebuilding

2. Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution.

Conflicts over water, particularly in areas with shared water resources, are a major issue in world politics. Hydro-political communication analyses the use of diplomatic channels to address conflicts, frequently via treaties, conventions, or international accords. Effective communication methods are essential for cultivating mutual understanding and trust between nations or groups, establishing a foundation for dialogue and collaboration to avert possible crises. This encompasses negotiations regarding water-sharing agreements and the creation of cross-border institutions to equitably manage water resources.

3. Media and Public Perception

The media significantly influences public comprehension and perception of water-related issues. The media may shape the discourse surrounding water policies at both national and international levels, impacting public perception and political motivation to take action, influence political agendas and effect policy change by presenting water issues through particular narratives. Water is not merely a concern of national security or economic advancement; it is also a crucial element in tackling social and environmental justice issues. Effective communication can enhance understanding of the social and human rights dimensions of water governance, promoting policies that guarantee equitable distribution and prioritise the needs of marginalised populations.

4. Climate Change and Water Security

The escalating threat of climate change has rendered water security a critical concern in Hydro-communication examines how policymakers and international organisations convey the urgency of addressing climate-induced water crises, promote adaptation and resilience strategies, and facilitate cross-border cooperation to alleviate the impacts of climate change on water resources.

5. Technological Advancements in Water Management

Innovations in water technology, including desalination, water reclamation, and intelligent irrigation systems, possess the capacity to revolutionise water utilisation and conservation. Hydro-political communication examines the political, economic, and social ramifications of these technologies, particularly in nations experiencing severe water scarcity.

1.2.1 Challenges and Opportunities in Hydro Communication

Hydro communication faces several challenges that often impede effective collaboration among riparian states in shared water management. A significant obstacle in hydro communication, especially regarding transboundary water resources, is the widespread mistrust stemming from historical grievances and imbalanced agreements among nations. This challenge holds considerable importance as it disrupts collaboration and the efficient management of shared water resources, essential for agriculture, drinking water, energy production, and regional development.

1.2.2 Colonial Legacies and Historical Grievances

A primary challenge is the pervasive mistrust rooted in historical grievances and unequal agreements. Rivers, lakes, and other essential water resources are shared by many African nations and transcend national boundaries. However, the agreements and borders from the colonial era frequently led to unfair distribution of water resources. Natural water basins were not taken into consideration when colonial powers defined their borders, resulting in nations having unequal access to common water resources, despite the fact that they may be highly dependent on the same water sources for their existence and development, some nations were given more authority over significant rivers or reservoirs, while others were only given restricted access.

For instance, the 1929 and 1959 Nile Water Agreements granted Egypt and Sudan extensive control over the Nile River, excluding upstream nations like Ethiopia. This historical exclusion has fueled tensions and fostered a lack of trust, as noted by Waterbury (2002). Similarly, Zeitoun and Mirumachi (2008) argue that historical power asymmetries often result in "hydro-hegemony," where dominant downstream states control the discourse, limiting equitable negotiations.

Another significant challenge is the divergence in national interests, which complicates hydro communication. In the case of the Nile Basin, Ethiopia views the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) as a symbol of economic progress and energy security, while Egypt considers it an existential threat to its water resources. This stark contrast has created a communication stalemate, with negotiations often dominated by accusations rather than dialogue (Swain, 2011).

Adding to this is the issue of data transparency, as countries often manipulate or withhold information to gain strategic advantages. A lack of clear and reliable data-sharing mechanisms has been a persistent source of contention, as seen in both the GERD talks and similar disputes, such as those in the Indus Basin (Gleick, 1993). Lastly, the limited involvement of diverse stakeholders, including civil society and technical experts, restricts the inclusivity of hydro communication. Negotiations primarily involving government officials often fail to address the broader concerns and perspectives of affected communities, as Susskind and Islam (2012) emphasize.

1.2.3 Influence on Hydro Communication

The pervasive distrust and past grievances obstruct efficient hydro communication, essential for the management of shared water resources. Effective communication is crucial for promoting transparency, facilitating collaboration, and resolving disagreements. When a nation autonomously decides to expand water infrastructure, such as building a dam or irrigation system, without consulting adjacent countries, it may exacerbate tensions. This may lead to diplomatic strains, reduced cooperation, and missed opportunities for collaborative resolutions. Furthermore, insufficient communication, coordination, and mutual comprehension across nations might hinder initiatives to tackle water scarcity, pollution, and the repercussions of climate change. Effective hydro communication systems require a foundation of trust and a commitment to open, transparent dialogue. In the absence of this, nations may have a diminished propensity to exchange critical information regarding water resources or engage in collaborative solutions.

The widespread mistrust and historical grievances hinder effective hydro communication, which is crucial for the management of shared water resources. Effective communication is essential for fostering transparency, encouraging collaboration, and addressing conflicts. However, a lack of trust among nations complicates the sharing of essential data regarding water quality, usage, and potential risks such as flooding or drought

Despite these challenges, hydro communication presents several opportunities for fostering cooperation and mutual benefit. Confidence-building measures, such as transparent data-sharing platforms and joint technical studies, can significantly enhance trust and dialogue. For example,

Elhance (1999) highlights how the establishment of shared technical committees, like the Mekong River Commission, has improved cooperative water management in other regions. Similarly, the International Panel of Experts (IPoE) formed during the GERD negotiations demonstrated the potential of technical collaboration in reducing misunderstandings (Yihdego et al., 2017). Another opportunity lies in multi-track diplomacy, which broadens the negotiation process by involving civil society, academia, and regional organizations. This inclusive approach can bridge communication gaps and ensure that all stakeholders have a voice, as argued by Islam and Susskind (2012).

Advancements in technology also offer solutions to longstanding communication challenges. Tools like remote sensing and real-time monitoring systems can improve data transparency and reduce disputes over water availability. Cascão and Nicol (2016) suggest that satellite imagery and advanced monitoring techniques could play a pivotal role in enhancing transparency in the GERD talks. Additionally, third-party mediation by neutral organizations or states can help facilitate dialogue and resolve disputes. The African Union's involvement in the GERD negotiations, for instance, underscores the importance of regional leadership in fostering cooperation, as noted by Tadesse (2020). Together, these opportunities demonstrate the potential for transforming hydro communication into a platform for collaboration and sustainable water management, even in the face of complex geopolitical challenges.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has been a focal point of regional diplomacy and hydro-politics in the Nile Basin since its announcement in 2011. Its communication history reveals a complex interplay of negotiations, mistrust, and intermittent cooperation among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. Early on, Ethiopia's unilateral decision to begin construction without consulting downstream nations heightened tensions. Egypt, relying on historical water agreements (1929 and 1959), perceived the GERD as a potential existential threat, while Sudan displayed mixed reactions, recognizing both benefits and risks (Waterbury, 2002).

Formal trilateral negotiations began in 2013, marked by the signing of the **International Panel of Experts (IPoE)** agreement to conduct a joint technical review of the dam's impact. However, disputes over data transparency and conflicting interpretations of technical findings soon emerged (Yihdego, Khalil, & Rieu-Clarke, 2017). Despite the signing of the **Declaration of Principles (DoP)** in 2015, which emphasized equitable use and no significant harm, progress

stalled as communication challenges persisted, including mistrust and public rhetoric that undermined dialogue (Swain, 2011).

Efforts by mediators like the African Union (AU) in 2020 brought temporary momentum but failed to produce a binding agreement. Tadesse (2020) notes that Ethiopia's emphasis on sovereignty and Egypt's focus on water security remained key sticking points. Sudan's shifting position, influenced by concerns over dam safety and water management, further complicated communication dynamics.

The GERD communication history underscores the need for transparent data-sharing mechanisms, trust-building, and inclusive dialogue to overcome entrenched barriers (Cascão & Nicol, 2016). This study aims to examine the communication challenges and opportunities in the trilateral discussions among these three nations from 2019 to 2024. The study will primarily focus on how communication strategies have exacerbated disagreements and tensions or facilitated resolution.

1.3 Statement of the Problem:

Despite more than a decade of dialogue, no legally binding agreement has been reached on the operation and filling of the GERD. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), has become a flashpoint in hydro-politics, sparking significant diplomatic tensions among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. Despite numerous negotiations since the dam's announcement in 2011, an enduring agreement remains elusive, underscoring fundamental challenges in hydro communication among the riparian states. These challenges have persisted despite the signing of the Declaration of Principles (DoP) in 2015 and multiple mediation efforts by regional and international bodies such as the African Union (AU) and the United States (Yihdego, Khalil, & Rieu-Clarke, 2017; Tadesse, 2020).

This study identifies a gap in understanding how hydro diplomacy and strategic communication interact in shaping both the process and outcomes of transboundary water negotiations. A significant gap exists in understanding the role of effective communication mechanisms in resolving such disputes. Studies like those by Zeitoun and Warner (2006) on hydro-hegemony focus on the role of power asymmetries in shaping water diplomacy, while Cascão and Zeitoun (2010) emphasize

trust deficits in transboundary water governance. However, these studies often lack a nuanced exploration of how communication strategies can transition from adversarial to cooperative frameworks, especially in multi-stakeholder contexts such as the GERD. Furthermore, while the geopolitical and legal dimensions of the GERD dispute have been extensively studied (Waterbury, 2002; Swain, 2011), limited attention has been given to the communication challenges that exacerbate the stalemate.

Ethiopia's framing of the GERD as developmental imperative clashes with Egypt's portrayal of the dam as an existential threat. Sudan, meanwhile, has oscillated between support and caution, complicating trilateral negotiations. This divergence in narratives has been amplified by inconsistent data-sharing, public posturing, and the exclusion of civil society and technical experts from key discussions (Cascão & Nicol, 2016). The absence of transparent and inclusive communication frameworks has hindered trust-building, perpetuating a cycle of accusations and failed negotiations.

Communication. Mistrust, historical grievances, and power imbalances hinder the management of the Nile's shared water resources; nonetheless, there exists opportunity for enhanced collaboration through efficient communication, data sharing, and diplomacy. The successful negotiation of the GERD may provide a precedent for the management of transboundary water resources throughout Africa and beyond, illustrating how hydro communication can be essential in converting water conflicts into prospects for regional collaboration, peace, and sustainable development.

This study seeks to address the gaps identified in existing research by focusing on the role of hydro communication in the GERD negotiations. Most exciting literature focuses on legal and hydrological dimensions with limited attention to the communication strategy employed by the riparian states.

1.4 Research Objectives:

1.4.1 General Objectives:

The main objective of this study is to analyze the role of hydro diplomacy and strategic communication in Ethio Sudan Egypt trilateral dialogue on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) between 2019-2024

Specific objectives are to

- Identify the major communication Strategies and challenges those have impeded Ethio-Sudan-Egypt trilateral dialogue on the GERD.
- Explore the communication strategies used by Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt to address concerns about water resource management.
- To analyze the impact of international mediations and third-party interventions on the communication process.
- Assess how the historical narratives and national identities influenced diplomatic position

1.5 Research Questions:

1. In the context of the GERD dialogue between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, what are the most significant communication issues that have impeded the implementation of effective negotiation?
2. What communication tactics have the three countries utilized in order to maintain their respective national interests within the context of the trilateral communication?
3. How have Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt used strategic communication in the GERD negotiation
4. What are the impacts of major international bodies on the communication dynamics that have been taking place inside the trilateral dialogue?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to a growing body of scholarship on water diplomacy and communication in the international relations. by focusing on the GERD case. it offers particular insights into how states use both formal diplomacy and public narratives to advance their interests in transboundary water formal disputes. The findings may benefit policy makers, diplomats, and scholars seeking more effective mechanisms for conflict resolution, especially in resource and politically volatile regions. Moreover, the research highlights the need to integrate communicative with technical and legal approaches in water governance.

will enhance the comprehension of hydro-diplomacy and the significance of communication in trans-boundary water management. This will offer insights into enhancing communication tactics to promote collaboration among nations sharing water resources, with wider ramifications for international water politics.

1.7 Scope and Limitations

The study will examine the trilateral interaction from 2019 to 2024, a very critical phase of the GERD negotiations marked by intensified dialogue and heightened tensions. It draws on official documents, media reports, speeches, and secondary sources. Due to the sensitivity and confidentiality of high-level diplomacy, the study does not include classified or insider information, and its analysis is limited to publicly available materials. Furthermore, the study emphasizes communication and diplomacy rather than technical or hydrological modelling.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

This study encounters several limitations that may influence the depth and scope of its findings. One significant limitation is access to data, as the GERD negotiations involve sensitive political and national security interests. Much of the high-level communication remains confidential, and the study relies primarily on secondary sources and publicly available materials. This dependence on secondary sources, including media reports and scholarly works, introduces the

risk of bias, as many of these sources reflect national interests, potentially compromising the objectivity of the analysis.

Another limitation is the evolving nature of the GERD negotiations. The ongoing dispute means that positions, communication strategies, and dynamics are subject to change, which the study may not fully capture, especially in relation to recent developments or future shifts. Additionally, the unique geopolitical, hydrological, and historical context of the GERD negotiations in the Nile Basin may limit the generalizability of the findings to other transboundary water disputes

While this study gives important bits of knowledge into hydro-communication flow within the GERD negotiations, a few confinements ought to be recognized:

Language and translation barriers also pose a challenge, as key documents and materials are often in Amharic, Arabic, or other regional languages. Relying on translations can result in the loss of nuance and context, potentially affecting the accuracy of the analysis. Furthermore, the study's focus on hydro communication may not fully encompass the perspectives of all stakeholders, particularly local communities, non-governmental organizations, and technical experts, who are often excluded from publicly documented negotiations.

Lastly, the temporal scope of the study, which covers the period from 2019 to 2024, excludes earlier developments and may miss critical insights into the evolution of hydro communication in the GERD dispute. Despite these limitations, the study aims to provide a balanced and transparent analysis, while identifying areas for further research to address these gaps and challenges.

2 CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) negotiations represent a complex and evolving challenge in the field of hydro communication. These negotiations involve multiple stakeholders with competing interests, primarily Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, whose historical, political, and economic stakes in the Nile River have deeply shaped the communication dynamics. The following literature review examines the key challenges, opportunities, and underlying factors influencing communication in the GERD dispute, drawing on various academic perspectives.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is a crucial issue that is at the center of the hydro-political situation in the region. When it comes to understanding the dynamics of the conversation between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, the literature on hydro-diplomacy, communication problems, and international river basin management provides vital insights. The following three important themes will be the primary emphasis of this review: hydro-diplomacy, trans-boundary water conflicts, and communication tactics in international negotiations.

The transboundary water management and hydro communication has been the subject of a significant amount of research in both international and regional settings. One of the most notable examples of a transboundary water system is the Nile River, which is shared by eleven different nations

2.2 Hydro -Communication Concepts and approaches

Hydro -communication often described as water diplomatic tools and negotiations to manage and resolve conflicts over shared water resources. It involves multilateral, bilateral, or regional efforts to ensure equitable and sustainable use of transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers According to *zeitoun and Mirumachi (2008)*, *hydro diplomacy combines elements of international law, environmental governance, and political negotiation.*

The literature distinguishes between Cooperative hydro diplomacy, which seek mutual benefits and regional integration and conflictual hydro politics, where water becomes a tool of leverage or

contestation. *Wolf (2007) emphasizes that while water disputes rarely lead to open conflict, they often result in political tension, particularly when asymmetries of power, mistrust, and lack of institutional frameworks exist.*

In the case of the Nile Basin (ABAY), hydro-communication has historically been constrained by upstream-downstream dynamics, colonial -era treaties, and the absence of a fully inclusive legal agreement on water allocation in the region. The GERD negotiation reflects both the opportunities and limitations of hydro-diplomacy in politically charged, resource scarce regions.

2:3 Strategic Communication in International Diplomacy

Strategic communication in diplomacy refers to the deliberate use of messaging, narrative framing and public discourse to shape perception, build alliances, and influence both domestic and international audience .it include speeches, media statements, diplomatic communiqué and symbolic actions designed to legitimized a state's position

Scholars like Etman (2008) and Nye (2004) connects strategic communications to the exercise of “Soft power” allowing states to frame narratives in way that support their foreign policy goals. In conflicts negotiations such as those over transboundary resources, strategic communication serves to rally domestic support, apply international pressure and manage reputation risks

In the GERD negotiation, Ethiopia strategically framed the dam as a symbol of national developments and African self-reliance, while Egypt by contrast framed the GERD as existential threat and emphasized its historical rights to Nile waters under the 1929 and 1959 treaties *Gebreluel G (2024)*. has positioned itself as a guardian of downstream water security and regional stability Sudan has used more fluid communication altered between supporting Ethiopia and aligning with Egypt, often using strategic ambiguity to safeguard its national interest at a times aligning with either side based on shifting national interest and political calculation. These divergent communication strategies are central to the diplomatic deadlock and shift alliances observed during the 2019-2024.

2:4 Transboundary water conflict and cooperation

Transboundary water governance is shaped by legal, hydrological, and political factors. In many basins the absence of enforceable agreements and joint institutions exacerbates disputes

Salman's (2013) In the Nile Basin power in balance and legal asymmetries have historical prevented equitable cooperation. the 1929 and the 1959 agreement between Egypt and Sudan excluded upstream states like Ethiopia and allocated the majority of Nile waters to downstream states *Cascao A.E & Nicol, A (2016)*

Cascao emphasize the role of "Political economical of water" in shaping Nile geopolitics noting that Ethiopians dam projects mark a shift towards 'counter hegemonic' hydro politics the GERD disputes traditional water allocation patterns and challenges Egypt's dominance, resulting in intensified diplomatic conflict. cooperative efforts, such as the Nile Basin imitative (NBI) have sought to promote dialogue and information sharing, but the lack of binding agreements have undermined its effectiveness scholars such as Elhance suggest that water conflicts are really caused scarcity alone but are often symptoms of deep political and historical disputes

When it comes to understanding the dynamics of the conversation between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, the literature on hydro-diplomacy, communication problems, and international river basin management provides vital insights. The following three important themes will be the primary emphasis of this review: hydro diplomacy, transboundary water conflicts, and communication tactics in international negotiations.

One of the primary communication challenges in the GERD negotiations is mistrust between the riparian states. According to Waterbury (2002), historical agreements, particularly the 1929 and 1959 Nile Water Treaties, have contributed to a sense of power asymmetry, where Egypt and Sudan hold privileged rights over the Nile's waters. This historical context has generated a lack of trust from downstream countries, particularly Egypt, regarding Ethiopia's intentions with the GERD. Mistrust exacerbates tensions, making negotiations more difficult and creating an atmosphere of suspicion rather than cooperation.

A critical factor in the communication challenges is data transparency. Zeitoun and Warner (2006) highlight how uneven access to technical and environmental data can escalate conflicts in shared water resources. In the case of the GERD, Ethiopia's reluctance to share detailed data regarding the dam's impact has been a point of contention. This has led to a breakdown in communication, with Egypt and Sudan expressing concerns over the dam's potential effects on

water flow and downstream water security. The lack of consistent, open data-sharing mechanisms between the states has perpetuated miscommunications and misunderstandings.

The issue of conflicting national narratives further complicates the communication process. Swain (2011) notes that Ethiopia perceives the GERD as a critical developmental project that will provide essential energy and economic benefits, while Egypt views it as a threat to its water security, given the Nile's vital role in sustaining its population and economy. This divergence in narratives creates a communication barrier, where each party interprets the actions of the others through the lens of its own national interests. Cascão and Nicol (2016) further assert that these differing national perspectives lead to an “adversarial” mode of communication, hindering constructive dialogue.

However Transboundary water conflicts are not uncommon in shared river basins around the world. Studies on the Indus River (Pakistan-India) and the Jordan River (Israel-Palestine-Jordan) show how shared water resources often lead to tensions when one country seeks to maximize its usage to the detriment of others. Gleick (1993) discusses the concept of "water wars," emphasizing that water scarcity can exacerbate geopolitical tensions, especially when cooperative frameworks are lacking.

2.3 Opportunities to Enhance Hydro Communication

Despite the challenges, there are several opportunities for enhancing communication and fostering cooperation. One significant opportunity lies in the establishment of confidence-building measures (CBMs). Tadesse (2020) suggests that creating platforms for transparent dialogue, such as joint technical committees and data-sharing initiatives, could help mitigate mistrust and enhance collaboration. By allowing the parties to engage in regular, structured communication, CBMs can build trust and create a foundation for more cooperative water management.

The use of technological tools presents another opportunity to overcome communication barriers. Gleick (1993) emphasizes the role of advanced technologies, such as satellite imagery and remote sensing, in providing real-time data and monitoring systems that can reduce disputes over water availability. In the case of the GERD, such technologies could facilitate transparency and

foster a more evidence-based approach to negotiations, reducing the potential for misunderstanding and manipulation of data.

Furthermore, multi-stakeholder engagement can improve hydro communication by involving a broader range of actors, including civil society, technical experts, and regional organizations. Islam and Susskind (2012) argue that expanding the negotiation process beyond government officials to include a diverse array of stakeholders ensures that the concerns of all parties, including affected communities, are addressed. This inclusive approach enhances the legitimacy of the negotiations and increases the likelihood of a durable agreement.

2.4 National Interests and Narratives in the GERD Negotiations

The differing national interests and narratives of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt are central to shaping communication dynamics in the GERD dispute. *Yihdego, Khalil, and Rieu-Clarke (2017)* discuss how Ethiopia's position centers on the dam's economic and energy benefits, positioning it as a means to alleviate poverty and stimulate development. Conversely, Egypt perceives the dam as a threat to its long-standing water security, where even minor fluctuations in water flow could have catastrophic consequences for its agriculture and population. Sudan, positioned between these two extremes, has interests in both benefiting from the dam's energy and irrigation benefits while ensuring its own water security. These competing interests create divergent communication strategies that complicate negotiations and limit the potential for consensus.

Zeitoun and Mirumachi (2008) argue that in such situations, hydro-hegemony often prevails, with stronger states influencing the communication process to serve their interests. Egypt's historical dominance over the Nile and its strategic use of diplomatic channels have shaped the communication process, often sidelining Ethiopia's perspectives. This imbalance in power further complicates efforts to create an equitable and cooperative framework for managing the Nile's waters.

Role of Regional and International Mediators in Hydro-communication

International and regional mediators have played a pivotal role in facilitating communication during the GERD negotiations. The involvement of the African Union (AU), the United States,

and other international bodies has been instrumental in providing a neutral space for dialogue. *Tadesse (2020)* emphasizes the African Union's attempts to mediate and facilitate communication, although challenges remain regarding its effectiveness in overcoming the entrenched positions of the involved states. *Elhance (1999)* highlights that, third-party mediation is most successful when it can maintain neutrality and leverage expertise to build confidence among the parties.

In the GERD negotiation the Africa Union AU has play a leading roil since 2020 attempting to replace the US led efforts seen by some parties as biased while AU led talk reflect a preference of "Africa Solution to African problem" they have struggle to achieve breakthrough due to the complexity of lagel and political disagreements

Cascão and Nicol (2016) further discuss the need for impartial mediation, which can ensure that all parties are heard and that the communication process remains focused on collaborative problem-solving rather than entrenched national positions. The role of mediators, especially in facilitating dialogue on technical issues such as water flow and dam safety, is crucial in overcoming communication barriers and guiding the parties toward a mutually beneficial solution.

International actors such as the United States, European Union and the world bank have offered technical supported and diplomatic pressure but their involvement has also exposed geographical divisions particularly during Tramp administration, which openly favored Egypt's position as *Wassara.S.(2021)* explain it the literature on mediation in hydro communication underscore that external intervention must be transparent, inclusive, and accompanied by trust building to succeed

2.5 Lessons for Other Trans-boundary River Disputes

Finally, the GERD negotiations offer valuable lessons for improving hydro communication in other trans-boundary water disputes. *Susskind and Islam (2012)* suggest that the key to resolving such disputes lies in the establishment of inclusive communication frameworks that allow for diverse perspectives and interests to be heard. The GERD case highlights the importance of building trust through transparent communication, data sharing, and inclusive dialogue

processes. These lessons can be applied to other regional disputes, such as those in the Mekong River Basin or the Indus River Basin, where similar challenges in hydro communication exist.

Cascão (2009) further argues that the GERD case can serve as a model for developing comprehensive water-sharing agreements that integrate both technical and political considerations. By focusing on communication strategies that foster collaboration, such as multi-stakeholder dialogue and the use of technology, these lessons can be applied to broader efforts in global water governance.

Communication Challenges and Opportunities in International Negotiations:

Effective communication is essential for effective international discussions, especially with shared resources such as Transboundary Rivers. Nonetheless, communication obstacles frequently emerge from divergent national agendas, cultural misinterpretations, and political distrust. Zartman (2001) asserts that in discussions characterised by power imbalances, as the Ethio-Sudan-Egypt dialogue, communication serves as a mechanism for both conflict and cooperation. In the GERD negotiations, various communication obstacles have arisen

Conflicting Narratives: Ethiopia characterises the GERD as an emblem of national progress and regional energy stability, whereas Egypt see it as a jeopardy to its water resources. The contrasting narratives have frequently been magnified in domestic media and public diplomacy, hindering constructive engagement (Verhoeven, 2013).

Distrust/Mistrust: Historical disputes, especially around water rights and prior Nile accords, have exacerbated distrust among the parties. This distrust has emerged as public charges, diplomatic impasses, and protracted discussions (Swain, 2011).

The involvement of other entities/External Mediation, such as the African Union (AU) and the United States, has impacted communication dynamics. Although external mediation may provide novel opportunities for discourse, it can also hinder talks if the mediator is viewed as biased (Tadesse, 2020). The AU's participation in the GERD discussions in 2020 facilitated the resolution of several impasses; but significant agreements have been sluggish to emerge.

Simultaneously, there were chances to improve communication within the Ethio-Sudan-Egypt discourse. Researchers like Susskind and Islam (2012) propose that multi-track diplomacy, which includes government officials, civil society, technical specialists, and regional organisations, can foster confidence and create new avenues for communication. Moreover, employing transparent data-sharing methods, collaborative technical evaluations, and confidence-building initiatives may mitigate trust gaps and promote more constructive dialogue (Casção & Nicol, 2016).

The conclusion of the literature review indicates that, while hydro-diplomacy has achieved success in various contexts, such as the Indus Waters Treaty, the GERD situation is hindered by distinct challenges stemming from historical tensions, legal disputes, and the conflicting interests of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. This is evidenced by the literature. To resolve these challenges, it is essential to prioritise legal frameworks while concurrently improving communication through trust-building, third-party mediation, and inclusive negotiation tactics.

2: 8 Gaps in the Literature

Despite the growing interest in transboundary water conflict relatively few studies combine the analytical lenses of hydro diplomacy and strategic communication most existing research focused on legal hydro logical aspects or broader geopolitical dynamics.

There is limited scholarly analyses of how states use public messaging narrative framing and symbolic language to influence water negotiation and regional positioning

This study seeks to fill this gap by providing an integrated analysis of both the diplomatic and communicative dimensions of the GERD negotiations particularly during the critical years from 2019 to 2024. By integrating hydro-diplomacy with strategic communication, offering an interdisciplinary perspective on how discourse, media and public diplomacy influence the outcomes of transboundary water conflicts

2:9 Theoretical Framework

This study employs two interrelated theoretical frameworks:

2:9:1. Theoretical -Hegemony Theory (*zeitoun & warner ,2006*) this framework examines how power is exercised over transboundary water resources through control of knowledge, technical expertise, legal instruments, and discursive framing .it explains how dominant actors mention influence even in the absence of physical control Zeitoun, M., & Warner, J. (2006). *Hydro-hegemony: a framework for analysis of transboundary water conflicts*. *Water Policy*, 8(5), 435–460.

2:9:2 Framing Theory (Etman, (1993):

This theory analyzes how actors use language and communication to construct meaning shape narratives and influence political outcomes. Frames emphasize certain aspects of reality while downplaying others, thereby shaping public understanding and policy preference

The combination of these two frameworks enables a nuanced analysis of the GERD negotiations illuminating how power and communication intersect in the pursuit of national water interests

In a conclusion the literature in hydro diplomacy and strategic communication it highlighted the central role of power, narrative and institutional frameworks in shaping negotiation dynamics.it also identified a critical gap in the integration of communication theory in to water diplomacy and strategic communication studies. s

3 CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological framework employed to explore the dynamic of hydro diplomacy and strategic communication in the trilateral negotiations among Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) between 2019 and 2024

It described the research, design data collection methods and analytical tools used to examine how diplomacy and strategic communication have intersected to shape negotiation outcomes. It also addresses issues of reliability, validity and ethical considerations. The methodology ensures a holistic understanding of the communication dynamics, national interests, and mediation efforts within the GERD negotiations.

3.2 Research Design

The study adapted a qualitative case study design which is suitable for in-depth exploration of complex context-specific phenomena. A case study approach allows for detailed examination of the interplay between hydro-diplomacy and strategic communication within a bounded temporal and geographical setting in the Ethio Sudan and Egypt negotiations over the GERD from 2019 to 2024

According to Yin (2014) a case study is particularly appropriate for answering How and Why question which aligns with this research aim to understand how diplomatic discourse and narrative framing influenced the negotiation process

to be descriptive-exploratory, aimed at understanding the communication challenges and opportunities between the riparian states involved in the GERD dispute. The descriptive aspect will help capture the state of communication and negotiation processes, while the exploratory component will delve into opportunities for enhancing cooperation through improved communication mechanisms.

3.3 Research Approach

This study is based on a constructivist epistemology, which recognizes that reality is socially constructed through language interaction and perception. It assures that states are not only rational actors but also narrative builders, and that Strategic communication is as much about perception and framing as it is about material interests.

Accordingly, the research explores strategic communication and hydro diplomacy allows for a deeper understanding of how communication strategies have been used to frame national interests shape international perceptions and influence negotiation outcomes.

3.4 Case study justification

The GERD negotiations present a unique and timely case of transboundary water diplomacy in a geographically sensitive region. The 2019-2024 period includes several critical phases

- The U.S led mediation in 2019–2020
- The African Union’s facilitation role in 2020– 2021
- The escalation of tensions between Ethiopia and Egypt
- Sudan shifting Diplomatic Alignments
- Periodic efforts de-escalation and renewed talks

This five-year window allows for the analysis of how strategic communication strategies evolved in response to changing political dynamics external interventions and public pressures in all three countries.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

3:5:1 Primary sources

The primary data was collected through qualitative content interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders involved in the GERD negotiations. These include diplomats, negotiators, policy experts, government officials, and representatives from regional and international mediation bodies statements, speeches, communique and documents from Ethiopia Sudan and Egypt

African Union, the United Nations, and the United States Statements on the GERD negotiations

Public addresses by heads of states and foreign, ministers during key negotiation rounds

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): To provide a more interactive form of data collection, focus group discussions with representatives from civil society organizations, journalist, and local communities affected by the GERD. These discussions will help capture a broader range of

perspectives on the communication dynamics surrounding the GERD dispute, as well as the role of international and regional mediation.

The primary data collection also includes participant observation of public forums and conferences related to the GERD negotiations, such as the African Union-mediated talks and public statements made by the involved parties. This will provide insights into the public-facing communication and the rhetoric used by the governments.

3:5:2 Secondary Data Source

Secondary data include

Academic Journal articles and books on Nile Basin Policy papers and reports from think tanks
Media articles from regional and international outlets (e.g BBC, Al Jazeera, RT, The Reporter
Ahram online e t c)

Interviews Elite interviews with regional expert, diplomats, scholars involved in Nile Basin
research negotiators Due to political sensitivity and access limitation such interview information
has made when ethically feasible.

3:5:3 Official Documents: These include agreements, memoranda, and communiqués produced during the negotiations. Examples are the Declaration of Principles (2015), joint statements, and progress reports from the African Union, the United Nations, and other relevant stakeholders.

Media Reports: National and international media coverage of the GERD negotiations will be analyzed to examine how communication around the dispute is framed and understood by different publics. This includes news articles, opinion pieces, and interviews published in newspapers, magazines, and online media platforms from Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan, and international outlets.

Reports and Publications from International Organizations: Publications and reports from international organizations such as the United Nations, African Union, World Bank, and International Crisis Group will be analyzed. These sources will provide insights into the role of international mediation and the impact of global water governance frameworks on the GERD negotiations.

Academic Literature: Scholarly articles, books, and dissertations that focus on the Nile Basin, hydro-politics, and trans-boundary water governance will be reviewed. This will help contextualize the GERD within broader theoretical frameworks of hydro-politics, communication in conflict, and international negotiations. Literature on similar cases of trans-boundary water disputes, such as those in the Indus and Mekong basins, will also be considered to compare communication strategies.

Government Reports: National government reports and policy documents from Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt will provide insights into their official positions, priorities, and communication strategies in the GERD negotiations. These sources will help identify the main points of contention and the national interests that shape communication dynamics.

3.6 Data Analysis

The study employs qualitative contents analysis and discourse analysis as its main analytical tool

3:6:1 Content Analysis

Thematic Analysis was applied to official texts, speeches and media coverages to identify recurring patterns in the framing of

- Water security and national sovereignty
- Regional stability and development
- Historical right and legal entitlements
- International norms and mediation processes

Thematic analysis allows for the extraction of patterns and recurring ideas across different interviewee responses, providing a comprehensive understanding of the communication barriers and opportunities analyze the qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions. Key themes related to communication challenges, national interests, transparency issues, trust, and the role of mediators will be identified.

3:6:2 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis focuses on how languages was used to frame issues, construct identities and legitimize claims this involves examining metaphors, keywords (e.g “existing threat”, ” rightful share”, ” African Solution”), and inter textual reference like colonial treaties, Pan -Africanism

The meted helps unpack how Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt communicated their position to domestic environments

Content Analysis: For secondary data, content analysis will be employed to examine media reports, official documents, and publications. This will allow for the identification of the framing of communication on the GERD and how the parties involved position themselves in the public domain. By examining how the media and official reports communicate about GERD, the study will assess whether these communications align with the private discussions or diplomatic rhetoric identified in interviews.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

This study, relies particularly interviews and focus groups. Participants their voluntary participation, and their right to confidentiality. Written consent obtained before any interviews in all cases and participants assured that their responses will be used solely for academic purposes. As study ureses, public and secondary data posing minimal risk however ethical diligence was appalled in the following areas

- Proper attribution and citation of all sorceress
- Respect for politically sensitive context and actors
- Confidentiality and informed consent in the case of interviews and
- Avoidance of bias or inflammatory language in analysis

The study aims to maintain scholarly objectivity while acknowledging the political and emotional sensitivities water issues in the Nile Basin.

3.8 Limitations of Methodology/Study

While this study gathers comprehensive data, several limitations are acknowledged

First, Access to confidential negotiation records as noted earlier, many of the primary sources of data limited access of officials (e.g., government documents and negotiation transcripts) therefore the study relies on publicly available data, which may overlook behind the scenes dynamics

Second given the sensitive nature of the GERD negotiations, some key stakeholders were reluctant to participate in interviews even those are willing to take part are not open due to confidentiality. And Media narration is often influenced by national biases, requiring careful triangulation therefore the study relies on publicly available data, which may omit behind the scenes dynamics.

Finally, the evolving nature of the GERD dispute means that some findings may become outdated as new developments occur.

Despite this limitation the research offers valuable insights into the hydro-diplomacy and strategic communication in a high-stakes regional dispute; It justified the case study approach describe the sources and analytical tools used and addressed ethical and methodological considerations. This provides insights on improving communication strategies to foster collaboration among governments sharing water resources, with broader implications for international water politics.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provide an depth contextual and historical background to the GERD dispute and the Nile Basin To understand the Dynamics of hydro communication surrounding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) it is crucial to examen to the historical ,legal and geographical background of the Nile Basin this chapter traces he evolution of Nile water politics, the role of colonial and post-colonial treaties ,Ethiopia’s Strategic motivations for constricting the GERD ,and the shifting position of Egypt and Sudan in reginal diplomacy .

4;2 The Nile River and the Geopolitics of the Basin

The research questions outlined in this study is by analyzing the communication dynamics between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt in the context of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) negotiations from 2019 to 2024. It provides a comprehensive discussion of the key communication strategy strategies, and opportunities identified through both primary and secondary data sources. Additionally, it contextualizes these findings within the broader academic literature, relevant theories, and conceptual frameworks, offering a nuanced understanding of the communication landscape that has shaped the GERD negotiations.

The chapter is organized around the following four central research questions:

1. In the context of the GERD dialogue between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, what are the most significant communication issues that have impeded the implementation of effective negotiation?
2. What communication tactics have the three countries utilized in order to maintain their respective national interests within the context of trilateral communication?
3. What are the options available to improve communication in order to both encourage cooperation and reduce tensions?
4. What are the impacts of major international bodies on the communication dynamics that have been taking place inside the trilateral dialogue?

4.2 Data Analysis Based on Research Questions

To understand the dynamics of hydro communication surrounding the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) its crucial examen the historical, legal and geographical background of the Nile Basin this chapter traces the evolution of Nile politics, the role of colonial and post-colonial treaties, Ethiopia's strategic motivations of constricting the GERD and the shifting positions of Egypt and Sudan in reginal diplomacy

The Nile River and the Geopolitics of the Basin

4.2.1 Communication Issues Impeding Effective Negotiation

The Nile River stretching over 6,650 kilometres and flowing through 11 countries, is the world longest river and the lifeline of northeastern Africa, it comprises two major tributaries the white Nile. originating in the Great Lakes region of central Africa and the Blue Nile. which begins at Lake Tana n Ethiopia and contributes approximately 85% of the river's water volume *Tafesse. T. (2001) The Nile question: Hydro politics, legal wrangling and the quest for reginal cooperation.*

The geopolitical significance of the Nile stems from its disproportionate importance to downstream states especially Egypt which depends on the river for over 90% of its freshwater needs *Swain, A (2011) challenges for water sharing in the Nile Basin.*

This dependence has historically motivated Egypt to maintain strict control over Nile Waters, often at the expense of upstream development interest.

4:3 Colonial and Post colonial legal Framework

The contemporary contest over the GERD is rooted in historical water agreements particularly the 1929 Nile wates Agreement and the 1959 Agreement for the Full Utilization of the Nile Waters;

1929 Agreement (between Egypt and Britain, on behalf of its Colonies) Give Egypt veto power over upstream water projects and prioritized its "natural and historical right" *Brunnee ,J,&Toope,S.J (20002) The changing Nile basin regime*

1959 Agreement (between Egypt and Sudan): Allocated 55.5 billion cubic meters (BCM) water to Egypt and 18.5BCM to Sudan completely excluding upstream states such as Ethiopia *Waterbury, T.J (2002) The Nile Basin: National Determinants of collective Action*

These agreements entrenched a hegemonic water regime favoring downstream states and formed the legal basis of Egypt's opposition to major upstream infrastructure like the GERD.

Ethiopia which contributes the majority of Nile Water through the Blue Nile but was excluded from colonial treaties, has never recognized the legitimacy of these agreements *Tafesse. T. (2001) The Nile question: Hydro politics, legal wrangling and the quest for regional cooperation.*

4:4 Ethiopia's Strategic Turn: The GERD Project

Ethiopia announced the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam in April 2011 amid the political upheaval of the Arab spring and the fall of Egypt's Mubarak regime. Founded largely through domestic sources and diaspora bonds, the GERD has become a symbol of national sovereignty, technological progress, and African self-reliance

With a planned capacity of over 6,400MW, the dam is Africa's largest hydroelectric project. Ethiopia has consistently framed the GERD as a developmental project that will bring electricity to millions, aid regional integration, and contribute to climate resilience through regulated flow *international crisis group (2020) Nile Dam Talks: A short window to reach a deal.*

However, the unilateral nature of the project particularly the commencement of filling the reservoir in 2020 without a binding agreement has been a flashpoint in regional relations

4:5 Egypt's perspective and Strategic response

Egypt views the GERD as an existential threat to water security and regional standing. From Cairo's perspective, any reduction in downstream flow, especially during drought years, risks agricultural collapse, economic disruption, and social instability *Gebreluel G.(2014) Ethiopians GERD, Ending Africa's Old Security Paradigms?*

Egypt has responded through multiple diplomatic channels

- Mobilizing International allies including the US, EU, Gulf States, and the World Bank:
- Invoking international water law emphasizing the principles of no significant harm and equitable utilization
- Using Strategic communication to frame the dam as a unilateral action that undermines regional peace.

Publicly Egypt leaders have emphasized their willingness to negotiation but have warned that all options are on the table phrase interpreted by many as including military action *international crisis group (2020) Nile Dam Talks: A short window to reach a deal.*

4:6 Sudan's Ambivalent position

Sudan's position on the GERD has shifted over time, reflecting both technical benefits and geopolitical risks

- On one hand Sudan stands to gain from regulated water flow, reduced sedimentation, and increased electricity imports
- On the other hand, concerns over dam safety, flood management and downstream impact have led Khartoum to at times align with Egypt's demand for binding legal guarantees.

Sudan position has also been affected by internal political transitions, border tensions with Ethiopia (Notably over the al-Fashaga region) and growing strategic ties with Gulf and Western powers *international crisis group (2020) Nile Dam Talks: A short window to reach a deal.*

The fluid position has made Sudan a Swing actor in the trilateral dialogue, sometimes acting as a bridge, other times contributing to diplomatic deadlock

4:7 Role of Regional and Global Actors

Various external actors have played direct and indirect roles in GERD negotiations.

- The African Union took over mediation in 2020 promoting 'African solution to African problem' "while its leadership welcomed, its facilitation has been criticized for lacking enforcement mechanisms
- The United States, particularly during the Trump administration, attempted to broker a deal in 2019-2020 but was perceived by Ethiopia as biased toward Egypt
- *Salman, S .M.A (2020) The Nile and The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam: Tragedy in the making water international,*
- The European Union, United Nations and World Bank have also attempted to support dialogue through technical input and diplomatic pressure

These actors reflect broader geopolitical alignments, with each country seeking to internationalize or regionalize the dispute depending on its strategy objectives.

4:8 Communication Strategies and Narrative Framing (2019-2024)

From 2019 to 2024 the GERD negotiations became as much a battle of narratives as one of hydrological and legal substance

1. Ethiopia framed the Dam as a Pan-African achievement and resisted what it described as ‘neo-colonial attempt’ to stall African development.
2. Egypt framed the GERD as a matter of life or death, warning of catastrophic consequences and appealing to international norms and sympathy
3. Sudan frequently invoked the need for technical cooperation and mutual benefits though its rhetoric varied based on domestic pressure

Media outlets diplomatic statements and international summits became platforms for Strategic communication, with each party seeking to shape regional and global opinion

4:9 Key Turning Points (Timeline 2019-2024)

Year	Key Development
2019	U.S brokered talks begin in Washington; technical disputes remain unresolved
2020	Ethiopia Begins first of the GERD reservoir AU assume mediation.
2021	Ethiopia completes second filling Egypt and Sudan push for binding legal agreement
2022	Sudan experiences political instability negotiations stall
2023	Low level diplomatic contacts resume technical committees reactivated
2024	Continued stalemate: increased calls for regional integration framework

Table 4:8:1 Key communication Development

Providing a historical and geographical overview of the Nile Basin and the GERD dispute it traced the colonial legacies, national strategized, and external interventions that have shaped the trilateral dialogue. The interplay between material interests and narrative strategies underscores the complexity of hydro communication in this context

Legal Disputes and International Reactions

Date	Headline	Media Source	Country	Summary
2021-06-23	Egypt Threatens Legal Action Over Ethiopia's GERD Filling	The Guardian	UK	Egypt considers taking Ethiopia to the International Court of Justice, citing violation of international water law.
2022-03-19	UN Urges Nile Countries to Reach Consensus on Water Sharing	UN News	Global	UN calls for a diplomatic resolution, emphasizing international cooperation and sustainable water management.

Table 4.2.2 Legal Disputes and International Reactions

The table presents key developments related to the legal disputes and international responses surrounding the GERD negotiations. It should be used to highlight significant legal and political events that have influenced the communication dynamics among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt.

Mistrust Between Riparian States

Mistrust has been a key factor hindering effective communication within the GERD negotiations. Historical water agreements, such as the 1929 and 1959 Nile Water Treaties, have created a legacy of distrust, particularly between Egypt and Ethiopia, with Egypt perceiving the GERD as a threat to its water security. As a downstream nation, Egypt is highly dependent on the Nile, and any changes to water flow are viewed as existential threats. This has led to defensive communication strategies, with Egypt using its historical rights as a central element in framing its position.

Respondent 1 (03/16/2025) observed that while early negotiations focused on technical discussions, once political and security officials became more involved, the dialogue quickly shifted and became complicated by political concerns. This shift from technical to political discourse contributed to the breakdown of trust and further strained communication. The respondent emphasized that without external political interference, technical experts might have reached better outcomes. This aligns with Zeitoun and Warner's (2006) argument that mistrust in transboundary water disputes often stems from unequal access to information and historical power asymmetries

."On the off chance that the specialists were permitted to proceed their talks without outside political impedances, there might have been superior communication and participation, especially Egypt, which appeared to effectively occupy from the negotiation process not only that there has not been structured media communication—it was on and off and due to a lack of detailed information about the negotiation process and communication gaps was clearly visible in our side " *said Respondent 1*

FGD 1 (04/04/2025) noted that although negotiation efforts during the pre-negotiation, negotiation, and post-negotiation phases appeared to address key issues, they ultimately fell short of success. Participants emphasized that no country was willing to compromise, particularly pointing to Egypt's role in disrupting the negotiation process. This illustrates the ongoing difficulty in building trust and establishing transparent, cooperative dialogue among the parties.

Conflicting National Narratives

Communication challenges are further intensified by conflicting national narratives. Ethiopia presents the GERD as a sovereign development project aimed at meeting its energy needs and fostering economic growth, while Egypt frames it as a potential disaster threatening its agricultural and domestic water security. These contrasting narratives have created a communication barrier that is difficult to bridge.

Respondent 3 (03/24/2025) explained that Egypt's narrative is deeply rooted in historical and national identity, reinforcing its claim over the Nile. The respondent noted that Egyptians have long been taught that the Nile belongs to them exclusively, making it difficult for the public or leadership to accept alternate narratives. As Zeitoun and Mirumachi (2008) suggest, entrenched national narratives in transboundary water conflicts impede dialogue by shaping each country's perception around its own interests. "Egypt has a dedicated media platform just for the Nile issue, and they are very good at using any platform to address their interests. They even hire international public relations experts and aggressively campaign for their stance. The participant also emphasized that while Ethiopia has strong professionals in the negotiation process, it lacks specialized communication and diplomacy experts' *'The participant noted*

FGD 3 (04/04/2025) indicated that legal complexities tied to past treaties—particularly the 1906, 1929, and 1955 agreements—continue to privilege Egypt and Sudan. The group discussed how Egypt’s reliance on colonial-era treaties undermines Ethiopia’s claims of sovereign rights over the Nile. Moreover, it was observed that Ethiopia’s inconsistent communication strategy—alternating between highlighting developmental needs and emphasizing national identity—diminished the clarity and strength of its position.

This further demonstrates how entrenched historical narratives have hindered the potential for compromise, reinforcing the need for Ethiopia to adopt a more strategic and coherent communication approach to counter misinformation and present its case more effectively.

Data Transparency Issues

Another critical issue impeding effective communication is the lack of data transparency, particularly on Ethiopia’s part regarding the GERD’s environmental and hydrological impacts. The absence of accessible, detailed information has increased speculation and mistrust, particularly from Egypt and Sudan, who fear potential negative consequences to their water security.

Respondent 4 (03/28/2025) noted that their scientific team was excluded from one of the key mediation rounds, which severely hampered the flow of technical information. Once political figures dominated the process, data sharing diminished, deepening the communication gap. This observation supports Zeitoun and Warner’s (2006) assertion that transparency is crucial to avoiding escalation in water disputes. "Ethiopia surrounded GERD as a regional improvement venture, not a geopolitical weapon. Hydropower for Africa: We (Ethiopia)contended that GERD would produce 6,450 MW of power, profiting Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti, and indeed Egypt by stabilizing the Nile's regular stream. Vitality Security Narrative’ *said respondent 4*

FGD 2 (04/04/2025) highlighted the lack of a centralized communication structure within Ethiopia as a major shortcoming. It was noted that Egypt has developed a focused media strategy supported by international public relations efforts, whereas Ethiopia has strong technical negotiators but lacks communication and diplomacy expertise. Participants stressed that without an institutionalized communication mechanism, Ethiopia continues to struggle against Egypt’s dominant media influence.

4.2.2 Communication Tactics Utilized by the Countries

This section addresses the second research question, focusing on the communication strategies employed by Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt to maintain their respective national interests during the GERD negotiations.

This data set monitors media coverage of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) negotiations from 2019 to 2024 across four major categories: Ethiopian, Egyptian, Sudanese, and international media. Peak coverage was observed in 2021, aligning with vigorous AU-led negotiations and heightened international diplomatic engagement. This period also experienced notable media surges, particularly during the initial filling of the dam and the resurgence of international pressure regarding the progress of the GERD. The media narration also demonstrates a polarized tone can lead to negotiation stalemates (2021). Neutral to mixed tones during periods of moderate diplomatic engagement. By 2024, a more balanced sentiment emerged, suggesting potential stabilization or negotiation fatigue.

Media Affecting GERD Negotiations (2019–2024) Add a chart showing media coverage of GERD by source between 2019 and 2024. Media mention volume from Ethiopian, Egyptian, Sudanese, and international sources. The impact of media coverage on the trilateral negotiations on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) involving Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan between 2019 and 2024 is investigated in this research. The media greatly changed public opinion, diplomatic priorities, and world views over this time. The chronology shows bursts in coverage matching major diplomatic and hydrological events: 2020: Initial dam reservoir filling those causes increased global media attention.

Negotiations conducted by the African Union in Kinshasa produced the highest media coverage in all four categories in 2021 particularly from foreign media, revived U.S. and EU cooperation in 2023 sparked worldwide interest. Media attention started to fade somewhat by 2024, but debates grew more inclusive and sophisticated.

Sentiment Trend Media sentiment changed greatly over time and across different areas: Coverage in 2019–2020 were mostly neutral to mixed, marked by measured optimism on issues and balanced reporting. 2021: Signalled a change to very polarised attitude. While Egyptian outlets strengthened existential rhetoric, Ethiopian media highlighted national sovereignty and

the building of the dam.2022: Amidst internal political unrest in Sudan, the environment grew one of uncertainty which reduced media coverage.2023: Western actors returning their participation brought a controversial tone but in a more expansive setting. 2024: Coverage grew fairer, implying either an evolution in debate or negotiating tiredness.

Stories of Actors Ethiopia: positioned the GERD as of national pride and African advancement. Emphasised sovereignty and fair use of water resources reduced outside mediation while energising within support. Egypt: noted GERD as a menace to its historical entitlements and water security Promoted binding legal agreements often drawing on international law and past treaties that improved its position with media and foreign diplomacy.

Sudan: balanced between prudent restraint and group involvement. First concerns centred on dam safety, particularly during monsoons. Later coverage revealed internal turbulence and a decline in media coherence around GERD.

Media Framing Popular and diplomatic impressions were much shaped by media framing. Ethiopian and Egyptian state sources increased nationalist discourse by amplifying their respective media. Both portrayed the other side as either threatening or obstructive, therefore raising the hostility. Outlets such BBC, Al Jazeera, and Reuters tried to present both sides, but often focused on conflict and crises rather than consensus. Coverage from throughout the world peaked around major events such as dam filling, failed negotiations. Delivered detailed and expert analysis stressing hydrological consequences, legal considerations, and possibilities for regional cooperation, independent and regional analysts emphasised Still, their impact and reach were usually limited in relation to Western or state-run platforms.

The GERD negotiations shaped not just on the negotiating table but also in the media. The media fulfilled two purposes: it was a mirror reflecting official narratives and an amplification of them. Managing the media scene will be as important in future water diplomacy as controlling the river itself.

Structured Database of Nile Water Agreements and Media Coverage (2019-2024)

Agreement Name	Year	Signatories	Key Provisions	Legal Status	Disputes/Challenges
1929 Nile Waters Agreement	1929	Egypt, Britain (on behalf of Sudan, Uganda, etc.)	Egypt's veto power over upstream projects; 48 bcm annual allocation to Egypt	Legally binding (for Egypt & Sudan)	Rejected by all upstream states as colonial-era interference
1959 Nile Waters Agreement	1959	Egypt, Sudan	Increased water allocation to 55.5 bcm for Egypt and 18.5 bcm for Sudan; reaffirmed Egypt's veto power	Legally binding (bilateral)	Excludes all upstream states from decision-making; Ethiopia and others reject its legitimacy
1993 Egypt-Ethiopia Framework Agreement	1993	Egypt, Ethiopia	Recognized principles of cooperation; commitment to not causing significant harm	Political agreement, non-binding	Lacks enforcement mechanism; did not resolve disputes over dam proj
Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA - Entebbe Agreement)	2010	Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, Burundi (later joined by South Sudan)	Rejects colonial-era treaties; advocates equitable utilization of Nile waters	Signed but not ratified by all members	Egypt and Sudan refused to sign, arguing it undermines their water security
GERD Declaration of Principles (DoP)	2015	Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia	Emphasizes cooperation, no significant harm, and equitable use; framework for negotiations on GERD operations	Political agreement, non-binding	Disagreements over dam filling timetable and binding legal obligations

Table 4.2.3 Nile Water Agreements and Media Coverage (2019-2024)

The table that structures the database on different Nile understandings and how the media has secured these agreements, highlighting key turning points and the varying points of view spoken to within the media. This will offer assistance in contextualizing media as a diplomatic instrument.

Ethiopia's Communication Strategy

Ethiopia has utilized explanatory strategies emphasizing the dam's developmental and energy benefits to reinforce its national narrative. This approach aligns with the findings of Yihdego et al. (2017), who highlight Ethiopia's focus on poverty alleviation and economic growth through the dam. Ethiopia has consistently communicated the GERD as a sovereign project essential for national development, which it views as an opportunity to supply energy to the nation and the broader region. This communication strategy has been effective in garnering domestic support, but it has also led to increased mistrust among Egypt and Sudan, who perceive Ethiopia's actions as potentially undermining their own water security.

Respondent 3 (03/16/2025) noted that Ethiopia presented the GERD as a national priority during high-level meetings, such as the 2019 AU Summit, emphasizing its right to develop its resources without external interference. Respondent 3 (03/24/2025) observed that the Ethiopian government consistently reassured the public that the dam was being filled using Ethiopia's rightful share of the Nile, asserting that no external permission was necessary.

FGD 4 (04/04/2025) explained that Ethiopia's communication strategy aligned with its unilateral filling and operation of the GERD. Participants noted that Ethiopia publicized each filling stage as a national triumph, even amid ongoing negotiations, and government updates were primarily focused on technical milestones, often downplaying regional tensions. The addition of an Arabic-language media channel was cited as a significant enhancement to communication efforts. The group also emphasized that Ethiopia's diplomatic engagements were comparatively more effective, while Egypt appeared to avoid entering negotiations in good faith, instead promoting misleading narratives to influence international perception. This strategy, according to the participants, contributed to a stalled negotiation process amid differing legal interpretations and national security concerns.

This observation aligns with broader discussions on negotiation tactics, where Ethiopia's strategic use of media and diplomacy was effective in shaping domestic and regional narratives. However, its perceived unilateral actions have contributed to heightened tensions with Egypt and Sudan.

FGD 1 (04/04/2025) also pointed out inconsistencies in Ethiopia's media communication. Participants observed that public messaging lacked structure and continuity, which may have resulted from limited access to detailed negotiation updates or internal communication breakdowns. They added that in some cases, Ethiopian citizens relied more on Egyptian media or international news for updates, even during meetings held in Addis Ababa. Over time, Ethiopia adapted its communication strategy in response to diplomatic pressure, military threats, and negotiation setbacks. For example, the Ethiopian government emphasized that GERD would not harm downstream countries, referencing scientific studies to support this claim. When Egypt and Sudan conducted joint military exercises, Ethiopian leaders responded with strong rhetoric, asserting that GERD was a "red line" for national security. Even during domestic turmoil, such as the Tigray conflict, GERD remained a focal point of public discourse, symbolizing unity and national pride.

This evolving approach demonstrates Ethiopia's use of strategic messaging to maintain internal cohesion while addressing external diplomatic challenges. The adaptation of its communication strategy over time reflects an attempt to remain firm in its position while navigating complex pressures.

Egypt's Communication Strategy

Egypt's strategy has centered on portraying the GERD as a threat to its water security and economic stability. This approach reflects Egypt's longstanding dependence on the Nile River for agricultural and domestic use. By highlighting the existential risks posed by GERD, Egypt has sought to garner international support and build diplomatic alliances. The use of media and diplomatic channels has been central to Egypt's strategy, reinforcing the narrative that the dam represents a severe national and regional security threat (Verhoeven, 2013). This communication approach is consistent with Egypt's historical hydro-hegemonic role in the Nile Basin.

FGD 4 (04/04/2025) noted that Egypt successfully shaped international narratives using a well-coordinated media strategy. Participants stated that Egypt leveraged international media and diplomatic platforms to amplify its concerns, depicting GERD as a destabilizing project. This allowed Egypt to influence global perceptions and place diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia.

Additionally, FGD 1 (04/04/2025) highlighted Egypt's reliance on colonial-era legal agreements as the foundation for its claims. The group observed that Egypt consistently framed its communication around its complete dependence on the Nile and presented GERD as a threat to national survival. This approach combined legal arguments with emotionally charged rhetoric, making Egypt's position appear unassailable in international forums. While this strategy reinforced Egypt's standing in global diplomacy, it also contributed to inflexible positions in the negotiation process.

Sudan's Communication Strategy

Sudan has participated in the GERD negotiations with a strategy focused on balancing Ethiopia's development goals and Egypt's water security concerns. Sudan's approach has centered on maximizing the dam's potential benefits, especially regarding energy generation, while safeguarding its own water interests. This bridging role positions Sudan between the more polarized stances of Egypt and Ethiopia.

FGD 2 (04/04/2025) shared that Sudan initially supported GERD for its flood control and hydropower potential. However, growing concerns about water management and operational safety led to shifts in Sudan's position. The discussion revealed that Sudan's communication was often reactive and unstructured, influenced heavily by evolving regional dynamics and pressure from both Egypt and Ethiopia.

The group noted that Sudan attempted to mediate between the two sides, but political pressures and internal instability often undermined its neutrality. Unlike Egypt and Ethiopia, Sudan lacked a consistent communication strategy, and its messaging shifted depending on the latest developments in negotiations.

Overall, Sudan's communication approach reflected its dual interests—benefiting from GERD's advantages while ensuring that its water security concerns were not sidelined. This balancing act has made Sudan a key, though inconsistent, player in the trilateral dialogue.

4.2.3 Opportunities to Improve Communication and Reduce Tensions

This section addresses the third research question, exploring potential strategies to improve communication in GERD negotiations.

Environmental and Regional Security Concerns

Date	Headline	Media Source	Country	Summary
2023-07-05	Climate Change to Exacerbate Nile Water Conflicts, Experts Warn	Nature	Global	Studies show that climate change will impact Nile flow patterns, increasing tensions between riparian states.
2024-01-30	Ethiopia Proposes Water Management Committee to Avoid Conflict	Addis Standard	Ethiopia	Ethiopia suggests forming a joint technical committee for real-time water management and cooperation.

Table 4.2.4 Environmental and Regional Security Concerns

This table will give detailed information on the potential natural impacts of the dam, as well as territorial security concerns related to water utilization, population growth, and climate change.

Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs)

One of the key procedures for progressing communication within the GERD negotiations is the usage of confidence-building measures (CBMs). Tadesse (2020) advocates for the foundation of joint technical committees and data-sharing activities to enhance transparency and trust. Cascão and Nicol (2016) also emphasize the value of impartial platforms for regular dialogues, providing a structured approach to addressing concerns and fostering shared understanding.

FGD 1 (04/04/2025) highlighted the significance of organized technical engagement, noting that repeated and structured meetings at various levels can lead to more productive discussions. FGD 2 (04/06/2025) emphasized the role of informal dialogues in building trust, suggesting that informal political efforts, such as Sudan's mediating role, can help bridge communication gaps and promote understanding.

FGD 3 (04/08/2025) discussed that Ethiopia should focus on regional development as a confidence-building measure. Ethiopia framed GERD as a regional development project, not a

geopolitical weapon. The dam was presented as a source of hydropower for Africa, with Ethiopia arguing that GERD would generate 6,450 MW of electricity, benefiting Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti, and even Egypt by stabilizing the Nile's natural flow. The energy security narrative emphasized that GERD was essential for lifting millions out of poverty by providing electricity to more than 60% of Ethiopians without access. Additionally, Ethiopia aligned GERD with the global push for renewable energy and climate resilience, making it harder for international actors to oppose the project. This perspective highlights that framing the GERD as a regional asset rather than a source of conflict might help de-escalate tensions. Ethiopia's emphasis on green energy and energy security aligns with global development goals, making its position more internationally acceptable.

Technological Tools for Transparency

The use of advanced technological tools, including satellite imagery, remote sensing, and real-time monitoring systems, can facilitate better communication by reducing misunderstandings about the dam's impact. Gleick (1993) highlights how technology enhances data transparency, allowing all parties to access objective, real-time information that supports more evidence-based dialogues.

FGD 4 (04/10/2025) emphasized the role of data modeling in decision-making, stating that technical data-sharing and modeling discussions can serve as instruments for improving transparency and fostering trust among the negotiating parties. FGD 5 (04/12/2025) further explained Egypt's use of international media engagement to shape narratives, noting that Egypt pushed its narrative in major Western media outlets (BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera, Reuters, AFP) to gain sensitivity for its position. Egypt repeatedly emphasized that GERD could 'starve Egypt' and that Egyptians would endure a water crisis, aiming to gain widespread concern. Egyptian think tanks, former negotiators, and hydrologists regularly appeared in media to examine the negative impacts of GERD on Egypt, reinforcing the government's narrative. This information outlines how Egypt has deliberately used global media platforms to influence international perceptions. By emphasizing existential threats and water scarcity, Egypt has been able to garner political support and sensitivity from global audiences.

Inclusive Dialogue and Stakeholder Engagement

Engaging a broader range of stakeholders, including civil society, regional organizations, and technical experts, can enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of the negotiation process (Islam & Susskind, 2012). A broader representation of perspectives can help reduce entrenched positions and encourage collaborative decision-making.

FGD 6 (04/14/2025) pointed out the complexities arising from internal disagreements within negotiation teams, stating that sometimes tensions arise, especially after external parties become involved. Even among the negotiation team members, differing views can lead to perceptions of misrepresentation when media promotes certain narratives. This underscores the need for a more inclusive and transparent negotiation process that incorporates diverse viewpoints to prevent internal misalignment and misrepresentation.

FGD 7 (04/16/2025) stressed the need for a change in trilateral discussions, stating that Ethiopian trilateral discussions should evolve, as current negotiations are challenging for Egypt as well. Ethiopian media should focus on countering misinformation. Egypt sought to position itself as a defender of international water law, using legal arguments to strengthen its case. Emphasis on historical agreements: Egypt cited historical agreements, arguing that Ethiopia was violating its historical water rights. They promoted the idea that binding legal agreements are necessary for transboundary water management while accusing Ethiopia of rejecting legally binding commitments. This statement highlights a key area of contention—Egypt’s reliance on historical agreements versus Ethiopia’s push for equitable resource sharing. The suggestion that Ethiopia should reshape its communication strategy to counter misinformation underscores the role of media in shaping public and diplomatic discourse.

By implementing CBMs, leveraging technology for transparency, and fostering inclusive dialogue, the GERD negotiations could move toward more constructive engagement and conflict resolution.

4.2.4 The Impact of Major International Bodies on Communication Dynamics

This section addresses the fourth research question, analyzing the role of international bodies in the communication dynamics of the GERD negotiations.

A. GERD Negotiations and Diplomatic Developments

Date	Headline	Media Source	Country	Summary
2019	የታላቁ የኢትዮጵያ ህዳሴ ግድብ ከጅምርው እስካ ወሀ ሙሉቱ	ቢቢሲ አማራጅ	ኢትዮጵያ	2012: የታላቁ የኢትዮጵያ ህዳሴ ግድብ ከጅምርው እስካ ወሀ ሙሉቱ
2020	የአባይ ግድብ ድርድር ፣ሱዳን እና ግብፅ	DW አማራጅ	Germany	የአባይ ግድብ ድርድር ፣ሱዳን እና ግብፅ
2020-07-12	Ethiopia Begins Filling GERD, Egypt Protests to UN	ቢቢሲ	UK	Egypt argues that GERD threatens its water security; Ethiopia insists on sovereign rights to Nile usage.
	ከጉባ እስከ ጸጥታው ምክር ቤት የደረሰው ታላቁ የህዳሴ ግድብ	ቢቢሲ	ኢትዮጵያ	ግብፅ እና ፋሽያት ኢትዮጵያ የአባይ ወሃ ፍሰትን መጠን በግድቡ ግንባታ የተነሳ ትግታዋለች እንዲሁም ይቀንሳል ሲሉ ቅሬታ ያቀርባሉ።
2021-09-25	Sudan Warns of Water Shortages as GERD Filling Continues	Al Jazeera	Qatar	Sudan raises concerns over uncoordinated filling, calling for a legally binding agreement.
2022	የአባይ ወንዝ ውሀ አጠቃቀም ለኢትዮጵያ ለግብፅ እና ለ ፋሽያት አለመግባባት ምክኛት መሆኑ ተገለፀ	ቫቲካን ኒውስ	ቫቲካን ኒውስ	Deadlocked key water allocation and GERD operational policies.
2024-02-10	Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan Resume Talks on Nile Water Dispute	Reuters	Global	Trilateral negotiations restart but remain deadlocked over key water allocation and GERD operational policies.

Table 4.2.5 GERD Negotiations and Diplomatic Developments

The GERD negotiations formed headlines as much as they did at the negotiating table. The media served as both reflector and amplifier of governmental narratives. The table enumerating key diplomatic advancements, counting intercession endeavors by international bodies just like the African Union, the United Nations, and the World Bank. This will give particular information on the intervention forms and their results, giving to the worldwide flow of negotiations.

The Role of the African Union (AU) and Other Mediators

The African Union (AU) has played a vital role in facilitating dialogue among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt concerning the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). However, its influence has been constrained by perceptions of bias and the entrenched positions of the negotiating parties. One respondent highlighted that the ministers did not create an environment conducive to effective communication, noting that past discussions, such as those on September 30 and October 1, were primarily aimed at issuing a statement to the United States rather than fostering genuine dialogue (Respondent 1, 03/16/2025). This reflects the AU's challenge in enforcing agreements and its limited ability to mediate when power dynamics dominate negotiations.

This observation aligns with Tadesse (2020), who notes that while the AU's role is pivotal, it has often been hindered by limited enforcement mechanisms and the complex power dynamics among the riparian states. Another respondent added that while the AU and other mediators have attempted to facilitate the process, external influences have frequently complicated matters. For instance, the Sudanese side engaged in strategic delays, employing legal experts to reshape the negotiation framework (Respondent 4, 03/28/2025). This suggests that while the AU provides a neutral platform, its mediation efforts are often undermined by external and internal political maneuvering. Cascão and Nicol (2016) discuss the difficulty of maintaining neutrality in transboundary water conflicts, further emphasizing this challenge.

Ethiopia's Media Engagement Strategy

Discussions from the focus group held on 04/04/2025 highlighted Ethiopia's proactive media strategy in shaping public perception and countering Egypt's international communication efforts. Participants noted that Ethiopia utilized both domestic and international media to fortify its position and challenge Egypt's claims. State-controlled media outlets showcased the benefits of GERD for Ethiopia and the region, while Ethiopian authorities engaged with international media to emphasize GERD's hydropower benefits and regional stability potential. Despite these efforts, Egypt's aggressive political and media campaigns often framed Ethiopia's actions as unilateral, thereby influencing global narratives.

International Mediation and Third-Party Involvement

The involvement of third-party actors, such as the United States, has significantly impacted the negotiation dynamics. One respondent described how American mediation escalated internal divisions among negotiators, leading to conflicting views and media distortions (Respondent 3, 03/24/2025). They explained that media influence has played a critical role in shaping perceptions and applying pressure on negotiators, sometimes leading to misinterpretations of key messages. This perception aligns with Elhance (1999), who argues that third-party intervention in transboundary water conflicts can either facilitate agreements or exacerbate divisions, depending on the perceived impartiality of the mediator.

Another respondent elaborated on Ethiopia's diplomatic and legal positioning, stating that Ethiopia used diplomatic and legal channels to position itself as a cooperative but assertive negotiator. It consistently opposed internationalizing the dispute through the UN Security Council, as Egypt sought, and instead promoted African Union mediation to maintain a regional approach. Ethiopia emphasized equitable water use based on the 2010 Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA), rejecting colonial-era agreements that favored Egypt. Additionally, Ethiopia strengthened its relations with Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, and South Sudan, encouraging broader Nile Basin support for GERD (Respondent 2, 03/18/2025).

This highlights Ethiopia's strategic diplomatic maneuvering, ensuring that the GERD issue remained within an African-led framework rather than being subjected to external pressures. However, Egypt's overarching narrative continued to emphasize GERD as an existential threat, using historical and diplomatic arguments to legitimize its opposition.

Further insights from the focus group discussion on 04/04/2025 indicated that the shift from observer to facilitator status in January led to a form of group division. Participants described how experts involved in the negotiation process were compelled to adjust their approach, often adopting national positions instead of engaging in collaborative problem-solving. Furthermore, they highlighted that during highly tense moments, UN observers remained relatively passive but occasionally offered suggestions when negotiations reached a deadlock. This observation supports Swain (2011), who argues that third-party interventions must be carefully balanced to avoid further polarization.

Geopolitical Strategies and Sovereignty Assertions

A respondent reinforced Ethiopia's stance on sovereignty and negotiation control, stating that Ethiopia consistently framed GERD as a symbol of national pride, economic progress, and sovereignty. Leaders, including Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, repeatedly asserted that Ethiopia has the sovereign right to develop its water resources without external interference. Ethiopia rejected colonial-era treaties like the 1929 and 1959 Nile Water Agreements, considering them unjust. Meanwhile, Egypt pursued strategic partnerships, signing military cooperation agreements with Sudan in 2021 and engaging Gulf states like Saudi Arabia and the UAE to apply pressure on Ethiopia. Additionally, Egypt lobbied U.S. and European policymakers, framing GERD as a potential destabilizing factor in the Horn of Africa (Respondent 5, 03/31/2025).

This statement illustrates the broader geopolitical strategies employed by both countries. Ethiopia's assertion of sovereignty clashed with Egypt's reliance on international legal frameworks and alliances to bolster its position. As noted by Gleick (1993), external actors in water conflicts often introduce new challenges rather than resolving disputes, which is evident in the GERD case where international mediation has frequently led to further complexity rather than resolution.

Additionally, another respondent pointed out that international actors, particularly the United States, have applied pressure that has sometimes swayed the negotiation process. The respondent emphasized that while Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt each navigated external pressures differently, the U.S. approach contributed to further complexity rather than resolution (Respondent 4, 03/28/2025). Gleick (1993) highlights similar patterns in international water negotiations, where external actors often introduce new challenges rather than resolving disputes.

4.3 Content Analysis

The content analysis in this think about centered on distinguishing the key subjects within the open communication and conciliatory explanations of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt amid the GERD negotiations. The analysis uncovered a few repeating subjects that have shaped the communication techniques of the three nations, including the accentuation on national sovereignty, water security, and developmental needs.

Kinshasa meetings between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan over GERD dispute extended to Tuesday

Abram Online, Tuesday 6 Apr 2021

The talks, which took place on Sunday and Monday, have been extended to Tuesday morning to allow for the drafting of a concluding statement



Kinshasa meeting should adopt new approach on GERD talks, says Sudan



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Press Release on the Trilateral Negotiations on the GERD, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (April 6, 2021)

April 6, 2021 / 0 Comments / in Uncategorized / by Embassy Content Editor

AFRICA 4 YEARS AGO



Three-way talks over Nile dam fail in Kinshasa

Talks between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan on Addis Ababa's contested dam on river Nile conclude without breakthrough in capital of Democratic Republic of Congo.



The AU should persevere on the GERD issue

The AU should bring all three parties together to de-escalate tensions around the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

Ethiopia's Communication Tone:

The content analysis appeared that Ethiopia's open communications reliably emphasized the sovereignty of the extend, surrounding the GERD as fundamental apparatus for national advancement and vitality generation. Ethiopia frequently depicted itself as a winner of regional advancement and looked for to legitimize the dam's development as imperative for tending to the vitality needs of the country. The official articulations made by Ethiopian pioneers unequivocally centered on sovereignty and self-reliance, downplaying the concerns raised by downstream nations (Hussein, 2019). This rhetoric fortified the national intrigued point of view, steady with Ethiopia's discourse in past water administration negotiations (Tadesse, 2020).

Egypt's Communication Tone:

Egypt's communications, on the other hand, surrounded the GERD as a danger to its water security and national survival. The examination appeared that Egypt reliably depicted the dam as an existential challenge, using doomsayer dialect the potential threats to its agricultural division and water supply (Verhoeven, 2013). Egyptian officials often called for international intervention and support, seeking diplomatic alliances to pressure Ethiopia to reduce the speed of dam construction and ensure that Egypt's water needs would be protected. This narrative played on Egypt's historical role as the dominant state in the Nile Basin (Swain, 2011).

Sudan's Intervention Endeavors:

Sudan's communications amid the GERD negotiations situated the nation as a unbiased go between, pushing for a adjusted approach that tended to the wants of both upstream and downstream nations. Sudan emphasized for agreeable and commonly advantageous solutions, centering on the shared benefits of the dam, such as electricity era and surge control (Yihdego et al., 2017). The substance examination highlighted that Sudan sought to adjust itself as a party that may act as a bridge between the two polarized nations, reflecting to guarantee that both sides may reach a tranquil and compelling (Tadesse, 2020).

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The findings from this study shed light on the perplexing communication flow that have formed the GERD negotiations among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. Thematic and content analyses uncovered that the communication breakdowns are established not as it were in specialized contradictions but too in profound chronicled grievances, national interests, and competing

narratives. These discoveries adjust with the hypothetical understanding that transboundary water transactions are intrinsically political and profoundly impacted by control asymmetries and recognition administration.

Communication Barriers Rooted in Sovereignty and Security Narratives

Ethiopia's framing of GERD as a sovereign right and a national development project has served to reinforce its unilateral posture in the eyes of its negotiating partners. By emphasizing vitality security, destitution reduction, and territorial jolt, Ethiopia endeavored to display itself as a capable actor. In any case, this communication procedure regularly made light of downstream concerns, especially those of Egypt, which depicted the dam as approaching existential risk.

Egypt's narrative, established in verifiable settlements and fears over water shortage, was pointed at internationalizing the debate. The country's dependence on emotive and security-based talk ("starvation," "threat to existence") illustrates a technique equipped toward gathering global sensitivity and discretionary use. This has escalates the communication separate, as Ethiopia rejected these framings as overstated and established in obsolete colonial-era assertions.

Sudan's situating as unbiased arbiter advertised a more practical and useful communication demonstrate. Whereas once in a while moving its position based on changing political circumstances, Sudan frequently looked for shared advantage — such as pushing for the dam's part in surge control and vitality get to. This interceding pose highlights the potential for middle-ground strategy in facilitating trilateral pressures.

Technological Tools and Media Strategies

Technological progressions — such as farther detecting, information modeling, and satellite imaging — have the potential to cultivate believe through more noteworthy straightforwardness. However, the conflicting or key withholding of information has prevented their viability. Moreover, media engagement developed as a central strategy for all three countries, with Egypt and Ethiopia especially dynamic in forming worldwide narratives through international news outlets. This underscores that communication in GERD negotiations amplifies remote past the transaction table and into the domain of open strategy.

Role of International Actors

The involvement of external mediators, especially the African Union and the United States, has had a blended affect. Whereas the AU given an African-led system that Ethiopia unequivocally favored, its restricted requirement components prevented its adequacy. U.S. intercession, in the interim, frequently contributed to inner divisions inside negotiation groups and exacerbated doubt. These discoveries reflect the broader drift in transboundary water conflicts where international actors, in the event that seen as one-sided or domineering, may complicate instead of encourage determination.

Require for Confidence-Building and Comprehensive Exchange

A critical understanding from the investigation is the significance of confidence-building measures (CBMs) such as joint specialized committees, shared information activities, and casual diplomacy. Respondents emphasized that informal and technical engagements — including side meetings and trilateral workshops — have occasionally led to productive outcomes. Moreover, the inclusion of civil society, regional experts, and independent stakeholders was identified as critical to ensuring balanced representation and reducing internal misalignments

1. Lack of a common narrative framework

A fractured story environment has hampered the GERD negotiations. Ethiopia sees the project as a source of national pride and necessary development; Egypt sees it as a threat to its important water supplies. Sudan's intermediary position is erratic. Lack of a cohesive narrative framework makes it difficult to develop common ground, which fuels strong beliefs and a declining confidence. Comparable narrative disputes arose in the Mekong River Basin, where Vietnam and Laos offered different stories on environmental issues and development (Backer, 2007).

2. Politicising Technical Speech

All the stakeholders have politicised technical data including reservoir models and filling rates. Facts became emblems of political power rather than unbiased tools. This expert-led conversation was compromised. Maintaining a functioning joint technical panel essentially free from political influence, the Indus Waters Treaty kept its validity (Salman, 2008).
Research Question: What impact have state-owned and foreign media had in changing the

narrative around the GERD debates, and how has this affected public and diplomatic dialogue?
Escalation and misrepresentation driven by media

3. Resistance to compromise

Official media from Ethiopia and Egypt have used patriotic rhetoric meant to boost public resistance to compromise. International media usually present the issue as a zero-sum geopolitical competition, therefore limiting chances for sophisticated diplomacy. Similar dynamics were observed during the Jordan-Israel water-sharing discussions as media influence encouraged popular hostility to cooperative models (Zeitoun & Allan, 2008).

4 In Third-Party Mediation Research Inquiry, to what extent have the African Union, United States, and other outside agencies effectively encouraged communicative clarity and consensus? Maintaining impartiality and clarity has been difficult for mediators. Ambiguous findings and non-binding declarations point to a lack of a consistent language for progress. Unlike the Senegal River Basin, which boasts a basin organisation with clearly defined governance procedures (Hirsch, 2010), the Nile Basin lacks a permanent, approved negotiating mechanism.

5. Legal and language ambiguities

Term like "serious harm" and "equitable use" mean different things to different stakeholders. The discrepancies result from the Nile Basin lacking a thorough treaty. The Danube River Basin shows how consistent legal vocabulary in the 1994 Danube Convention improved compliance and communication (Schmeier, 2013).

6. Marginality of Non-State Views and Civil Society

Elites have mostly controlled negotiations, therefore reducing public debate or expert engagement chances. This stunts regional ownership and legitimacy. The Rhine River instance shows how crucial open communication and stakeholder involvement were for long-lasting cooperation (Mostert, 2003). Effective resolution of transboundary water problems calls for coherent communication across political, technical, and public spheres rather than only diplomatic negotiations. The GERD scenario shows how poor communication could aggravate mistrust and inertia. Insights from other basins show that developing long-lasting water diplomacy depends on institutionalised communication, common narratives, and inclusive platforms.

4.5 Conclusion

Chapter 4 has analyzed the core discoveries from interviews, open articulations, and diplomatic communications to explore how communication issues have impacted the GERD negotiations. The analysis uncovers that settled in national accounts, authentic grievances, key media engagement, and outside impacts have collectively ruined compelling communication among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt.

Ethiopia's accentuation on sovereignty and regional advancement clashed with Egypt's securitized surrounding and lawful requests, whereas Sudan endeavored, but conflictingly, to intercede between the two. Mechanical instruments and media strategies played a double part — both encouraging and complicating negotiations. The AU and other international bodies given valuable stages but needed the control to implement agreement.

Eventually, the discoveries highlight that significant advance within the GERD arrangements requires a move from zero-sum communication methodologies to collaborative, straightforward, and comprehensive exchange. Confidence-building, territorial participation, and depoliticized specialized trades are fundamental to decrease pressures and construct enduring trust.

5 Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter present and analyzes the main findings of the study, based on qualitative content and discourse analysis of official documents ,media source, Interview and focus group discussion it examen how Strategic hydro communication influenced the trajectory of the GERD negotiation between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt from 2019 to 2024 .key patterns ,themes, and strategic narratives are unpacked to demonstrate how each actor strategic communication and framed its position , mobilizing allies and navigated the evolving diplomatic landscape

The GERD negotiations. It also presents limitations encountered during the research process and outlines potential areas for future inquiry. The aim is to reflect on how effective communication strategies can support regional cooperation and conflict transformation in managing the shared waters of the Nile Basin.

5.2 Overview of communication strategy

The research identifies three dominant communication strategies employed by the three countries involved

Country	Strategic Communication Frame	Key Messaging Tactics
Ethiopia	Developmental, nationalism & African self-reliance	Emphasized sovereignty, national pride, and African Solution
Egypt	Existential threat & legal continuity	Appealed to international law downstream dependency, and reginal stability
Sudan	Technical rationalism & pragmatic mediation	Balanced technical concerns with reginal diplomacy, shifted position periodically

Table 5:1 country Strategic communication frame overview

Each start employed narrative framing as a tool to garner domestic support and shape international perceptions of legitimacy

5.3 Ethiopia Sovereignty, justice, and Development

Ethiopia consistently framed the GERD as an emblem of national resurgence and a rightful utilization of natural resources Government speeches, state media, and diplomatic communications highlighted several core themes

- Narrative of historical marginalization Ethiopian invoked colonial -era exclusions from Nile treaties to justify unilateral action
- Language of dignity and defiance: terms like ‘‘Sovereignty’’ ‘‘in justice’’ and ‘‘historical right’’ appeared frequently ‘‘Its My Dam’’

- Pan-African framing the GERD was portrayed as a symbol of African-led development, defying dependency on international donors.

“The Nile Is a gift from GOD to all the people of the basin. No one country has the right to own it” prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, 2020

5.4 Egypt: Existential Risk, Legal Entitlement, and Global Norms

Egypt’s communication strategy centered on the existential necessity of the Nile. Key narrative frames including

- ‘A matter of life or death’ water security was framed as vital for Egypt’s survival, particularly under conditions of climate vulnerability
 - Invocation of international law Egypt emphasized the principle of ‘NO significant harm’ and prior notification enshrined in customary water law.
 - Crisis diplomacy: Cairo launched diplomatic campaigns in the UN, Arab League, and Africa Union to isolate Ethiopia diplomatically
- Egyptian media often used emotive language, portraying the GERD as a unilateral threat. Cairo also framed its position in the context of regional stability and peace, warning of escalation if dialogue failed

5.5 Sudan: strategic communication: Ambivalence and Technocratic Framing

Sudan occupied a fluid and at times contradictory position, its messaging evolved with political transitions and external pressures

- In early stages (2010-2020) Sudan welcomed the GERD’s potential for regulate flow and energy cooperation
- concerns about dam safety and operational transparency grew following Ethiopia’s first reservoir filling in 2020 without coordination.
- Sudan’s language was marked by technical precision referencing flood managements water flow modeling and civil engineering standards

“Our support for the dam depends on guarantees that our peoples safety and our national infrastructure will not be jeopardized” Sudanese Ministry of irrigation, 2021

Sudan’s shifting alliances at times siding with Ethiopia or Egypt were often the result of internal political calculations and regional security concerns such as the al-Fashaga border dispute

5.5 Regional and international mediation communication Gap

The study found the mediation efforts particularly by the African Union and United States often struggled due to mismatched communication expectations and narratives

- The AU’s emphasis on “African Solutions” aligned with Ethiopia’s framing but was seen as insufficiently forceful by Egypt.
- The U.S.-brokered talks (2019-2020) collapsed when Ethiopia rejected a draft agreement, citing bias. Egypt signed the agreement unilaterally, reinforcing the perception of isolation

These incidents reveal a lack of harmonizing framing across actors and underline how divergent narratives contributed to diplomatic stagnation.

5.6 Discourse Analysis: patterns in Language and Framing

Main Discursive Themes Identified:

Theme	Ethiopia	Egypt	Sudan
sovereignty	“Right to develop “ “Uncolonized”	“violation of rights” “imposed risks”	“Mutual interests” “balanced benefit”
Historical grievance	‘colonial-era injustice’	‘Historical entitlement’	‘Historical partnership’
Water security	‘Equitable utilization	‘Life or -death issue’	‘Safety and cooperation’
Mediation	African Solutions”	Global accountability’	‘technical coordination

Table 5:2 communication Discursive

This comparative discourse mapping illustrates how national identity post-colonial memory and legalist rhetoric influenced the trilateral process.

5.7 Factor contributing to Strategic communication

The analysis identified five main factors that hindered the emerging of a cooperative framework:

1 Asymmetries in power and communication resources: Egypt’s media reach and diplomatic clout contrasted with Ethiopia’s bottom -up mobilization

2 conflicting legal narratives: Disagreement on whether historical treaties or equitable utilization should prevail

3 Mutual distrust and securitization: the framing of water as a security threat limited compromise

4 Lack of Institutionalized communication: absence of permanent trilateral mechanisms or basin-wide treaty frameworks.

5 Domestic politics: Leadership changes, civil unrest, and electoral cycles repeatedly disrupted continually

5.8 Positive Outcomes and Diplomatic Openings

Despite tensions the research also found moments of constructive engagement

- The 2020AU-Led platform created space for dialogue, even if no final deal emerged

- Technical committees and data-sharing mechanisms were proposed and, in some cases briefly activated
- Each country Publicly affirmed the importance of negotiation, suggesting that communication break downs were procedural, not absolute:

chapter summarizes the key findings of the study, drawing conclusions from the data analyzed in Chapter Four and offering significant proposals for improving trilateral communication between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt within the GERD negotiations. It too presents restrictions experienced amid the research process and outlines potential zones for future inquiry. The point is to reflect on how compelling communication strategies can support regional participation and conflict transformation in overseeing the shared waters of the Nile Basin.

This study critically examined the hydro-communication challenges and strategic opportunities within the trilateral negotiations between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) from 2019 to 2024. It focused on the crossing point of communication procedures, national interface, and international discretion, uncovering that lacking communication systems, politicized stories, and shared doubt proceed to weaken maintainable negotiation results.

The ongoing disagreement on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has been significantly influenced by communication challenges. Specifically addressing study subjects routinely used in hydro-diplomacy and negotiation analysis, the following is a methodical analysis of the main communication obstacles hindering successful negotiation.

The findings from essential interviews, archive examination, and case-based assessment uncovered a determined need of straightforward, organized, and institutionalized communication instruments. Each party—Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt—relied on one-sided communication approaches driven by national sovereignty, water security fears, and moving geopolitical interface. These accounts were increased through state-controlled media, contributing to deception and increased patriot estimations. Discretionary suggestions were regularly responsive

instead of proactive, spiking amid minutes of emergency such as supply fillings or specialized debate.

Examining communication strategies inside the Ethiopia-Sudan-Egypt trilateral debate illustrates how each nation has deliberately structured conversation to fit its national objectives, both inside and abroad. Below is a methodical response including analytical paragraphs for every nation and focused research questions.

Ethiopia has often used strategic framing of GERD as a sovereign development project essential for electrification, national pride, and reduction of poverty. Ethiopia tells formal announcements, broadcast briefings, and diaspora outreach that GERD is a symbol of post-colonial emancipation rather than a danger to downstream countries. Public diplomacy channels such as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's remarks at the African Union and focused press briefings at significant events e.g., filling phases amply highlight this. Ethiopia's strategy mostly depends on stressing "equitable and reasonable use," as defined in international water law, therefore purposefully avoiding talks of legally enforceable agreements that would restrict its freedom.

Ethiopia similarly presents itself as a pan-African actor and rejects outside mediation using the language "African solutions to African problems." Ethiopia has thus acquired regional credibility, particularly among nations cautious of Western encroachment. Ethiopia has been portrayed as recalcitrant in more general terms by Egypt and some other countries, however, due to the emphasis on unilateral filling schedules and the rejection of enforceable methods.

Egypt has followed a legal-internationalist approach to communication. Its main story is that GERD constitutes an existential threat, so international intervention is required to defend historical rights acquired from the 1929 and 1959 Nile Water Agreements. Egypt regularly consults international law, emphasising ideas of "no significant harm" and advocating a legally enforceable contract. Cairo has framed the GERD issue as a question of international peace and security, therefore lobbying the UN Security Council, Arab League, and European Union.

In public outreach, Egypt also uses threat-based rhetoric, including threats to possible war should

water security be compromised. Especially prevalent in Egyptian official media and military-linked rhetoric, this securitisation strategy promotes domestic solidarity and internationalises the problem. Egypt's narrative is successful in that it can seem both reasonable and victimised, therefore winning backing from outside players and keeping diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia.

With a highly flexible and purposefully dubious communication style, Sudan positions itself as both a GERD beneficiary and a worried neighbour over dam safety. Early on, Sudan helped GERD because of possible advantages including controlled water flow and less flooding. But worries about dam safety and openness during the first filling periods drove Khartoum to choose a more technical and careful approach of communication. Sudan frequently emphasises the lack of appropriate channels of information exchange, which helps to explain its changing stance without entirely alienating either side.

Using technical expert panels and engineering narratives to highlight data-based objections rather than overt political allegations has been a mainstay of Sudanese strategy. Sudan's communications often advocate the idea of a win-win scenario should safety issues be solved and urge for tripartite technical cooperation frameworks. This helps Sudan to keep credibility and stay free from entanglement in the Ethiopia-Egypt rivalry. Depending on which national interest is at risk, its middle-ground strategy has also let it serve as a possible mediator or swing actor at several times.

In summary Every nation has applied different communication strategies fit for its national agenda:

Ethiopia stresses African unity, equitable growth, and sovereignty. Egypt mostly depends on legalistic, security-based international appeals. To guard both opportunity and caution, Sudan uses a flexible, technical, and vague approach. Often resulting in uneven expectations and communication stalemate, these different approaches of communication have not only reflected but also shaped the framework of negotiations. Any future initiative aimed at mediating or changing the trilateral process depends on an awareness of these strategies.

Communication tactics in the GERD Negotiation

Ethiopian Strategic Framing and Public Diplomacy

Ethiopia has often used strategic framing of GERD as a sovereign development project essential for electrification, national pride, and reduction of poverty. Ethiopia tells formal announcements, broadcast briefings, and diaspora outreach that GERD is a symbol of post-colonial emancipation rather than a danger to downstream countries. Public diplomacy channels such as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's remarks at the African Union and focused press briefings at significant events e.g., filling phases amply highlight this. Ethiopia's strategy mostly depends on stressing "equitable and reasonable use," as stated in international water law, so avoiding talks of legally enforceable agreements that may restrict its adaptability.

Ethiopia likewise projects itself as a pan-African actor by rejecting outside mediation and speaking of "African solutions to African problems." Ethiopia has gained regional legitimacy thanks in part to this, particularly from nations reluctant of Western impact. But Egypt and several other countries have objected to the insistence on unilateral filling schedules and the rejection of enforceable processes, painting Ethiopia as recalcitrant in more general terms.

2. Egypt: Legal Internationalisation with Message Based on Threat

Egypt has followed a legal-internationalist approach to communication. Its main story is that GERD presents an existential threat, hence international participation is required to defend historical rights gained from the Nile Water Agreements 1929 and 1959. Egypt regularly refers to international law, stressing ideas of "no significant harm" and demand for a legally enforceable accord. Framing the GERD issue as a matter of world peace and security, Cairo has pushed the UN Security Council, Arab League, and European Union.

In public outreach, Egypt also uses threat-based rhetoric, including threats to possible war should water security be compromised. Especially prevalent in Egyptian official media and military-linked rhetoric, this securitisation strategy promotes domestic solidarity and internationalises the problem. Egypt's story works because it can seem both sensible and victimised, which attracts backing from outside players and keeps diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia under constant strain.

Sudan: Technical Legitimacy, Ambiguity, and Role Flexibility

Sudan's communication strategy has been both flexible and deliberately vague, positioning itself as both a worried neighbour over dam safety and a benefactor of GERD. Early on, Sudan helped GERD because of possible advantages including controlled water flow and less flooding. But worries about dam safety and openness during the first filling periods drove Khartoum to choose a more technical and careful approach of communication. Sudan frequently emphasises the lack of appropriate information-sharing systems, which helps to explain its changing stance without totally alienating any side.

Using technical expert panels and engineering narratives to highlight data-based objections rather than overt political allegations has been a mainstay of Sudanese strategy. Sudan's communications often advocate the idea of a win-win scenario should safety issues be solved and urge for tripartite technical cooperation frameworks. This helps Sudan to keep credibility and stay free from entanglement in the Ethiopia-Egypt rivalry. Depending on which national interest is at risk, its middle-ground strategy has also let it operate as a possible mediator or swing actor at several times.

Ethiopia stresses sovereignty, fair development, and African solidarity although every nation has employed different communication strategies fit for its particular interests. Egypt mostly depends on legalistic, security-based international appeals. Sudan uses a flexible, technical, and vague approach to guard caution as well as opportunity. Often resulting in uneven expectations and communication stalemate, these different approaches of communication have not only reflected but also shaped the framework of negotiations. Any future initiative aimed at mediating or changing the trilateral process depends on an awareness of these strategies.

Over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), important international entities have dramatically changed the dynamics of communication between Ethiopia-Sudan-Egypt trilateral negotiations. Their responsibilities have been those of mediator, agenda-setter, pressure agent, and story builder. Below is a thorough study split out into major players and their effects?

Impact of International Bodies on Geard Trilateral Communication Dynamics

1. African Union (AU) Regional Legitimacy and "African Solutions" Framing

Under the cover of "African solutions to African problems," the AU has positioned itself as a regional arbiter. Ethiopia embraced this approach since it helped to prevent the GERD conflict from being internationally escalated. Although the AU arranged multiple rounds of negotiations, it lacked technical capacity to generate legally enforceable results as well as the instruments for enforcement.

Media Quote: "We have to come up with African answers for African challenges. That is the only way this dam can help all of us, remarked former AU Chairperson Cyril Ramaphosa, South African President, in July 2020.

2. United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Globalisation of the Conflict

Framing their GERD issue as a threat to regional peace, Egypt and Sudan brought it up before the UNSC in 2020 and 2021. Ethiopia objected to this action claiming it compromised regional systems and African sovereignty.

Media Quote: "The GERD matter should not be under Council involvement. Said Ethiopia's UN Ambassador Taye Atske Selassie during a UNSC session in July 2021, "this is an African issue to be solved by Africans."

3. United States: High Stakes Mediation and Reported Bias

Under the Trump administration, the United States helped to organise discussions in 2019–2020. Ethiopia left the talks claiming prejudice towards Egypt. Comments made by the Trump government further eroded confidence.

Media Quote: "They [Egypt] will end up blowing out that dam," President Donald Trump remarked on a phone discussion with Sudanese officials in October 2020. Ethiopia took strong offence at the comment.

4. Technical Support and Quiet Diplomacy: European Union (EU)

The EU provided technical assistance and encouraged quiet diplomacy, therefore acting in a supporting capacity. It aimed to remain impartial rather than adopt overt positions, therefore preserving the credibility of the dialogue.

EU spokesman Peter Stano said in March 2021, "The EU encourages the parties to return to the negotiating table under the African Union process."

5. World Bank and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) Subtle Influence

Though they are not direct mediators, the World Bank and IFIs have shaped the conversation by advocating development-oriented narratives. Ethiopia has exploited these stories to support GERD as a project addressing poverty and energy consumption.

A World Bank official in a 2019 policy brief on energy and water in Africa stated, *"The World Bank stands ready to support regional cooperation on transboundary water resources in the Nile Basin,"*.

Every international entity has shaped the GERD communication scene in different ways: The AU lacked enforcement tools but gave regional legitimacy. The UNSC turned the matter to global security, therefore strengthening national viewpoints. Under Trump, the United States became polarised due to supposed bias. The EU kept technological neutrality and quiet diplomacy. The World Bank approved of Ethiopia's development story. These players have shaped not only the content of national stories but also the channels and tones by which every party has expressed its interests.

Summary of the Impact of International Communication involvement

International Body	Role	Effect on communication
African Union	Mediator	Framed GERD as regional issue; limited authority
UN Security Council	Global Forum	Elevated conflict; hardened Ethiopia's rhetoric
United States	Mediator	Perceived bias; worsened trust, increased division
European Union	Technical Advisor	Maintained dialogue credibility through neutrality
World Bank /IFIS	Development framers	Indirectly legitimized Ethiopia's economic framing

Table 5.8.1 the impact of international communication involvement

Despite these challenges, the inquire about recognized noteworthy openings for progressing discretionary communication and changing the GERD negotiations into a agreeable transboundary system. Proposed arrangements incorporate the foundation of a Trilateral Hydro-Diplomacy Communication Assignment Drive, advancement of real-time digital hydro-data stages, creation of a Joint Media Coordination Component, and development of Track II discretion including academics, gracious society, and free specialists.

Eventually, the GERD ought to be seen not as a divisive image of regional dispute but as a potential catalyst for regional integration, technological collaboration, and economical water administration. Improved communication channels and agreeable regulation components can move the negotiation worldview from conflict-prone strategy to a show of comprehensive, straightforward, and evidence-based hydro-diplomacy within the Nile Basin.

Presenting itself as a regional mediator, the African Union has pushed the idea of "African solutions to African problems." Ethiopia took up this idea as a means of preventing the GERD controversy from becoming global. The AU negotiated multiple rounds; but it lacked the necessary technical knowledge and enforcement tools to guarantee legally enforceable results.

Global Conflict Transformation

Egypt and Sudan presented the GERD problem to the UNSC in 2020 and 2021 on a pretext of a threat to regional stability. Ethiopia objected to this measure, claiming it compromised regional frameworks and African sovereignty. Under the Trump presidency, the US helped to negotiate 2019–2020. Ethiopia has dropped out of the negotiations claiming apparent favouritism for Egypt. The remarks made by the Trump administration seriously eroded confidence. Media Quote: "They [Egypt] will ultimately detonate that dam," President Donald Trump said over a phone call to Sudanese officials in October 2020. Ethiopia strongly opposed the announcement. European Union (EU): Technical Assistance and subdued diplomacy

By providing technical support and allowing covert diplomatic initiatives, the EU helped rather constructively. It attempted to remain impartial instead of expressing clear opinions, therefore safeguarding the integrity of the conversation. Media Quote March 2021 EU spokesman Peter Stano said, "The EU encourages the parties to resume negotiations within the framework of the African Union process." World Bank and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) Indirect Affect

Though they are not direct mediators, the World Bank and International Financial Institutions have shaped the dialogue by stressing development-oriented narratives. Ethiopia has used these stories to support GERD as a project meant for poverty reduction and energy production.

A World Bank official said in a 2019 policy brief on energy and water in Africa, "The World Bank is prepared to assist in fostering regional collaboration on transboundary water resources within the Nile Basin."

5.9 Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

Establishing a permanent Nile basin communication Establish a Trilateral Hydro-Diplomacy Communication with binding mandates Task Force (THDCTF)

1. A multilateral frame wok with dispute resolution mechanisms would reduce ad hoc bargaining and enhance institutional trust

2. Adopt a shared water security framework grounded in the principle of equality and cooperation.
3. All parties should move beyond zero-sum thinking towards mutual benefit, patiently using the UN Watercourses Convention the 2010 Cooperation's should be institutionalized, particularly during drought seasons.
4. Include civil society and local experts in track-two diplomacy
5. Border inclusion can help soften entrenched state position and generate more flexible, people-centered solution
6. Leverage regional organization like African Union to facilitate neutral and long-term mediation.

The AU should build a dedicated Nile mediation unit with legal and technical expertise.

- Dependable for real-time data trade, overseeing joint press releases, and connecting political pioneers with technical specialists.

Communication Strategy recommendation Launch a Digital Hydro-Communication Platform (DHCP)

Develop coordinated public diplomacy campaigns to build regional trust.

1. Share real-time data on GERD water levels, energy output, and hydrological forecasts. States should avoid inflammatory rhetoric and instead focus on shared narratives of cooperation and development. Consolidate early caution systems for dry seasons or sudden filling events
2. Frame the GERD as a regional public Good Emphasizing the dam's potential to provide energy, improve water regulation, and mitigate climate risk may open space for consensus
3. Institutionalize regular trilateral communication forums. Create a Joint Media Coordination Mechanism (JMCM) Accomplish with a media monitoring and fact-checking body to vet dam-related reports Facilitate joint press briefings and counter disinformation through unified messaging
4. Scheduled summits, expert panels, and media engagements can mention dialogue even when formal negotiations stall. Provide open-access specialized reports made by free hydrologists and engineers. Give training in water strategy, technical hydrology, and conflict-sensitive news coverage.

Encourage Civil Society and Expert Participation

- 1 Support trilateral academic exchanges, joint university research, and community-based forums.
- 2 Organize open workshops and online engagement stages to bring local voices into policy talk.
- 3 Emphasize collaboration between logical and legitimate experts from all three nations.

Promote Track II Diplomacy

1. Enable informal negotiations between retired diplomats, academics, and civil society leaders.
2. Launch cross-cultural programs and joint development projects to foster goodwill.
3. Leverage shared environmental and economic interests to shift the discourse from zero-sum thinking to mutual benefit.

Access to Dependable Information

- Key hydrological, technical, and diplomatic data were not readily accessible to researchers due to state security considerations.
- A noteworthy parcel of pertinent discussions and documentation exists as it were in Amharic or Arabic, with few deciphered or systematized into English.

Scholarly and Investigative Gaps

- Existing literature often addresses GERD from singular perspectives—hydrology, law, or diplomacy—without integrating communication as a core component.
- Longitudinal considers following how negotiation narratives advanced from 2011 to 2024 stay constrained.
- Commitments from neighborhood African researchers, especially those composing in non-Western or territorial dialects, stay underrepresented.

Stakeholder Engagement Limitations

- Community voices from Nile-dependent populaces were not adequately captured within the formal arrangement discourse.
- Civil society organizations, especially in Ethiopia and Egypt, confront administrative imperatives that restrain their inquire about and open communication endeavors.

Technological and Linguistic Barriers

- Key archives and policy papers remain inaccessible due to lack of digitization or restricted platforms.
- Internet shutdowns and censorship during political unrest further disrupted communication and research access.
- Translation inconsistencies and ambiguous terminology created additional interpretation challenges across Amharic, Arabic, and English.

The Temporal and Dynamic Characteristics of the Discourse

- **Transforming Political Alliances:** Swift alterations in internal politics (e.g., regime transitions in Sudan) influence the dynamics and stability of hydro communication.
- **Seasonal and Crisis-Driven Communication:** Dialogue frequently escalates solely during flood or drought emergencies or before significant dam operations, resulting in reactive rather than proactive communication.

Implications for Future Research

This study offers a foundational framework for understanding and progressing hydro-communication in transboundary water conflicts. Future inquire about ought to:

- Conduct longitudinal studies following shifts in communication narratives from 2011 to 2030.
- Explore the part of fake insights, adj. information, and advanced strategy instruments in lessening data asymmetry.

- Investigate comparative case thinks about from other transboundary waterways (e.g., Mekong, Indus, Tigris–Euphrates) to enhance the conceptual and viable understanding of cooperative hydro-diplomacy.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: MAJOR NEWS LINKS

<https://www.bbc.com/amharic/news-60445083>

<https://sudantribune.com/article67501/>

https://sudantribune.com/article67501/?_cf_chl_tk=RamCAS5MUXAyrSLf9KaHRf90Dy9GXMsVflKp4wqCA58-1744737255-1.0.1.1-

[fJtUWdgcLNEKssICzL6TiYVXRji_6vITjGxP1Za0HDc](https://sudantribune.com/article67501/?_cf_chl_tk=RamCAS5MUXAyrSLf9KaHRf90Dy9GXMsVflKp4wqCA58-1744737255-1.0.1.1-fJtUWdgcLNEKssICzL6TiYVXRji_6vITjGxP1Za0HDc)

<https://egyptindependent.com/african-unions-role-in-gerd-negotiations-is-neutral-assures-au-commissioner/>

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APPENDIX B: Interview Questions and FGD Guide

Interview Guide

Title:

Hydro Communication Challenges and Opportunities: A Case Study of the Ethio-Sudan-Egypt Trilateral Dialogue on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (2019-2024)

Researcher:

Hanna Demissie

Institution: Addis Ababa University, College of Humanities, Language and Journalism, School of Journalism and Communication, Public Relations and Strategic Communication, Extension Class

Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. This investigation seeks to examine the communicative challenges and prospects that have emerged during the trilateral negotiations concerning the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). Your insights are critical to enhancing our understanding of how communication dynamics have influenced the negotiation process among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. Please note that your participation is entirely voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential. The interview is expected to take approximately 30–45 minutes. You are free to refrain from answering any question or to withdraw at any stage.

Research Question

1: In the context of the GERD dialogue between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, what are the most significant communication issues that have impeded the implementation of effective negotiation?

Interview Questions:

1. Could you please describe your professional role and involvement in the GERD negotiations or in related fields?
2. In what ways have the historical relations between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt influenced their communicative practices and the overall negotiation process regarding the GERD?

3. How do national interests shape the communicative tactics of each country, and in what manner do these interests affect the pursuit of a consensus?
4. Could you identify the specific communication barriers—whether linguistic, cultural, political, or otherwise—that have emerged among the negotiating parties during the GERD discussions?
5. How have media representations and public opinion in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt influenced the diplomatic discourse and the negotiation process surrounding the GERD?
6. What have been the principal obstacles in the dissemination of technical and scientific data related to the dam's impact, and how have these challenges affected mutual trust among the countries?
7. In what ways has the involvement of international organizations, such as the African Union or the United Nations, altered the communication dynamics among the three nations?
8. How do the divergent political systems and leadership styles of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt contribute to potential misinterpretations or communication breakdowns during negotiations?
9. To what extent has mistrust among the countries contributed to the stalling or breakdown of communication during the GERD negotiations?
10. How have alternative negotiation methods or platforms (e.g., direct talks, third-party mediation, and multilateral meetings) modified the communication flow among the involved nations?
11. Looking ahead to future GERD negotiations, what communicative strategies or solutions might be employed to enhance cooperation and improve communication between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt? Research Question 2:

What communication tactics have the three countries utilized in order to maintain their respective national interests within the context of the trilateral dialogue?

Interview Questions:

1. What distinct communication strategies have Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt adopted to effectively articulate their national interests in the context of the GERD negotiations?
2. How have the national leaders of each country articulated their interests during public discourse to secure domestic support and shape international perceptions?
3. What role does the utilization of both state-owned and independent media play in the communication strategies of each country as they construct narratives surrounding the GERD to safeguard their national interests?
4. In what manner have Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt employed diplomatic language and tone to express their positions during negotiations, particularly concerning sensitive issues such as water rights and sovereignty?
5. What are the primary negotiation strategies utilized by each nation to advance their interests while simultaneously maintaining constructive relations with other stakeholders and international mediators?
6. How have the three nations leveraged alliances or third-party interventions, such as those by the African Union, United Nations, or regional blocs, to further their national interests throughout the negotiation process?
7. In what ways have non-verbal communication strategies (for instance, symbolic gestures, public declarations, or diplomatic visits) been utilized to advance individual national objectives in the trilateral dialogue?
8. How do the communication approaches of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt differ when addressing diverse audiences—domestic, international, and regional—to sustain national backing and influence negotiation outcomes?
9. To what extent has the deliberate use of silence or the strategic withholding of information influenced the negotiation tactics of the three nations, and how has this practice served to protect their national interests?
10. Have the nations employed specific framing techniques or narrative construction methods to present themselves as responsible negotiators, and in what ways have these strategies impacted their national interests?

Research Question 3: *What are the options available to improve communication in order to both encourage cooperation and reduce tensions?*

Interview Questions:

1. What communication methods could be adopted by all parties to foster a more transparent and open dialogue, thereby enhancing trust among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt?
2. In what ways can the principles of active listening and mutual understanding be integrated into the negotiation process to ensure that the concerns and national interests of each country are fully acknowledged and addressed?
3. How might third-party mediation or facilitation improve communication and assist the three nations in identifying common interests during negotiations?
4. In what ways could the establishment of joint technical committees or expert panels contribute to improving discourse on the environmental and economic implications of the GERD, thus mitigating misunderstandings?
5. What measures could be implemented to enhance the dissemination of precise and timely information to all stakeholders, particularly with regard to the dam's operational impact downstream?
6. How might regular, structured communication channels—such as periodic meetings, summits, or forums—be established to ensure sustained dialogue and mitigate the risks of miscommunication throughout the negotiation process?
7. In what ways could cultural exchange programs, workshops, or educational initiatives contribute to a deeper mutual understanding and greater collaboration among the populations of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt?
8. How can the three nations reconcile their national pride and sovereignty with the necessity for collaborative efforts, and how can communication be structured to effectively address these delicate issues?

9. In what manner can nations address misinformation or media narratives that may exacerbate tensions, and what role does accurate, responsible reporting play in bolstering diplomatic initiatives?
10. What alternative dispute resolution mechanisms—such as mediation, arbitration, or collaborative problem-solving—might be explored to resolve communication breakdowns and foster future cooperation?

Research Question 4:

What are the impacts of major international bodies on the communication dynamics that have been taking place within the trilateral dialogue?

Interview Questions:

1. In what ways have international organizations such as the African Union (AU), United Nations (UN), and World Bank influenced the communication strategies and negotiation dynamics among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt?
2. To what extent have the mediatory efforts of the African Union affected the communication dynamics among the three nations, and how effective have these initiatives been in promoting constructive dialogue?
3. How does the participation of international organizations influence the transparency of the GERD negotiations, and in what ways does it shape the exchange of information among the involved parties?
4. What specific methodologies have international organizations employed to navigate conflicts or disputes within the trilateral dialogue, and how have these approaches influenced communication dynamics?
5. How have global entities, including the UN and regional organizations, contributed to integrating specialized knowledge into the dialogue, and what implications has this had for the discourse surrounding the dam's impacts?

6. In what ways have the roles or impacts of international organizations, such as the World Bank or the African Union, shaped how Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt articulate their national interests throughout the negotiation process?
7. What obstacles or constraints do international organizations encounter when attempting to mediate among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, particularly in relation to communication barriers and national sensitivities?
8. In what ways do the engagements of international organizations influence the political narratives in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt, and do these engagements contribute to transforming the public discourse surrounding the GERD?
9. What influence have the United States and other global powers exerted on the trilateral negotiations, and how has their involvement shaped the communication dynamics among the three nations?
10. What recommendations or enhancements could be proposed to strengthen the capacity of international organizations in fostering improved dialogue and encouraging more productive collaboration in future discussions regarding the GERD?

Thank you for your time and valuable insights. Your responses are integral to advancing our understanding of the role of communication in international water diplomacy. Should you have any additional thoughts or require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me via email

APPENDIX C: LIST OF RESPONDENTS AND FGD

LIST of Interview Respondent

No.	Code	Name	Responsibility
1	Respondent 1	Yelma Selash Associate Professor in water resources engineering at Addis Ababa	DERD negotiation (2018-2024)
2	Respondent 2	Slaabat Manaye (water Journalist) Director of Digital Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Water Journalist and senior analyst published two Book related to Abay
3	Respondent 3	Beleta Berhanu Associate Professor at Addis Ababa Institute of Technology AAU	GERD negotiation Scientist Team leader (2012-2024)
4	Respondent 4	Gasaw Ayferam (DR) African Affairs Researcher at the institute of Foreign Affairs	GerD /Abay researcher

List of participants of FGD

No.	Name	Responsibility
1	Besrat Melesa	Journalist Fana Broadcasting water related senior Analyst
2	Ato Getinet Getu	Ministry of Water and Energy PR and communication Executive
3	Selam Mulugeta	Ministry of Foreign Affairs P R and diplomacy
4	Seyfe Selasie Endale	Abay/GERD related Documentary film maker