

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**  
**INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY STUDIES (IPSS)**

**The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Centered Emerging  
Ontological Security in Ethiopia: Its implication to the Negotiations  
of the Dam**

**By**

**Tadiyos Asnake**

**October, 2021**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**  
**INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY STUDIES (IPSS)**

**The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Centered Emerging  
Ontological Security in Ethiopia: Its implication to the Negotiations  
of the Dam**

**By**

**Tadiyos Asnake**

**A thesis paper submitted to the Institute for Peace and Security Studies for  
the Partial fulfillment of the requirements of Master of Arts in Peace and  
Security Studies at Addis Ababa University**

**Advisor**

**Fana Gebresenbet (PhD)**

**October, 2021**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**DECLARATION**

Here I confirm as of this manuscript is the original work that I have submitted to the Institute for Peace and Security Studies for the Partial fulfillment requirement of a Master's Degree at Addis Ababa University. This paper has not yet been worked on by any other individuals for the degree awards at any University and at any stage of the class.

Name: Tadiyos Asnake

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPROVAL**

The undersigned certify that they have read and hereby recommend to the Addis Ababa University to accept the thesis submitted by Tadiyos Asnake and entitled “The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Centered Emerging Ontological Security in Ethiopia: Its implication to the Negotiations of the Dam” in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts Degree in Peace and Security Studies complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Name of supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Internal Examiner \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of External Examiner \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Head of Department \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **ENDORSEMENT**

This thesis has been submitted to Addis Ababa University, Institute for Peace and Security studies, for examination with my approval as a university advisor.

**Fana Gebresenbet (PhD)**

Advisor

**Signature & Date**

---

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

I want to extend my gratitude to: My Lord Jesus Christ, My advisor, Fana Gebresenbet (PhD), Yonas Ashine (PhD) and all my friends that have supported me in my way.

## Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	i
LIST OF FIGURES .....	iv
ACRONYMS .....	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
CHAPTER ONE .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1. Background of the Study .....	1
1.2. Problem Statement .....	3
1.3. Objectives .....	5
1.3.1. General Objectives.....	5
1.3.2. Specific Objectives .....	5
1.4. Research Questions.....	6
1.5. Significance of the Research.....	6
CHAPTER TWO .....	7
2.1. Conceptual Framework.....	7
2.1.1. Hydro-Politics .....	7
2.1.2. Ontological Security .....	7
2.1.3. Social Constructivism Theory.....	9
2.2. Historical Overview and Hydro-Politics of the Nile River .....	10
2.4. Egypt: The Status Quo Ante Riparian.....	14
2.5. Ethiopia: The Anti-Status Quo Riparian.....	16
2.6. GERD: The Controversial Ethiopian Dam .....	17
CHAPTER THREE .....	19
3.1. Research Methods.....	19
3.2. Research Design .....	19
3.3. Data Collection and Data Types .....	20
3.3.1. Data Types .....	20

3.3.2. Data Collection Tools .....	20
3.3.2.1. Key Informant Interview (KII) .....	20
3.4. Data Analysis and Interpretation .....	22
3.5. Ethical Consideration.....	22
3.6. Limitations of the Study.....	23
3.8. Organization of the Study .....	23
CHAPTER FOUR.....	25
4.1. Cooperation: Overview of the Nile Basin Agreement since 19 <sup>th</sup> C .....	25
4.2. Contemporary Negotiations .....	26
4.2.1. The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) .....	26
4.2.2. The Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) .....	28
4.2.3. The Declaration of Principles -2015 .....	29
3.2.4. The USA and World Bank involvement over GERD’s negotiation .....	29
CHAPTER FIVE .....	31
5.1. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS .....	31
5.1.1.The Actors of narrative building over GERD.....	31
5.1.2.Narratives and Discourse Continuities of Key Elites.....	32
5.1.3.GERD and Emerging Ontological Security in Ethiopia .....	37
5.1.3.1. The Name Renaissance and its implications to ontological security .....	41
5.1.3.2. Aesthetics to instigate support to GERD .....	43
5.1.4.The Constructed Identity on GERD and Its Implications to the Negotiations.....	48
5.1.5.Findings .....	53
CHAPTER SIX.....	53
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	53
6.1. Conclusion .....	53
6.2. Recommendation .....	56
REFERENCES .....	59



## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: The Nile River Basin.....	14
Figure 2: Route of Ontological Security.....	52

## ACRONYMS

AfSol:	African Solutions for African Problems
BCM:	Billion Cubic Meters
EBC:	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation
EEPA:	Ethiopian Electric Power Authority
ENDF:	Ethiopian National Defense Force
ENTRO:	Eastern Nile Technical Regional Office
ETV:	Ethiopian Television (Previous name of EBC)
FBC:	Fana Broadcasting Corporate
GERD:	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
HoA:	Horn of Africa
IGAD:	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
IR:	International Relations
KII:	Key Informant Interview
MoFA:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NBI:	Nile Basin Initiative
OS:	Ontological Security
PM:	Prime Minister
SNNPR:	South Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region

## ABSTRACT

*This study argues that narratives justifying the construction of, and the aggressive mobilization of resources for, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) are leading to the construction of a new state identity centered on the GERD. It is further argued that this emerging identity has implications to ontological security, and adds limitations to the possibility of compromises expected in the GERD negotiations. These arguments are made based on qualitative method of study by which an exploratory design is adopted. Various narratives of elites are collected from both primary and secondary sources like magazines, newspapers, mainstream media reports, and interviews with the researcher. The negotiations center on the filling and operations of the Dam, which is a game changer given the country's failure to significantly use the Nile's water although it contributes more than 85% of the Nile's annual flow. Egypt (and in more recent years Sudan) view this as reversal of what they consider to be their 'historic rights', and as such resisting any water storage and utilization in Ethiopia, among others, by framing it as a security threat. Conversely newly structured ways of narratives are been constructed by the Ethiopian elites after the announcement of the GERD. These narratives have anticipated an emotional attachment that could construct Ethiopian state identity on the GERD that led to the consideration of 'absence of GERD as an ontological insecurity to Ethiopia'. The GERD under the elite's narratives is seen as a uniting means of all nation nationalities by which all have become together for a common good. Even though the GERD is not the sole provider of Ethiopian biographic continuity, it is emerging to be among the few widely accepted anchors Ethiopian ontological security. The GERD negotiations are affected by the identity construction around the GERD since the negotiation team members are also likely emotionally attached view to GERD and there is relatively lower latitude to compromise by the public.*

**Keywords:** GERD, Nile, Ethiopia, Ontological Security, Negotiations, Rigid Routine

**Local Word;** Abbay (Blue Nile)

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

The Nile River is the world's longest river having about 6875 km in length passing through varied climatic and geographic areas. The Nile is known for its fluctuating nature by that the amount of water varies over time (Ahmed & Elsanabary, 2015). This river has two sources namely the Blue Nile and White Nile coming from Ethiopia and Lake Victoria respectively. Soliman et al. (2016) said that different threats have surrounded societies in the basin of which poverty, lack of water resources, and mismanagement are the main ones (Ahmed & Elsanabary, 2015, Soliman et al. 2016).

Ethiopia's beginning of the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) became a source of tension between Ethiopia and Egypt. The construction of this dam (GERD) was embarked in 2011 and is expected to hold about 74 billion cubic meters (BCM) of water. The contestation due to GERD led those states to go for negotiations and including military threats (war of words). Following this Egypt tried to diplomatically strengthen its water security concern in which president El-Sisi has visited and negotiated with about four African states in 2018 (Shay, 2018). This dam of Ethiopia is considered as the main concern for Egypt since they consider "The Nile is a matter of national security". As Yihdego et al. (2016) argued that this contestation would lead both states either to conflict or cooperation. The consideration of the Nile as a sole source of water has created and escalated this contestation (Shay, 2018, Yihdego et al. 2016).

In modern times different types of security have emerged. From those modern security concepts cyber security, human security, and ontological security are the main recently emerged concepts of security. Srikanth (2014) argued that the military dimension of security is changed to multi-dimensional security concerns (Srikanth, 2014).

It is argued here that the security considerations relating to the GERD/Nile also have an ontological dimension. This idea of security has emerged from the Giddens (1991) concept of individuals' need for identity continuity (Zarakol, 2017). States are the ontological security

providers and seekers as well. Mitzen (2006) argued that the concept of ontological security is the state's need to have a continued self and feeling of continuity. Mitzen (2006) argued that ontological security is an idea of "subjective understanding of "who one is" (Mitzen, 2006:34). States would also threaten their physical security to ensure the security of their identity consistency (Mitzen, 2006; Zarakol, 2017).

This theory of security focuses on the identity marker of states as a referent for security affairs. Degaut (2015) argues that realist theory focuses on military capacity and state control over territories. This theory assumes the IR as an anarchic political space, and the powerful would control it. The realists give much attention to the material aspects and gains of states in their international relations (Degaut, 2015).

The traditional/conventional security aspects and the ontological security concept dimensions are different. While the conventional security concept gives priority to the protection of the state's material interests the ontological security concept focuses on ensuring the state's identity consistency in the IR (Mitzen, 2006; Degaut, 2015). For ontological security theory, states could compromise their material interests including physical challenges to ensure their identity get affirmed by others (Zarakol, 2015). In ontological security, states get protected by narratives (which consolidate a sense of one-ness) and routines of engagement with others, while in the traditionalist concept of security states get protected by their capability in international influence and military strength. In general, these two aspects of security are having different dimensions of focus, while the realists consider external aggression as a major threat to the state; ontological security theory considers the loss of identity markers as a major threat (Degaut, 2015; Mitzen, 2006; Zarakol, 2016).

The position in arguments centered on ontological security is not to reduce the importance of conventional understandings of security which focus on physical/territorial and political governance dimensions of the state, but the aim is to complement this idea of states interest to protect its existence of agency (Mitzen, 2006).

## 1.2. Problem Statement

In history, different agreements have been signed on the Nile River. Since the early years especially of the 19<sup>th</sup> C, the Nile River was considered as the epicenter of Western and Egyptian (more strongly and with legal documents) interests. Because of this many powers have tried to control this region by considering it as a "pivot land".<sup>1</sup> In 1890 Britain and Italy have signed an agreement to restrict any type of construction on the Nile tributary named Atbara. Another agreement and the most confusing were between Ethiopia and Britain (on behalf of Egypt) in 1902 and this agreement was to restrict Ethiopia from impeding the Nile's flow. As Swain (1997) argued that agreements made in 1906, 1929, and 1959 were able to protect the Nile River from being diverted by any upstream state. Quoting Robert Collins, Swain (1997) said "the 1929 agreement appeared to work solely for the benefit of Egypt and by this historic right of Egypt was recognized" (:677). After the Sudanese rejection of the 1929 agreement, Egypt agreed to revise it and they made a deal in 1959 and the shared Nile water 55.5 for Egypt and 18.5 for Sudan (Swain, 1997).

The 1959 agreement on the Nile helped Egypt and Sudan to make the term "The Nile as a Historic Right" recognized in the international system. In the agreement of 1959, Egypt and Sudan were able to make the Nile water non-negotiable for their international relations. Cascao (2009) said that the agreements on the Nile were being politicized by states. Egypt had also been dictating on the whole issue of Nile due to its strength both economically and geopolitically. Egypt was able to announce to the international society that the whole dependence of its water need is on the Nile and "The Nile is its Historic right". Quoting Hiekal (1978), Cascao (2009) said that "the first consideration of Egyptian government is to guarantee the Nile water is not threatened" (:248). Also, Cascao quoted Butros Ghali's speech on (BBC 10 June 2003), "the national security of Egypt is a question of water":248. As argued by Cascao (2009) the Toshka project of Egypt showed that the Nile is a non-negotiable affair for Egyptians. Any compromise on the Nile is unacceptable for Egyptians (Cascao, 2009).

Challenging Egyptians dominance on the Nile water Ethiopia began constructing a dam on the Blue Nile (Abbay) which caused tension and conflicts with Egypt. Aiming at improving the life

---

<sup>1</sup> Najimdeen Bakare and Minahil R. TOOR, 2019, revisiting Mackinder's heartland theory: identifying the emergence of a complex power competition in the Indian Ocean region, NUST University Islamabad.

of 80% agriculture-based population and the poorest population in the world; Ethiopia announced the dam on the Blue Nile. This dam is found some 40 km from Ethiopia's border with Sudan at the location named Guba (Ahmed & Elsanabary, 2015). The main argument of the Ethiopian government is that the need for GERD is to improve the lives of millions of citizens. This dam of Ethiopia is being constructed by Ethiopians financial capacity without external aids (Beyene, 2017).

This paper aimed at exploring the importance of the GERD in an identity construction and its importance in anchoring biographic continuity of the state by which it is not deeply studied in various works of scholars. The major focus of scholars while they study on the Nile and GERD is related to its importance in material aspects. Here is realized that, the very gap of the study is the unseen and denied reality of GERD and its impact in ensuring Ethiopia's ontological security. This study has the focus of studying the importance of GERD besides its material benefits. Several scholars have mentioned the contestations over the GERD as issues of benefiting from the resource to feed their people. But this study goes beyond and explored the reality of contestation as an issue of identity construction on the material entity.

This paper sees the gap by which several elites didn't realize and seemingly ignored. For instance, Yacob (2007) while discussing about Ethiopia's aim of getting share of the Nile River in his research of "Nile River Geopolitics" concentrates on the state's contestation as based on ensuring water availability. Further he has discussed the negotiation terms like NBI as state's goals are limited to achieving of water shares. Here it is realized that, his view is limited to material aspects and doesn't have seen state's attempts to protect their biographic continuity through these material entity.

Further, Mihretab (2018) articulated the tussle among riparian states as it is to ensure hegemonic power on the Nile River by which he insisted on the material aspects of the river. He calls the Ethiopia's endeavor to ensure counter hegemonic interest on the Nile River. This scholar has a very limited and customary view on the Nile River by which he doesn't mention other aspects of Nile's importance. Hegemony in his contextual writing is getting dominance in material benefiting.

Additionally, a scholar named Shay (2018) while discussing about the GERD, has mentioned the major critical issues as filling and operation of the GERD by which he only sees technical issues as halting for agreement. This view is so limited in which the state's identity construction either on Nile or GERD is not studied. In the same mean, Yihdego et al. (2016) in their part have concentrated on the hydro-hegemonic competition between Ethiopia and Egypt, and they focused on the material needs of states as the main source of contestations.

In contrary to all the above mentioned scholars views, this paper focuses on the importance of GERD in the state's biographic continuity and the elites consideration of the dam as an ensuring entity of state's ontological security. Scholars see Ethiopian interest in the Nile River in the perspective of material needs and resource benefits, but this thesis intends to examine Ethiopia's interest in making the GERD among many of others, it is becoming one as its identity marker and as a national symbol in the international phenomenon. The researcher focuses to study the attachment of Ethiopian interest (identity-related) obtruded during negotiations. The researcher sees a gap that Ethiopia's interest in the GERD in the concept of ontological security perspective is unstudied. Since Ontological Security Theory is a new concept of security the researcher finds a gap that there are very limited academic studies made in the Ethiopian Ontological Security concern over the GERD. So the researcher intends to study how Ethiopia's concern of Ontological Security is obtruded during the negotiations on the GERD.

### **1.3. Objectives**

#### **1.3.1. General Objectives**

The general objective of this research is to explore and asses the narratives of elites' importance in identity construction over the GERD and its implication to negotiations over GERD.

#### **1.3.2. Specific Objectives**

1. To examine the discourses/narratives Ethiopian officials and mainstream media used in public mobilization and awareness-raising works to support GERD;
2. To explore perception towards this dam and its importance in the stabilizing continuity of Ethiopian state identity;



3. To assess and explore the ramifications of the narrative based emerging ontological security in Ethiopia to the negotiations over the GERD

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

1. What are the major narratives of Ethiopian officials and mainstream media that are used during the public awareness-raising situations?
2. What is the importance of GERD in Ethiopian state identity continuity?
3. What are the implications of the narrative based emerging ontological security in Ethiopia to the negotiations over the GERD?

#### **1.5. Significance of the Research**

This research is focusing on the newly emerging concept of security-Ontological Security. While the security of states concerning their physicality is much studied and explored, the ontological security (securitization of identity) is not. The security concept concerning physical security of GERD, Nile, and the geopolitics of the Basin is studied, while scholars forget to see the other dimension of security-ontological security perspective on GERD. The main aim of this research is to pave a way for the next researcher in the view of GERD's aspect from an OS perspective. This research is trying to cover the unstudied security apparatus concerning GERD and its negotiations, so this will fill the gap in an academic environment. The researcher will try to fill the gap by studying the implications of OS of Ethiopia in the negotiations of GERD. In the meantime, this research could be used for academic researches, further explorations, policy formulations and others.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1. Conceptual Framework

#### 2.1.1. Hydro-Politics

Hydro-politics is an idea of the interaction of states through negotiations, co-operations, and disputes based on sharing of water (mainly transboundary water). Hydro-politics could also be considered as water-sharing interactions between political entities. When a river/water source crosses more than one state's territory this river is regarded as a transboundary/international River. Because of the scarcity of those water resources states go to planning different strategies of being dominant over specific water resources. Because of this, "strong riparian states with high amount of political, economic and military leverage can often coerce weaker riparian to agree on water sharing policies that adversely affect them" (Kehl, 2010:3 see also, Towfique and Espey, 2002). In the hydro-political relationships of states, the state of the main water source has the power of dominance over other riparian (Kehl, 2010). As Towfique and Espey (2002: 3) said that "International law prohibits any country sharing an international water body (river or lake) from causing significant harm to other countries by overexploitation" (Towfique and Espey, 2002).

#### 2.1.2. Ontological Security

Ontological security is an emerging concept of security that intends on illustrating individuals (states in this context) need for having the feeling of agency. This security concept emerges because, besides the state's concern to protect its territorial security, in the same manner, they will give attention to ensure their self-continuity. The main dilemma that makes states give attention to their self-continuity is mistrust and unpredictability of the status quo. For that matter, the main interest of the state is to routinize relationships to create a knowable status quo and to have trust in the coming phenomenon. While scholars like Mitzen (2006) consider that identity is a social construction, in another way Zarakol (2017) identifies ontological security to be determined by the ability of a state to give its citizens a sense of security.

Even if there is no commonly agreed term of Ontological Security the most used common concept is "Uncertainty and mistrust conveying unknown threats and anxiety". Under this

uncertainty and threat, the major goal of the state is to ensure their sense of self (feeling of agency). Under a pendulous anarchic phenomenon, ensuring relative stable biographic continuity is the epicenter of this security concept. In the making of this and when states ensure their relative continuity, subjective understanding of self and others will grow up and occur. This subjective understanding is coming through the actions and reactions of those states (including routines) and these shape state's view of itself and the way other states see it. "Ontological security is a subjective understanding of who one is" (Mitzen, 2006: 344).

To bring this self-identity continuity, states according to Zarakol (2017) should be able to provide order and security to its citizens to be considered legitimate. States are sources of ontological security for their citizens and state organizations are mainly concerned to provide their citizens with confidence and in response, citizens to give the state legitimacy and acceptance. This is because unless the state is trusted by its citizens, there will be no binding and common identity for citizens, and not possible to think about state biographic continuity (Costantinos, 2015).

To bring this identity of a state Subotic (2016) examines, narratives have a bigger stake. In the making of the state's identity and ensuring the state's continuity (like routinizing relationships with others) they also need narrations to provide a cognitive bridge for its citizens. The main intention of narrations is to either legitimize or delegitimize something/somebody and to create an attachment with something. Besides the political purposes of narrations, they could be used to stabilize biography and ensure its continuity, for that matter state's endeavor to embed narrations in their daily discourses and dialogues to stabilize and strengthen cognitive bridge among citizens (Subotic, 2016).

In this manner a strengthened cognitive bridge (constructed identity) motivates actions and those actions are aiming at strengthening the state's identity (identity and actions are mutually interlinked). Besides narrations, actions (activities) are crucial to bringing "common identity and biographic continuity" (Mitzen, 2006: 342).

In the overall idea of ontological security, every state should form routines (relationships) with others to reduce anxiety and threats that come from uncertainty about the status quo. In creating these routines states can get relatively trustable phenomena. While states interact, their routine

can be either flexible or rigid. In the healthy condition of relations between states, the routine should be flexible in which actors can be rational in decision making and their interaction with others. When actors act under rigid routines they will be irrational in their decisions. Those following rigid routines are mainly considering the routine as an end not as means for goals (they don't go for exchanging ideas, rather blocking everything that comes from the reverse side in this type of routine), while the flexible routine considers routines as a means for their goals. Changing routines (flexibility) is important because an enemy in the past can be friendly today, and a friend today can be an enemy tomorrow. So by having these routines states try to recover from their anxiety and they could relatively trust the system (Mitzen, 2006; Kinval & Mitzen, 2016).

The researcher considers constructivism theory is fascinatingly important to study this identity construction over the Nile and to buttress the ontological security theory. Besides its contemporary nature, constructivism theory is akin in many instances to the Ontological Security Theory.

### **2.1.3. Social Constructivism Theory**

Constructivists besides their little difference on some issues, share almost all issues under constructivism theory in general. They see the world not only based on material aspects but the ideas, norms, and construction of identities. Belief for them is crucial in giving meaning to things. They stand against the realists' conception, considering everything as a result of social construction. The meaning of things can be changed through time and space when another identity is formulated and constructed. For that matter meaning of things will be variable and non-static; it will be changed when the idea of people gets changed. Under the routines of states, actions and reactions will be per their conformed identity and shaped by their constructed norms. Like Ontological Security Theory, the constructivism theory considers the routine between states to be determined and shaped by ideas and norms. These routines are shaped by an inter-subjective understanding of each other. According to Theys (2018) "In the constructivism theory concept, actions interactions and perceptions shape reality on the ground" (Theys, 2018: 4).

In contrary to the realism theory, this theory focuses on social construction and normative aspects. The realist's main consideration is the realpolitik and the structural world, while the

constructivists consider the normative and ideas as primary to the structural world (Dorner, 2017). Contrarily to the realists, the constructivists see the structures as a result of social construction. Structure for realists is a matter of territoriality and material aspects to be given the first concern, while ideas and perceptions became the most pressing matter in ontological security theory as well in constructivism theories (Agus & Sultani, 2012).

## **2.2. Historical Overview and Hydro-Politics of the Nile River**

In the study of the Nile River hydro-politics, overviewing its historical background is salient for analysis. The researcher aiming at clarifying the goal of the thesis tries to look at the historical routines in the Nile basin, especially of Ethiopia and Egypt.

The Nile besides its length is known for its dynamic and miraculous nature (in terms of its non-navigability and people's attachment to it-Egyptians considering it as God). Having two headwaters namely Blue Nile (originating from Ethiopia with its local name of Abbay) and White Nile (originating from Lake Victoria) they form a bigger Nile meeting at Khartoum. Even though the Nile is the source of development states of this basin are known for their conflicting and disagreeing nature. Almost the entire Horn of Africa and Northern Africa region is dominantly affected by the Nile's political Dynamics. The main water source of the Nile River is the Blue Nile (Abbay) that comes from Ethiopian highlands contributing about 85% of the total Nile water. Blue Nile (Abbay) has been taking more than 207 million tons of sediments annually for centuries from Ethiopian highlands towards the deserts of Sudan and Egypt (Swain, 2009).

Unlike other basins around the world, the Nile basin is dominated by lower riparian states/down streamers with no consideration of the upstream states. Even though the Nile has been flowing for centuries there has never been any cooperation and shared agreement among the basin states. This no-agreement status quo has also led Ethiopia and Egypt to confront armed conflicts. Due to its high intent over the Nile River Egypt has been exercising and expanding itself to control the source of the Nile especially the Blue Nile River (Ibid).

Due to Ethiopia's proximity to the Arab world, it became a strong ally with them, especially with Egypt. The first religious routine (in Christianity) was through Abune Salama (Fremnatius) who

was sent by the Coptic Christian church in the year 334. Though he came from Egypt, the Ethiopians received him well as a religious father. The Abuns appointed from the Coptic Church to the Ethiopian church was serving as a mediator between the two states. Albeit Ethiopia receives Abuns from Egypt, it was acting as a patron (protector) of minority Christians while they were threatened by Muslims in Egypt. The Ethiopian monarch was forcing the Egyptian administration to cushion Coptic Christians unless the Abbay River would get diverted (Chaillot, 2018; Erlich, 2002).

Back to ancient times, quoting Collins, Hailu (2005) wrote that "in the Year 936-945 there was a severe drought in Egypt due to the Nile's dwindling. Due to the catastrophic water shortage in 1201 G.C, 1/3 of Cairo's population has died. Dispatching their envoys to Ethiopia, the Egyptian sultans (pharaohs) have beseeched the Ethiopian kings not to block the Abbay River" (Hailu, 2005: 77).

In the year 1137, during the Zagwe kingdom of Ethiopia, there was a political interaction with Egypt. In this year, the Zagwe kingdom was an emerging dynasty in Ethiopia and indeed was interested in a tie-up with Egypt to have more bishops from Egypt and to legitimize its expansionist policy southward in Ethiopia. The Zagwe king, Nakuto La'ab noticing the fear of Egyptians, threatened them to pay him tributes and to send pops of Coptic churches unless he would rather block the Nile (Ibid).

"A more formalized relation between Ethiopia and Egypt has started in the year 1270-1529 (this time was known as the Ethiopian golden era) between Ethiopia and Egypt" (Erlich, 2002: 38). Besides their interest over the Nile River, the Mamluks were interested to have a trade route via Ethiopia due to the blockade of other routes by the Mongols. The routine was dominated by the exchanging of the Abbay River with the Coptic Abuns, in which Egypt feels threatened while the Nile has dwindled and Ethiopians feel the same way (but not in an equal manner) when Coptic pops are absent from coming (Erlich, 2002).

During the reign of King Dawit (r.1348-88) the Egyptian pops translated various religious books into geez including ta'amre-Maryam (literary means, the miracle of St. Marry) (Erlich, 2002, Chaillot, 2018). During the time of King Dawit of Ethiopia, military action was about to be taken by the Ethiopian king over the Mamluks though hadn't been taken (Bahru, 2018). Due to the

Middle East's duel with Christian Europe (the crusade war) and due to the Egyptians agonizing the Coptic Christians leads Ethiopian kingdom to think of diverting the Abbay River (Bahru, 2018). Zara Ya'qob, an Ethiopian king in the 14<sup>th</sup> C has warned the then Egyptian governors-Ottomans to leave Christians free and respected. In the routine of Ethiopia and Egypt, the Abbay River was a major rhetoric and political weapon (Erich, 2002; Chaillot, 2018). This action of diverting the Abbay River was the main agenda during the reigns of king Dawit (1380-1412) and King Zara Ya'qob (1434-68). As Bahru argued that, the only reason that restricted Zara Yaqob from diverting Abbay River was only the "Fear of God" (Bahru, 2018:63).

The Ethiopian and Egyptian relations had been highly strengthened due to religious ties, both having the world's most dominant religions, Christianity and Islam. "The Ethiopian church was for centuries a branch of Egyptian one, a bishopric of the Coptic Church. The bishop of Ethiopia, "the Abune" was always an Egyptian monk appointed by the Coptic patriarch" (Erich, 2018: 21). Through this religious routine, Egypt was able to either legitimize or delegitimize Ethiopian political leaders, for that matter Ethiopia was dependent on Egypt (Ibid).

The relation between the two states was highly dominated by mistrust and uncertainty because of Egypt's fear of Ethiopia's possibility to divert the Nile that would cause serious disaster to Egypt (Hassan, 2018). To nourish this argument of Hassan, we can see the letter that the Ethiopian emperor sent to Egyptian pharaohs. In 1688 Emperor Tekle Haimanot of Ethiopia sent a message to Egypt having the Amharic content of, “እናንተን ለመቅጣት ዓባይ ራሱ በቂ ነዉ። ምንጩንና ዉሃዉን ጭምር አምላክ ለኛ በመላገሱ በዚሁ ኃይል በመጠቀም እናንተን ለማሰቃየት መቻላችንን እወቁት የሚል ማስጠንቀቂያ ልከዉላችዋል።” (Hailu, 2005: 76), the unofficial and researcher’s translation of this version is, “To punish you (Egyptians), Abay by itself is enough mechanism. God himself gave us the source and the water, and through using this power we can torment you”.

Religious correspondence between Ethiopia and Egypt was the stabilizing factor for the routine they had in general, though have been competing and using the River Nile as a method for threatening each other. Due to the deep correspondence between them, they shared different normative and political cultures. The Nile-the uniting factor of the regional hydro-politics, not only in Christianity but also in Islam followers considers it as holy River and "Master of Rivers" (P:40).

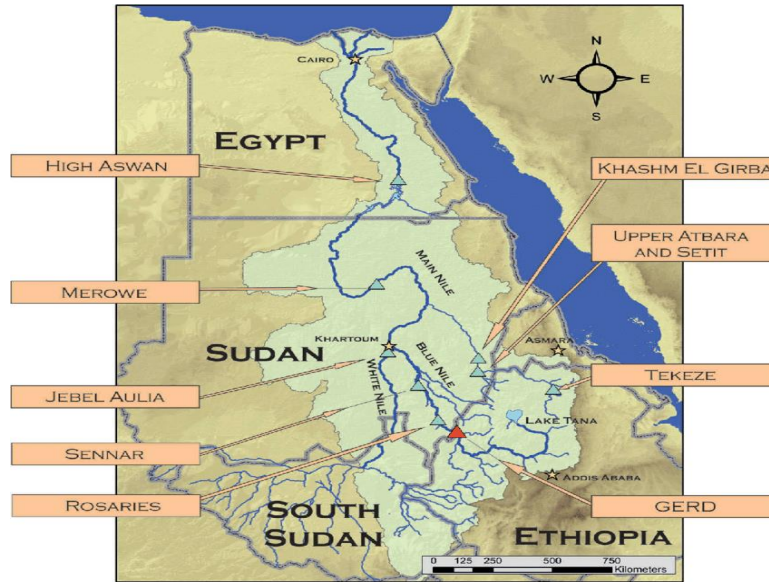
Egypt's interest in expansion and control of Nile source reached the climax during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in which they fought two severe battles with Ethiopia at the Gundet and Gura battles, and the Egyptian expansion became mere delirium. Ethiopia in both battles achieved a higher political and military success (Howe, 2009; Mihretab, 2018). Controlling Ethiopia was the plan of Mohammed Ali of Egypt, in which expanding their territory was used as a method of ameliorating their water security. Besides their proxies, Egypt's politicians considered religious contacts as a "political card" to ensure their water security (literally securing Abbay River) (Erlich, 2002:63). Egypt under the rule of Ismael Pasha was expanding itself towards the south, mainly to the red sea, and later conquered Harar-the now part of Ethiopia (Erlich, 2002).

After centuries of a united journey, the two churches, of Ethiopia and Egypt separated in the year 1959. The turning point for this discrete was Egypt's identification of itself as an Arabic republic, separating itself from the African continent (Hassan, 2018).

After the 1960<sup>th</sup> the aims of Ethiopian government of constructing dams on the Nile River has made Egyptians wary of the status quo. For that matter Egypt after that did not even stop conspiring over Ethiopia. The Egyptian government has been supporting anti-government forces in Ethiopia and has also been fighting Ethiopia in proxies. An example of that is the Ogaden war between Ethiopia and Somalia that brought Somalia's failure. And also Egypt has been supporting Eritrean insurgents that led to the occurrence of the longest civil war in Africa. Due to Egypt's proxies against Ethiopia, the Ethiopian state became highly weakened in political and economic capacity, and because of that Ethiopia became a passive partner of the Nile basin (Howe, 2009; Mihretab, 2018).

The multi-consequence civil war brought several challenges to Ethiopia including drought, poverty, state weakness, and lesser leverage capacity on the Nile. Though Egypt was able to control the Nile Basin for a long, Ethiopia re-emerges as a counter power after the 1990s. Two decades of durable peace in Ethiopia led the government to think of the Nile as its source of energy. In relative to other riparian states Ethiopia was able to achieve economic growth after the 1990s which gave it an edge to consider building hydraulic infrastructures (Mihretab, 2018; Yacob, 2007).





**Figure 1:** *The Nile River Basin*<sup>2</sup>

## 2.4. Egypt: The Status Quo Ante Riparian

Egypt is highly known as it is a vulnerable and highly dependent state on the Nile River while it is argued it's 90% of the population surrounds the Nile's shore for its survival. Egypt's freshwater source is solely the Nile and as Attalla (2015) argued in Egypt life is unthinkable without the Nile River. This is because 90% of Egypt's land is desert. The old Egyptian civilization, which is seen as a figure for African civilization is categorically the Nile-Valley-Civilization. Egypt, in many dimensions, is seen as a birthplace of wisdom, civilization and known for its marvelous architecture (Attalla, 2015; Wuhibegzer, 2018).

"Historical records indicate that ancient Egyptians were worshipping the Nile having God's name - Hapi. As part of their ritual ceremony, they composed rites. Even contemporarily some peoples slaughter oxen, tossing coins, pay tributes and providing sacrifices to the River Nile" (Wuhibegzer, 2018:53).

During colonial times, Egypt's Nile interest was mainly driven by the British administration. British cotton production highly seeks water and for that matter controlling the source of the Nile was one of its goals. Before this time Egypt fought two battles with Ethiopia during the reign of

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Eastern-Nile-region-with-reservoir-locations\\_fig1\\_302977907](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Eastern-Nile-region-with-reservoir-locations_fig1_302977907)

Mohammed Pasha. He aimed to ensure Egypt's water security by controlling the entire basin of the Nile, though his aim became a mere illusion due to the devastating loss in the battles of Gundet and Gura (Mihretab, 2018; Waterbury &Whittington, 2009; Yacob, 2007).

Egypt has been using both covert and overt powers to ensure the Nile's security. In controlling the basin, Egyptian leaders were aiming to militarily and politically control the region that includes some parts of the Horn of Africa (Teferi, 2020). History of the past is evidence for that and also in the year after Ethiopia announces its new dam project Egypt's ex-leader Morsi was initiating to take military actions on Ethiopia to stop the dam project (Belachew, 2013; Yihdego et al. 2016).

Egypt, after constructing the Aswan dam, it has become curious in every aspect of activities on the Nile River. This was because; Egypt fears the Ethiopia's capacity of controlling the Nile's flow downwards (Teferi, 2020). Besides the military threats, Egypt has been using ideational powers in its diplomatic routes, in which they argued and narrate "The Nile for Egypt is a matter of death or life". Egyptians see the Nile as a "mysterious God: a beneficent and sometimes vengeful" (Attalla, 2015:4). The whole story of Egyptian statehood is attached to the Nile's availability. Because of its concern on the Nile Egypt has constructed a dam named Aswan to increase its leverage capacity. Not only constructing dams, but also Egypt protects the Nile by securitization and via ideation (narration) that led the international society not to think of Egypt separately from the Nile (Mihretab, 2018; Shay, 2018; Yihdego et al. 2016). The Egyptian governments through history have been manifesting their readiness for any confrontations that would come by the issue of Nile. "the matter of securing the flow of Nile water remains dominant in Egypt's decision making regardless of who controls Cairo" (Hassan, 2018:41). This is because, "Huge dams like Aswan in Egypt & other states serve as iconographic & symbolic functions".<sup>3</sup>

Ethiopia's announcement of the GERD became a turning point of Egypt's dominance over the Nile. This dam of Ethiopia is being considered a national threat for Egypt. Even though the panel of experts for GERD has studied GERD's technical affairs, Egypt still considers it as a major

---

<sup>3</sup> Hailu A. & Taye B. G. (2021:7). Symbolic Values And Implications Of The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Project In Ethiopian Identity Politics. SKHID Vol. 1 (2), Research Articles. Doi: 10.21847/1728-9343.2021.1(2).229192

national security threat (Mihretab, 2018, Shay, 2018 Yihdego et al. 2016). They see GERD as a possible cause for stray of Egypt's historic right. Due to those reasons the Egyptian government is interested and highly committed to ensuring the continuity of the previous status quo based on the 1959 colonial agreement (Mihretab, 2018).

## **2.5. Ethiopia: The Anti-Status Quo Riparian**

Ethiopia provides the highest share of the Nile contributing about 85% of the total water share. Having been tied with poverty and less bargaining power Ethiopia has never been considered a capable riparian of the Nile. Though Ethiopia had been denied to get loans, it has been constructing different micro dams around the Abbay River. Concerning those micro dams Egypt didn't complain because they don't affect Egypt's self-proclaimed water share (Belachew, 2013; Waterbury & Whittington, 2009,).

Passing through different challenges Ethiopia in 1957 had planned to construct a dam on the Nile River for the sake of producing electricity. The main goal of Ethiopia during this time was to search for its natural resource, making them achieved, paving a way for further studies, and increasing productive manpower. This plan of Ethiopia had taken about 42 million birr (2 birr=1 dollars during the then time). Even though this dam planning was concluded it became unsuccessful due to financial shortage and the less interest of international financial institutions. This planned dam was expected to bring a new status quo, but its failure became a reason for the continuity of Egypt's dominated status quo. The political dilemma was one of the challenges that put Ethiopia in a very weak leverage capacity and it devastated its economy due to the occurrence of civil war and drought (Yacob, 2007).

Besides the huff of Ethiopians, they were aiming at Abbay as a futuristic source of development. The need of changing the status quo rose especially after the 1990s. This is because; Ethiopia faces a high population increase and snug relative political stability (Yacob, 2007). To fulfill the need of millions the government was forced to think of the Nile (Abbay) as a source of development (Swain, 2009). After the 1990s the Ethiopian bargaining power increased and high reactionary measures were taken during the late-PM of Ethiopia-Meles Zenawi. Eventually, the huff of Ethiopians came out and decided to use the Nile for developmental purposes. The beginning of GERD by the Ethiopian government shaken the status quo and Ethiopia and Egypt

goes into fierce competition. After many years of frustration and aggression, Ethiopia has announced a dam on the Abbay River. Due to the beginning of this dam, Ethiopia was considered as a counter hegemon and new master of the Nile, and the dam also gave Ethiopia a leverage capacity with other riparian states (Mihretab, 2018, Shay, 2018).

## **2.6. GERD: The Controversial Ethiopian Dam**

Ethiopia's puissance power is higher due to its geographic position, resource, and manpower, but it has used its fraction (Cascao & Zeitoun, 2010). Ethiopia realized the GERD after centuries of tussle with Egypt and its proxies. Succored by its decades of relatively durable peace, the Ethiopian government was able to plan a development agenda on the Abbay River which led to a tense tussle with Egypt. This dam was announced to the public in 2011 by the late PM Meles Zenawi to be constructed by domestic efforts and financial capacities. This dam is constructing in the western region of Ethiopia named Benishangul Gumuz in a place of Guba far from Sudan about 40 KM (varied data of Kilometers of GERD from Sudan among writers). This dam plan is expected to produce 5250 MW of power. This dam is seen as a tool for changing Ethiopia's features and future, creating a green and sustainable economy (Mihretab, 2018.).

This dam of Ethiopia has a massive reservoir of having about 74 BCM. The expected benefits of GERD to the downstream states are mainly ensuring stable flow and making the Nile sediment free. After the completion of GERD, Ethiopia is expecting to produce three times the current electric production (as per the data of 2018). Trust among the basin states is eroded due to GERD, though experts agreed on the GERD's capacity of ensuring at least minimum water flow to downstream states; Egypt and Sudan. Egypt besides negotiating with Ethiopia has been trying to internationalize the GERD narrating the GERD as a national security threat for Egypt (Attalla, 2015; Shay, 2018).

Under the three scenarios presented by Soliman et al. (2016), the condition of No dam planning could lead Egypt to be the sole beneficiary due to the continuity of the status quo. And secondly, even if the dam is planed if its water reservoir is limited to 10 BCM, there will be no impact to downstream states and no conflict to occur. The last scenario presented by Soliman et al. is the current realization of Ethiopia's dam. In this scenario, the 70 BCM large dam will be a threat for Egypt and Sudan. Though Soliman et al. (2015) argued this way, Belachew (2013) on the

contrary argued the GERD as a multi-beneficiary dam for both Ethiopia and other riparian states. The GERD can provide stable flow downstream including dry seasons. This dam can also increase the capacity of downstream hydropower production due to sediment-free water flows.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3.1. Research Methods**

The qualitative research method is adopted by the researcher. This is because qualitative data collection allows collecting non-numerical data and it helps to explore how decisions are made and can provide detailed insights about the issue. The qualitative method also seeks to interpret data and gives meaning. It also helps to know how the social life and other aspects of the study population are organized (Richards, 2006: Williams, 2006). In qualitative research design, the main focus would be on understanding human beings' experience and their reflection on them. Unlike the quantitative method, the qualitative method initiates respondents to give deeper ideas about the issue. For that matter, an open-ended method is advised. In the qualitative method, subjectivity should be respected since the method itself motivates deep discussions (R. L. Jackson et al. 2007)

### **3.2. Research Design**

Exploratory research design is used for interpretive researches in which the researcher intends to answer questions like why, what, and how. This type of research design is an unstructured way of study that follows an interactive and open-ended method of data gathering. Under this design, the researcher can have the flexibility and this helps to study the unstudied (Question pro, 2020). When a specific issue is unstudied before exploratory design helps to lay down the foundation and the problem would be identified. As Stebbins (2001) said that finding out new things and unknown issues is the focus of exploration. Stebbins (2001) quoting Vogt (1999) said that "social science exploration is a broad-ranging, purposive and systematic to maximize discovery of generalizations leading to description and to understand an area of social and psychological life"(Stebbins, 2001). The researcher intends not only on exploring the central issues of the research but also on making analyses and investigations based on different theories like realism, constructivism, and Ontological Security Theory. So the researcher intends to bring new insights of ontological perspective concerning Nile & GERD in which other scholars have not covered.

### **3.3. Data Collection and Data Types**

#### **3.3.1. Data Types**

In this paper, the researcher focused on getting data from both primary and secondary sources. Those data types are works of literature, public speeches of officials, published and non-published materials, magazines, newspapers, and interviews. The researcher focuses on documents and discourse analysis that are to make the research more eligible. In the meantime the study is articulated with analyzed the speeches of government officials, diplomats, political elites, security force officers, and experts. In the end, these data are interpreted to theoretical viewpoint of ontological security, and their interaction with the emotion/identity building and their impact on negotiations are deeply discussed.

#### **3.3.2. Data Collection Tools**

##### **3.3.2.1. Key Informant Interview (KII)**

As usual in the qualitative method of study interview is used by many researchers. This research used the interview as one of my data gathering methods. An unstructured method is also adopted to get information from the respondents. Since the researcher used the qualitative method giving respondents free space of speaking to increase the validity of the research. Due to the reason that the topic the study made is by itself a sensitive national issue; respondents were expected to go deep and more subjective. Ontological security itself is a subjective understanding of things. So in this research, the respondent's subjectivity was expected. In addition to that, the researcher made the interview unstructured because some of the respondents were expected to be government officials and other scholars, so they had expressed their feelings and their subjectivity while responding to questions. For the sake of different respondents, the researcher took flexible questions to give them the freedom to speak (R. L. Jackson et al. 2007: Richards, 2006: Williams, 2006).

This study triangulated three major ideas. These are Narratives on GERD & Abbay, Ontological Security of Ethiopia, and the negotiation on GERD. The first and the second ideas of study are mainly analyzed with document and discourse analysis. The third idea which is the Negotiation part during analysis is comprised of the document analysis and scholarly views of negotiation

team members and those who have closeness to the negotiation trend. Even though I was aiming at meeting Egyptians as key informant of this thesis but they were not willing to give me space. For that matter, I have made an interview with some scholars to buttress the articulation and findings of the study. The key informants are 5 in number in which 4 of them are closely related with the negotiation of GERD (two of them are negotiation team members for GERD) and the one is member of the draft committee for the new Ethiopian foreign policy. The detail about the KII is mentioned in the appendices.

### **3.3.2.2. Document Review and Discourse Analysis**

To increase the validity of the research I tried to read the governments' narratives and discourses (Ethiopian Government) from the very beginning of the GERD's announcement. To get the real and truer discourses of the government data of Addis Zemen Magazine from the year 2010 is seen as a very efficacious source of the governments' discourse. In this magazine, different government official including the prime ministers and other highly credited personnel have presented their ideas towards the dam. The other informative source was the annual Magazines of the GERD which are released during the anniversary years of the dam. These annual magazines mainly comprise the discourses of different regional presidents, Mayors, officials, and major scholars. Major events of the year regarding the dam are presented as a summary of the general activities.

The critical source of analyzing the narratives over the GERD is seen under the incitements via music and poems that praise Abbay and the GERD. These incitement pieces of music and poems were presented in the time before and after the announcement of the GERD. The major singers included in this study are;

1. Teddy Afro's song named "Demo Be'Abbay; in Amharic Version of, ደሞ በአባይ"
2. Ejigayehu Shibabaw (GIGI) praises Abbay in her much-known music of "Abbay-አባይ.
3. The south Ethiopia singers team in their impressive song with better appearance praises the Abbay and the new dam in the music named "wase-Abbay, ዋሴ-አባይ
4. Genet Masresha a famous singer praising Abbay before the announcement of the GERD in her song "Chis Albaw Nedaje-Smokeless oil, ጫስ አልባዉ ነዳጅ



As one way of transmitting government discourse, the 8100-A text system has two importance; one in making the public participation to the financial support to GERD and the other to make the discourses/narrations on GERD reach in a different way of approach. The messages that have been/are transmitting in this text system are of national confinement ideas and as I saw some of them they are focusing on attaching the GERD with the national identity. Some texts are included in the analysis part to validate the discourse analysis.

### **3.3.2.3. Observation**

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and Abbay in general, for many years, have been the pinnacle topics for Ethiopians. We could say that every Ethiopian from child to elder could be considered familiar with the topic. I am also part of this society in which I have been listening to and watching the narratives and discourses of elites for many years. For this reason, my observation is included while doing the analysis part.

## **3.4. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Initially, I comprehend the major sources of narratives like newspapers, magazines, news at mainstream media, as principal sources of data. And to further nourish the finding of the research, I interviewed scholars that have more attachment to the topic. Those key informants are considered essential to the finding of the research. Changing the raw data collected from both documents and key informants to meaningful information through the theoretical concept of OST is considered the main goal of the researcher. The data that is collected from newspapers, magazines, news, and interviews are all in Amharic except for some data. Due to this, all Amharic version data are transcribed to English by the researcher.

## **3.5. Ethical Consideration**

The study comprises document reviews and interviews of scholars (government officials and other elites). The major question of ethical consideration could be raised regarding the interviewees. All the interviewees in this study have been involved in their wiling permission and the recording of their voice (except for one informant that wasn't recorded) was based on

willingness. The objective of the study from the very beginning was announced for the interviewees. Though it is based on their willingness, the names of the key informants are not mentioned to protect their privacy.

### **3.6. Limitations of the Study**

The main challenge I faced was during the collection of data. This was because searching for data was not simple since there are no well-organized archives. The major data of GERD from 2011 to now that I search for analysis were not findable. In the same mean finding historical background of Nile & Abbay River don't have archived data. Finally, the finding of negotiation team members and scholars was quite difficult due to their lack of time. Due to this, the researcher was forced to analyze with two negotiation team members and three scholars that are closely related to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia. To compensate for the absence of negotiation team members, I have used the online interviews of other members of the GERD's negotiation team that is channeled via mainstream media.

### **3.7. Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the GERD's importance to anchor Ethiopian biographic continuity and its implications to the Negotiations of GERD. The study sees the narratives of major elites of Ethiopia and Contemplates Ontological Security Theory with narratives of Ethiopian Elites and further goes to identify how it could ramify to the negotiations over the GERD.

### **3.8. Organization of the Study**

The study comprises six chapters. The first chapter mainly incorporates the background of the study in which it discusses the Nile River and GERD to provide some clues for readers. The second chapter provides ideas of the ontological security concept and goes back to discuss the very history of the Nile River and Ethio-Egyptian ancient contestations. Besides the historical overviews, this chapter embraces the backgrounds of the negotiations on the Nile River. Chapter three is the methodological description by which the path of the research is expressed. The Fourth contends of the negotiations and platforms by which the major contending forces over the Nile (Ethiopia & Egypt), is uncovered in this chapter. The fifth and most crucial chapter comprises data presentations and analysis which are collected through document review,

interview, and collection of discourses. Finally, the sixth chapter is of conclusive discussion of the researcher, and recommendations of the researcher are also provided.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.1. Cooperation: Overview of the Nile Basin Agreement since 19<sup>th</sup> C

During the 19<sup>th</sup>C the British colonial administration was a dictating regime on the Nile River. The British interest in the cotton production over the Nile basin forced them to give more emphasis to control the source of the Nile especially of the Ethiopian western part. All the agreements that the British administration made on behalf of Egypt were driven by this interest in cotton production. In 1902 British administration of Egypt signed an agreement with Ethiopia on the Nile River. This agreement was mainly intended at restricting Ethiopia from impeding/arresting the Abbay's flow to Egypt. As narrated by (Hailu, 2005) the first intention of this agreement was to discuss the Ethio- Sudanese border issue. Then, the attempt of the agreement changed to the issues of Abbay River. According to this agreement article 3, “የኢትዮጵያ መንግስት ከጥቁር አባይና ከባህረ ፃና፣ ከሰባት ወንዝ ወደ ነጭ አባይ የሚወርደውን ውሃ ከእንግሊዝ መንግስት ጋር አስቀድሞ ሳይስማሙ፣ ወንዝ ተዳር እዳር የሚደፍን ስራ እንዳይሰሩ ወይም ወንዝ የሚደፍን ስራ ለመስራት ለማንም ፈቃድ እንዳይሰጡ” (Hailu፣ 2005:102) and this Amharic version of the article can literally be translated by the researcher as "The Ethiopian government before agreeing with the British government shouldn't do any action as well giving permissions that fully impedes the Abay's flow, and of the Sobat river that feeds the white Nile". The major contradiction in the 1902 agreement was the word "arrest". The agreement forces Ethiopia to be limited from taking any measures that can arrest the flow of Abbay to Egypt while the Amharic version of the agreement says Ethiopia should not impede the Nile from flowing downstream in a full manner (Abdo, 2004; Yacob, 2007).

Besides creating pacts in between the riparian states, Britain was thinking of constructing a dam by itself on Lake Tana. Albeit under the negotiations of Tana and Abbay in general the British Government offers hundreds of thousands to the Ethiopian government, the then de facto king-Teferi Mekonnen (Later Haile Selassie I) was wary from taking such grants. This was because the Ethiopian government fears of "invitation of foreigners in the Ethiopian sovereignty" (Bahru, 2018:67).

The 1929 agreement was signed between Britain (on behalf of Sudan) and Egypt. This agreement was mainly focused on restricting Sudan and other riparian states from any construction activities on the Nile River. According to the signed agreement, this agreement can only be voided if the Egyptian government allows doing so. Albeit Sudan was given limited right on the Nile, the ultimate power was given to Egypt. This agreement dictates the Nile as a historic and national security issue for Egypt (Abdo, 2004).

Due to the disagreement of Sudan over the 1929 agreement of Nile, they revised the negotiation and formed a new agreement of 1959. In this agreement, they shared 55.5 and 18.5 BCM of water for Egypt and Sudan respectively. Ethiopia even if it had no leverage capacity, has criticized those agreements since they are excluding Ethiopia-the source of Abbay. Through those agreements Egypt was able to dominate the ideational/narration of the Nile, it attached itself with the Nile (Mihretab, 2018).

## **4.2. Contemporary Negotiations**

### **4.2.1. The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI)**

In 1999 the Nile basin initiative (NBI) was formulated to create cooperation space for those riparian states of the Nile. But the main challenge was the Egyptians consideration of the Nile affairs as non-negotiable. The NBI is a cooperative framework of 10 riparian states of the Nile River such as; Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania, Rwanda & Uganda. Quoting the NBI (2015) Knaepen & Byiers (2017), said “the NBI aims to ensure that Nile Basin countries work together to unlock the huge potential in order to bring vast range of benefits to the Nile Basin citizens including increased hydro-power, food productions, improved management of watersheds and better access to water for domestic use” p.4. Achieving sustainable socio-economic development via the use of the Nile River equitably was the first objective set by the NBI (Knaepen & Byiers, 2017). Among others, bringing riparian states to cooperation and bringing shares knowledge was set as a goal by the NBI. The NBI has two sub-regional offices;

1. The Nile equatorial lakes subsidiary action program (NELSAP)
2. Eastern Nile Technical Regional Office (ENTRO)

When the NBI was formulated, its main concern was to create trust and peaceful dialogues. Via that, the NBI aims to give all riparian states a win-win solution. In the NBI all riparian states of the Nile Basin were not included, for that matter bringing common agreement and shared vision was difficult (Nile Basin Initiative, n.d.).

As of the NBI 10 year's strategy, it has set 3 major objectives (from 2017-2027).

1. What basin challenges the Nile Riparians expect to contribute towards addressing over the next 10 years.
2. What contributions the NBI will make to address the basin challenges.
3. How the NBI as an institution should position itself to effectively discharge its mandate.

According to the NBI article (accessed December 12, 2021), the aim of NBI is to help the basin states to enhance their interactions via modifying the use of water resources & through improving electricity and other projects. Further modernization of irrigation in the basin states is given paramount status by the NBI.<sup>4</sup>

Before the NBI, some other initiatives were organized by which TECCONILE is one of them. This TECCONILE had the focus of technical issues like environment and water quality issues. Though this initiative had these aims, it has failed because of its lack of comprehensiveness.

In the meetings held in Aswan 1993, Khartoum 1994, Addis Ababa 1997, aiming at bringing cooperative resource uses; Ethiopia was involved as an observer. And also in the TECCONILE discussion, Ethiopia was less interested due to Egypt's sway on the discussion (Swain, 1997). Conflict and cooperation are the features of the Nile basin, though recently tensions rose due to the failure of negotiations. To resolve those tensions different platforms were/are formulated though none are successful. The NBI and the IGAD have been trying to harmonize the relations of those riparian of Nile. The poverty, high population growth, and less interest in negotiations led riparian states not to reach a common agreement (Knaepen & Byiers, 2017).

---

<sup>4</sup> NBI. The Nile basin initiative strategy 2017-2027 (n.d.). Abridged version. (accessed, December 12, 2021).

#### **4.2.2. The Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA)**

The comprehensive framework agreement (CFA) was a platform aiming at bringing the equitable share of the Nile to the basin countries and to convey legal frameworks as a binding agreement. This platform was based on the international laws based on equitable use and "no significant harm on others". Even if many of the basin states signed this framework, in contrary Egypt and Sudan refused to sign, and Egypt relegates the framework by participating only in events (Knaepen & Byiers, 2017). Egypt according to Tesfaye, (2018) retreats from signing the CFA due to two main reasons;

“1. The fear that CFA could necessitate the renegotiation of its acquired right on the Nile”

“2. The fear that it may surrender its veto power on the utilization of the Nile”

The CFA or Entebbe agreement has begun in the 1997 aiming at providing binding and legal agreements on the use and management of the Nile waters. This framework was based on the international principles of water sharing by which equitable utilization and non-significant harm on other parties were the major objectives set by the CFA. Ultimately the CFA became opened to be signed by Nile Riparian states, although Egypt and Sudan quite from signing it. In fact the CFA was signed and or ratified by countries like Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, and Burundi. Disregarding all these, Egypt goes to follow its interest over the Nile based on the colonial agreement of the 1959 (CFA, May 14, 2010).

“The treaty intends to establish principles, rights and obligations to ensure long term and sustainable management and development of the shared Nile waters. According to its provision, the Nile Basin States would assume the obligation to cooperate on the conservation, management and development of the basin and its waters (Ibid).

### **4.2.3. The Declaration of Principles -2015**

According to the Declarations of Principles-2015, principles of cooperation, the three states (Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan) are expected to “cooperate based on common understanding, mutual benefit, good faith, win-win, and principles of international law”(P.1). The benefit of GERD to produce electric power, by which contributing for economic development and for trans-boundary cooperation, are perceived by the signing states. The internationally accepted terms of agreement, which is the principle of not causing significant harm on water sharing parties is the main point of agreement set by this treaty. If significant harm occurred on any of the riparian states, states of the cause shall discuss with the vulnerable to eliminate & compensate the problem. While utilizing the resources of the Nile, those states shall be reasonable and be on the principle of ‘equitable utilization’ (DoP, 2015).

Under this agreement, the signing states have agreed to implement the recommendation of the international panel of experts (IPoE). To support & strengthen the confidence and trust among the signing states, the DoP-2015 declares priority of buying electricity from the GERD to the downstream states. Further, the confidence building is supported by the issues of data exchange among the signing states. The DoP-2015 further declares that the conflicts and disputes among them shall be resolved by themselves in an open-mindedness and cooperative manner. If they are not able to resolve their contestations by themselves, they could jointly appeal for mediations of third party. This agreement has become the leading principle of the GERD agreements by which heads of governments of the three countries signed on March 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2015 in Khartoum (Ibid).

### **3.2.4. The USA and World Bank involvement over GERD’s negotiation**

Due to the contestations between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan over the GERD, the US and the World Bank have involved as an observer (later as mediators) of the negotiation terms. Accepting the invitation of the U.S. & World Bank involved to resolve the dispute over the GERD. In just 2 years (2019-2020), several meetings have held to settle the contestations (Eshetu T.M., (n.d.).

The meetings of these countries in Washington DC on December-January 28-31, 2020 was focusing on the filling and operation of the GERD. As of the report by the US Department of



Treasury on January 31, 2020, the delegates from Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan have agreed on the issues of

- Schedule based filling plan of the GERD.
- Mitigation mechanism during the times of drought and prolonged dry season.
- Mitigation mechanism for the annual & long term operation of the GERD in drought & dry years.<sup>5</sup>

Even though all the negotiation platforms were held to bring harmony, none of the meetings were successful. Seeing this, the U.S. requested and practically involved in drafting the agreement platforms over the GERD. The U.S. and the World Bank on February 22, 2020 provided a draft of agreement over the GERD's filling and operation issues by which Egypt immediately accepted & in contrary Ethiopia rejected it (Eshetu T. M. (n.d.)).

To resolve the menaces the riparian states go through creating platforms that were expected to have positive impacts on the deadlocks. IOP (the international panel of experts) in 2012 and TNC (tripartite National Committee) in 2014 were formulated. The DoP (declaration of Principles) in 2015 was signed by those three competing riparian states Yacob (2018).

In history as well in contemporary situations of GERD (the Nile in general), there is no commonly shared transboundary agreement amongst the basin states. Due to that, the actions taken by those states, especially Egypt and Sudan are unilateral. The BATNA (Best Alternative to Negotiated Agreement) according to Yacob, (2018) is still not achieved.

---

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Treasury (January 31, 2020) Joint statement of Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan, The United States and the World Bank (Retrieved, December 12, 2021)

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5.1. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter comprises the data presentations and analysis by the researcher. The vital data presented here incorporates discourses narrated in magazines, newspaper reports –mainly Addis Zemen, mainstream media, and the annual magazines over GERD that comprehended the narratives of major political elites and non-political elites as well. The discourses and narrations ramifications to the concept of emotional attachment and identity construction are seen from the ontological security perspective. Though this study doesn't focus on studying what is argued and agreed on the negotiations arena, emerging OS in Ethiopia around the GERD could be theoretically interpreted to influence the negotiations.

#### **5.1.1. The Actors of narrative building over GERD**

The major actors in this narrative construction are mainly government officials and this according to Zarakol (2017) can be considered as the government's responsibility as a provider of ontological security to its citizens. Major political actors of the government play a very important role in this regard. Some of these actors are Meles Zenawi (the late Prime Minister), Demeke Mekonnen (the Deputy Prime Minister since 2011), higher government officials, regional presidents, and others that have key impacts on the narratives. Additionally, various media outlets have been used in this narrative construction. The annual magazine, the GERD public mobility council has published shows the general progress and public support to the dam since the year 2011. This forms narrative construction by government officials. The main purpose of this magazine seems to obtrude the uniting nature of GERD for all Ethiopians. In this regard, this magazine played a significant role in echoing the narrative of government. Since its establishment, it has been presenting public support to GERD to further persuade the public to increase their assistance to the dam. All the annual magazines that I have construed focus on a specific issue of narrating GERD as a matter of pride and identity for Ethiopians.

### **5.1.2. Narratives and Discourse Continuities of Key Elites**

Following the announcement of the dam by the government of Ethiopia (the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi), various elites and media have expressed their support to it via reverberating the dam's importance to the public. This was seen in Addis Zemen newspaper, Annual Magazine of GERD, and other means of media narratives in which it has been echoing the government's main narratives. Strong stances of the Ethiopian government and elites were seen under the discourses they have made.

The contents of the government officials' speeches, while they speak to mobilize the public in support of the dam, seem focused on creating strong narrative consistency. Meles's inauguration speech, Demeke Mekonen's annual messages since the beginning of the GERD, Roman G/Egziabher's speech, and many other higher government officials have been narrating the GERD's national status in a similar way to each other. The narratives of the major political actors seem focused on creating a strong emotional attachment between the GERD and the public.

Throughout all these, the major focus of narratives were the threat that comes from Egyptians by which Meles Zenawi (the Late Prime Minister) has stated "Though we don't know the stance of the newly coming administration (in Egypt), the previous government's stance is known. Egyptian's have been working on Ethiopia to restrict us from working dams on the Nile". Meles clarifies the beginning of Egypt's destructive policy towards Ethiopia saying that "it has begun during the British colonial administration". Meles spell out "to guarantee the cotton supply of Britain that is produced in Egypt they planned to control the very source of the Nile River". Further discussing about the Egyptian strategies over Ethiopia, Meles elaborated that the 1st strategy is "since Egypt has better geopolitical advantage in the region, they restrict us from getting loans to build dams, and this policy has continued for long". Meles also briefs that the then Egyptian foreign minister named Aboul Gheit has sent messages for those who are expected to give loan for Ethiopia. In the message of Aboul Gheit as Meles narrated "never give loan for Ethiopia, if so you will go in conflict with Egypt, and conflict with Egypt means to mess with the Arab world". The second strategy as Meles said is "destabilizing Ethiopia through indirect means". This strategy, according to Meles, gives the Egyptians two advantages. The first is "distracting Ethiopia from focusing on developmental affairs". And the other is "making our neighbors members of the Arab league and threatening us indirectly. Egypt has been conspiring

over Ethiopia using different methods”. Meles added “using the Ethio-Somali conflict, Egyptians have done lots of conspiracies”. Threatening Ethiopia in their big army was the third and last strategy of Egyptians he added the solution for this is “Not to panic with their big army”.<sup>6</sup>

This ideas and discourses of Meles were not new. Rather in his interview with Aljazeera in 2010, he has emphasized the unchanging strategies of Egypt towards Ethiopia. In this interview, Meles has articulated that “there are some in Egypt still following old fashioned ideas. The idea of the inability of upstream states from using the Nile River due to their poverty is changed once and for all”. Spotting at Ethiopia's construction of the ideal dam, Meles said "Egypt will not be able to stop Ethiopia from building dams. Ethiopia is able and willing to build dams". Forwarding his message to Egyptians Meles added "Egypt shouldn't try to stop the unstoppable".<sup>7</sup> In the same bearing, Hailemariam Desalegn has also said “unless they are insane, they (Egyptians) won't take the option of war to resolve this situation”.<sup>8</sup>

Likewise Meles Zenawi and Hailemariam, Abiy Ahmed has also seen threats coming from the contending forces in which he mentioned one of Ethiopia's strategies on GERD as “neutralizing possible targeted attacks and ascertaining our national aspiration”.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, while asserting threats coming from Egypt, Ambassador Dina Mufti elaborated that, Ethiopia is not destructed by the violent deliriums of Egyptians. Ambassador Dina affirms "Ethiopia has clearly stated that it will not be discouraged by the sorts of empty and violent rhetoric" (directly imply for Egyptians). Ambassador Dina also presented his advice to the then Egyptian government to be cooperative rather than transmitting destructive ideas. He added that "GERD is not the threat to Egypt, it is merely a permit perception, and it is not a positive perception charged with lies and

---

<sup>6</sup> Nazret.com. (April 17, 2012). *Meles Zenawi: Parliament Speech*. “(Video)”. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILWYNjR4-TQ&t=98s>

<sup>7</sup> Aljazeera English. (May, 23, 2010) *Meles Zenawi: Talk to Aljazeera*. “(Video)”. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9S83SVAumsQ&t=893s>

<sup>8</sup> CNBC International. (August 28, 2014). *Hailemariam Desalegn: Ethiopia's Great Renaissance Dam*. “(Video)”. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2csKJ0rKo3w>

<sup>9</sup> Ethiopian News Agency. (July 16, 2020). *Abiy Ahmed: Parliament Speech*. “(Video)”. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKn68kQ2E3I&fbclid=IwAROTDoCDOptFIAz4hMfmCqGkcywpcUt5k9fReU0ZSbHrOqMwJskBO15Xs4>

falsehoods". Ambassador Dina added that "the Egyptian elites made the issue of GERD for political purposes".<sup>10</sup>

In a ramified discourse, Abiy's (the current Prime Minister) administration was able to ensure the GERD's narrative related to the state's pride and honor. As presented by ENA (Ethiopian News Agency) July 16, 2020, Abiy said that "concerning the construction of GERD we have been following the idea of completion of construction of the dam with paramount quality. We have made remarkable achievement on that".<sup>11</sup>

Having a reflected interest of elites, in strongly argued terms the Ethiopian foreign policy affirms the use of water resources as a matter of necessity. Through this, the foreign policies were able to stabilize narratives with a static stance. The Ethiopian foreign policy of 2002, and the draft policy of 2019, has the same stance regarding the use of water resources to ensure national pride and honor. “የድንበር ተሻጋሪ የውኃ ሃብቶቻችን በፍትሃዊ መልኩና በጋራ የመጠቀም ፖሊሲ በማጠናከር የላቀ ተጠቃሚነት የሚያረጋግጡ ግንኙነቶች ማጠናከር ልዩ ትኩረት የሚሰጠው የፖሊሲው ዓላማ አካል ነው”:<sup>11</sup>. The literal translation of this according to the researcher can be "concerning the transboundary resources, fair and equitable use is emphasized for cooperative benefit". The main river of Ethiopia can be mentioned primarily while discussing transboundary water resources in the Nile/Abbay. These transboundary water resources as of both foreign policies are seen as the major source of national pride and honor.<sup>12</sup> In an inter-related manner, Abbay & GERD as of elites like Demeke Mekonne, Cardinal Berane Eyesus is a source of national pride and honor. This shows the revealed fact by which GERD is by default mentioned in both foreign policies of Ethiopia since the conflict and icon amongst the transboundary resources is the Abbay River. Adding in this issue an interviewee KII 05, proclaimed that “there is nothing added in the new foreign policy rather we maintained the past goal over the Abbay River”.

---

<sup>10</sup> ETV. (June 21, 2013). *Ambassador Dina Mufti: Meet-ETV*. “(Video)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCBscMOFZPE>

<sup>11</sup> Ethiopian News Agency. (July 16, 2020). *Abiy Ahmed: Parliament Speech*. “(Video)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKn68kQ2E3I&fbclid=IwAR0TDoCDOptFIAz4hMfmcaGkcywpcUt5k9fReU0ZSbHrOqMwJSkBO15Xs4>

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Information Press & Audiovisual Department. (November, 2002). *The Federal Democratic Republic Of Ethiopia Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy*. Addis Ababa

Further in a consistent discourses circumstance, the GERD has been narrated as follows by Takele Uma the Ex-Deputy Mayor of Addis Ababa city during the anniversary of GERD in 2020 stating that "the Nile River for centuries was a source of wealth and base for life for down streamers and in contrary a source of contrition for us. I am proud to see that my generation is close to finishing the dam which is anticipated to be the cornerstone for our economic, social, and political aspects". Takele added, "Though the world has said we are unable, we showed that we can do greater things when we become united".<sup>13</sup>

In a buttressing narrative to that of Meles Zenawi, Fekahmed Negash, the former Executive Director of Eastern Nile Technical Regional Office (ENTRO) clarifies the unwavering stance of Ethiopia stating "though there is pressure from outside, it doesn't affect the underlying position and interest of Ethiopia". Fekahmed further explained the interest of Egypt as she is trying to make the issue of the Nile a national security threat. He said "Egypt tries to securitize the Nile by taking the GERD issue to the international level. Egypt also tries to convince the international society saying GERD would bring regional crisis". Fekahmed further asserted "the more you securitize and politicize water, the less the role of science will become". Further Fekahmed argued "the countries are reporting that they reached on understanding on the filling, on mitigation and the annual operation of the dam. The challenging part is to convert the technical understandings towards legal agreements".<sup>14</sup>

In the same bearing, religious fathers have expressed their full support to the GERD by which it seems they ensured the continuity of discourses and narratives of the government. For instance, as stated in the annual magazines of GERD religious father of EOTC (Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church), Islamic fathers, Catholic Fathers, and others have expressed their unchanging and unshakable support to the GERD. The head of Ethiopian Orthodox Church Abune Matthias in 2017 said that "GERD is one of our heritages, our church with all its staff is contributing for the dam". And this religious father calls for the public to participate in the construction of the dam to an end. In the same stance and narrative, the Islamic affairs president Sheikh Mohamed Amin said that "the GERD is the grand national project that made us all expect a bright and

---

<sup>13</sup> Regional Presidents. (April 1, 2020:2-10). *Messages of Regional Presidents to the Celebration of GERD's anniversary*. Annual Magazine of GERD. Addis Ababa.

<sup>14</sup> Habesha View. (August 18, 2020). Fekahmed Negash: *Ethiopia, Talks Over the Nile Dam GERD*. "(Video)" Youtube.

hopeful future". He added that "binding us all with one heart and spirit, the GERD made our future brighten. Further adding his similar narrative and interest in the GERD, the Catholic Church father of Ethiopia cardinal Birhane Eyesus in his message said that "GERD shows our people's greatness, identity, and unity to the international society". He added, "The dam is a pride for our country".<sup>15</sup>

In general the narratives of elites (political, no-political, and religious) show that there is unchanging and continued narrative over the GERD. As seen in the above, narratives of political elites like, Meles Zenawi, Hailemariam Desalegn...and others highly recognized people have shown a strongly unwavering discourse over the GERD. This according to constructivism theory is, construction of norms through timely discourses by which perceptions, actions, and reactions shape & change the reality on the ground. Further according to ontological security theory, narratives continuities could help to stabilize state identity. Besides narrative of elites via their publicized discourses, continuities of narratives related with Abbay (in an indirect means) is seen in the two foreign policies published in 2002 & 2019.

---

<sup>15</sup> Abune Mathias, Cardinal Birhane Eyeses, Sheikh Mohamed Amin. (April, 1, 2017:6&7). Messages of Abune Mathias to the Celebration of GERD's anniversary. Annual Magazine of GERD.

### 5.1.3. GERD and Emerging Ontological Security in Ethiopia

The GERD from the very beginning has been the agenda of many Ethiopian elites, especially for the political elites. As seen in the narrative section, several elites have discussed GERD in a consistent and related manner. Throughout those continued and inter-linked narratives, the major idea disseminated could be considered as a source of providing ontological security to Ethiopia. Emotionally attached narratives have been the utmost channeled discourses.

Likewise the ontological security theory, social constructivism theory also asserts the construction of identity through time. As for the constructivism theory, the meaning of things is results of social constructions, by which here is, realized that, the value and meaning of a project (GERD in this context) has become more than a project entity by which narratives of scholars shows the construction of common identity over the dam. Further, the idea here is also supported by the theoretical frame of constructivism by which subjective understanding of things, which is the central point in theory of ontological security theory.

GERD though seen as a project that is expected to provide electric power is seen as the unstoppable and national project of Ethiopians. This was strongly reinforced by political elites like Meles Zenawi (the Late Prime Minister), Seleshi Bekele (The Minister of water irrigation and energy), and several others. As stated above in the narrative section, Meles Zenawi <sup>16</sup>has discussed and advised Egyptians not to try to stop the unstoppable Ethiopian move towards the construction of a dam on the Nile River. Hailemariam<sup>17</sup> has also mentioned the dam as unstoppable in various speeches. This is due to the dam is considered a source of national pride for Ethiopia. The importance of GERD for national pride was elucidated by elites like Abiy Ahmed (The Prime Minister) & Demeke Mekonnen, (Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister).

---

<sup>16</sup> Aljazeera English. (May, 23, 2010). Meles Zenawi: *Talk to Aljazeera*. “(Video)” YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9S83SVAumsQ&t=893s>

<sup>17</sup> Message of Hailemariam Desallegn, the Ex-Prime Minister. (March 29, 2012). *The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam*. Addis Zemen newspaper. Addis Ababa.

CNBC International. (August 28, 2014). Hailemariam Desalegn: *Ethiopia's Great Renaissance Dam*. “(Video)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2csKJ0rKo3w>



Moreover, the GERD's as unstoppable narratives have been narrated due to the importance of the dam to Ethiopian state identity. This dam according to Seleshi Bekele<sup>18</sup>, Minister of water irrigation and energy of Ethiopia, is a matter of living and survival due to Ethiopians deep-rooted poverty and insufficient energy source. This was further supported by Abiy's<sup>19</sup> articulation of "No difference between living and not living in a country where women still carry woods in their back". Tussling with those facts, Ethiopian elites give the Abbay River and GERD paramount status. While asserting the GERD's importance, Hailemariam Desalegn firmly discussed that "I insist that the construction of the GERD will not be stopped for a second". Further, Seleshi Bekele the minister of water irrigation and energy, in an interview with EBC News on April 1, 2020, clearly articulated the necessity of GERD to the expansion of infrastructures like water, healthcare, and other institutions. He further asserted that Ethiopians demand for GERD by asking "aren't we food insecure? How can we go forward having 8-10 Million people with an immediate need of assistance?" He noted that "even though Egypt says 'The Nile is a matter of its existence, they are verily dissipating the Nile water". He affirmed that "using our water within our territory is our sovereign rights" (EBC news, April 1, 2020).

Associating the GERD with Ethiopians national interest, Hailemariam Desalegn<sup>20</sup> -the Ex-Prime Minister of Ethiopia, on the 1st anniversary of GERD said that "the dam has brought the solidarity and togetherness of the people". Additionally, during his interview with the ETV English program, Hailemariam firmly announced that the GERD project is a priority for Ethiopian people and government, "so nothing can stop it". In the same bearing, following the anniversary of GERD in 2014 the message released by Demeke Mekonen, mainly clasps of the GERD and the spirit of ability that would give to Ethiopians. Further, Demeke<sup>21</sup> reports that since the beginning of the construction of the dam in 2011 to 2014 around 28million farmers have participated and bestowed about 35 billion birr to the dam. This warm participation of the

---

<sup>18</sup> ETV News. (September 10, 2020). Seleshi Bekele: ኢትዮጵያውያን ለውጭ አገራት ለውጭ ገንዘብ ለማግኘት ለሚችሉት ጉዳይ ላይ ማጠቃለያ ማድረግ። “(Video)” YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdzsXUe2hMU&t=3s>

<sup>19</sup> Ethiopian News Agency. (July 16, 2020). Abiy Ahmed: *Parliament Speech*. “(Video)” YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKn68kQ2E3I&fbclid=IwAR0TDoCDOPtFIAz4hMfmcqGkcywpcUt5k9fReU0ZSbHr0qMwJSkBO15Xs4>

<sup>20</sup> Hailemariam D. (March 29, 2012). *Message of the Ex-Prime Minister*. Addis Zemen newspaper. Addis Ababa.

<sup>21</sup> Demeke M. (April 1, 2014). *Message of Deputy Prime Minister of Ethiopia on GERD*. Annual Magazine of GERD. Addis Ababa.

public according to Demeke gives the public the "Spirit of Ability". He further calls the dam a flagship project in which the national pride is sheltered.

Further, likewise, the elites, the GERD's Public support & mobility council's vision mission and goals are based on the consideration of GERD as a national identity marker. The major goals, vision, and Mission are set by the council that could be considered as major narratives of inter-relating the dam with the public emotions. The vision of the council is "to see the GERD completed in the endeavor of all Ethiopian nations and nationalities and to see it being the source of peace for our country". The Goal of the council is "to realize the GERD with the active/holistic participation of all Ethiopians and to make it a source of cooperation with our neighbors for mutual benefits". Further, the mission of the council is also "to ensure the national consensus in making all Ethiopians both inside and abroad to support GERD through financial, public diplomacy and environmental protection".<sup>22</sup>

The uniting nature of the GERD is also realized through the financing contribution of the public on various occasions including the 8100-A text system and via buying a bond for GERD. The public as Demeke Mekonnen discussed, has contributed 35 billion birr through the participation of 28 million farmers from the year 2011 to 2014. Further Fana & Dawit<sup>23</sup> stated that "Close to 12.4 Billion Birr (about one-eighth of the projected project cost) was raised from the public by April 2019 (National Council, 2019). In the first eight months of the 2019/20 Ethiopian fiscal year alone (July 2019 to February 2020) about 405.9 million Birr was raised from the public":12. The coming of the dam has also led the public to remove remorse and started to sing uniting songs.<sup>24</sup> This articulation is further asserted by the argument of KII 04<sup>25</sup> by which he witnessed the importance of GERD in uniting various Ethiopians from lower to the high level of people.

---

<sup>22</sup> Front-page of Annual Magazine of GERD. (April 1, 2018). *GERD's Public Support & Mobility Council's Vision, Mission, and Goals*. Annual Magazine of GERD Addis Ababa.

<sup>23</sup> Gebresenbet F. & Yohannes D. (2021). *New Dimensions in the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Negotiations: Ontological Security in Egypt and Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa.

<sup>24</sup> Roman G. (April 1, 2016:6). *Message of Roman Gebreegziabher-the late GERD's Public mobility council director*. Annual Magazine Addis Ababa.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with a negotiation team member and scholar at AAU. (Jul. 10, 2021). Addis Ababa University.

This was realized through the strongly asserted mobilization of regional leaders and their expression of support to the GERD. For instance the regional president of Harari, Odrin Bedri<sup>26</sup> stated "finishing the dam shall be the role of all Ethiopians". In the same mean, the SNNPR president Restu Yirdaw also has called the dam a manifestation of the spirit of Ethiopian-ness. Having the same stance with others, Ashadley Hassan, the Benishangul Gumuz regions' president (the province of GERD's construction site) also has witnessed the importance of GERD to unite all nations, nationalities of Ethiopia. In the same bearing, several regional leaders including Somali Region President Mustefe Mohamed, Oromia's President Shimels Abdisa, and several others have reverberated the importance of the GERD to create harmony and unity for all Ethiopians.<sup>27</sup> Narrative of the regional leaders thoroughly articulates GERD as a metaphor of all nationalities endeavor that would link up all Ethiopians together for common benefits. This dam according to many of the regional leaders is a source of concord (Harmony) amongst the nationalities of Ethiopia. This is because the dam is considered, all nationalities come together and having ventured to complete what is known as "historic dam". In this regard, KII01, and KII03<sup>28</sup> have asserted that the GERD as an immensely linking and uniting project since the river Abbay connects 6 of the 11 regional states of Ethiopia. This according to them is beyond the fundraising to the dam since it could amalgamate the regions with the feeling of oneness. In the same stance, opposition political elites have also asserted that differences among political parties shouldn't pose threat to Ethiopia's sovereignty Yeshiwas Assefa and Obang Metho<sup>29</sup> the public mobilization workday argued that all politicians shouldn't see the GERD from a political perspective, since the dam belongs to all Ethiopians.

Further, the dam has also become the cornerstone of bringing Ethiopian ancient civilization by which the dam somehow is considered as a repetition of historical achievements like Lalibela and Aksum.<sup>30</sup> In the same mean, higher officials like Demeke Mekonnen<sup>31</sup> has mentioned the

---

<sup>26</sup> Regional Presidents. (April 1, 2020:2-10). *Messages of Regional Presidents*. Annual Magazine of GERD. Addis Ababa.

<sup>27</sup> Mustefe M. & Shimeles A. (April 1, 2020:11). *Message of Mustefe Mohammed & Shimeles Abdisa*. Annual Magazine of GERD Addis Ababa.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Member of GERD's negotiation team at Ministry of Foreign Affairs-MoFA & Interview with a senior expert of Trans boundary Rivers at MoFA. (July 6, 2021). Addis Ababa.

<sup>29</sup> ETV. (May 31, 2020). *Yeshiwas & Obang: GERD and its importance*. Addis Ababa.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with a senior expert of transboundary water affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (June 9, 2021). Ministry of water, irrigation and energy, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

GERD as a means of bringing back Ethiopia’s ancient civilization. The GERD is also seen as a heritage of the state that could equate the dam with what a scholar has mentioned as historical achievements. This for instance Abune Mathias<sup>32</sup>, Religious father of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church asserted the GERD as a national heritage that shall be kept by all Ethiopians. In the same bearing, the logo of the 2019 annual magazine mentioned the GERD as "ታላቁ የህዳሴ ግድብ ብሄራዊ ኩራታችን፤ ለትውልድድም የሚተላለፍ ቅርስ ነው።" and this is transcribed by the researcher as "the GERD is our national pride; a heritage that carried over for generations"<sup>33</sup>

### **5.1.3.1. The Name Renaissance and its implications to ontological security**

To intricate how the discourse is constructed understanding the naming of the dam GERD is very salient. In this sense the name “Grand Ethiopian renaissance Dam” is considered under the view of Concept analysis. According to Mariam Webster Dictionary the term Renaissance is revival renewal, resurrection, reawakening and re-emergence of something. From what and where, does Ethiopia resurrect? Is GERD a re-awakening project for Ethiopia? Is Ethiopia to be re-awakened by the GERD? For this question the scholars that the researcher has interviewed presented their idea as follows;

Mentioning the linking nature of Abbay River for the 6 regional states of Ethiopia, key informant 03<sup>34</sup> considers the heed given to the GERD as remarkable. He further discusses “I don’t know why the previous administration named the dam ‘renaissance’. But I believe this dam would take us to the way of revival. The dam is the symbol of unity. The dam has unified all the Ethiopian people. I hope in the future the GERD would also be a model for Sub-Saharan Africa. This is because Africans will begin to ask ‘Ethiopians are able to build this mega dam. So we can also do the same’. The informant 03 further elaborates the importance of GERD for Africans revival interrelating it with the Adwa victory. He added “when we see ‘Adwa’ it is very important and divulgence to all Africans that led to question ‘do the blacks can do such great things? The same is true for GERD. I hope the dam will motivate and unite all Africans”.

---

<sup>31</sup>. Demeke M. (April 1, 2015:4). *Message of Demeke Mekonnen on GERD. Annual Magazine of GERD. Addis Ababa.*

<sup>32</sup> Abune Mathias, Cardinal Birhane Eyeses, Sheikh Mohamed Amin. (April, 1, 2017:6&7). *Messages of Abune Mathias, Cardinal Birhane Eyesus, Sheikh Mohamed Amin. Annual Magazine of GERD. Addis Ababa*

<sup>33</sup> (April 1, 2019). *Logo of the Year. Annual Magazine of GERD.*

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Member of GERD’s negotiation team at Ministry of Foreign Affairs-MoFA. (July 6, 2021). Addis Ababa.

Having the same stance, key informant 02<sup>35</sup> elaborates the naming of the dam as ‘renaissance’ saying “the dam is a cornerstone that would led Ethiopia to bring its ancient civilizations like Aksum, Lalibela etc. The dam brings the Ethiopian people united. Every Ethiopian in every category has the same stance regarding the GERD. So we can say the dam has become a symbol of unity for Ethiopians”. Disagreeing with the consideration of the GERD as a mere project, informant 02 calls the dam as it is beyond a project. And for him GERD is a project that the remorse of Ethiopians gets erased out. Further adding he argued “For many years we have been expressing our remorse and anger via music, poems and discourses. The GERD by itself is a grand-story and it can also give us the spirit of Ability”. He also spell out that the dam has also been considered as an identity card for all Ethiopians.

Another expert key informant 01<sup>36</sup> has provided both his view and expertise ideas. Regarding the naming of the dam as renaissance informant 01 said “the first name of the GERD (officially known name) was Millennium dam. But after a while the government thinks of making the project to be a spring board of Ethiopia’s revival. Passing through very difficult tussles Ethiopia unified its people and began constructing the GERD which in my view is second Adwa victory”.

Key informant 01 further added “while Egyptians have been working in protecting the Nile River we (Ethiopians) have been blaming and insulting the river. Changing all these stories when you bring developmental plan it really becomes revival for Ethiopia. For real Abbay is our life and blood”. Further expounding, informant 01 argued that it is impossible to detach Ethiopians from the GERD since all have internalized the dam project. Informant 01 added that “if you go to rural places the people could narrate about Adwa as if they had participated in the battle since Adwa is in their blood. The same is true for GERD that people have internalized it.

In contrary to the above mentioned scholars, key informant 04 considered the naming of the dam as merely given. Informant 04 said “the previous leaders of Ethiopia gave the name Renaissance to the dam. But I don’t think the GERD is the only source of Ethiopia’s revival. There are also many other projects that would help Ethiopia to revive”. Informant 04 emphasizes saying that “state’s revival can’t be ensured by one project”. As mentioned in the above document analysis

---

<sup>35</sup> Interview with a senior expert of transboundary water affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Jun.9, 2021). ministry of water, irrigation and energy. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with a senior expert of Transboundary Rivers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-MoFA. (June 1, 2021). Addis Ababa.

higher officials of Ethiopia and other scholars have argued and narrated the GERD as an anchor for Ethiopia's revival and symbol of civilizations like Lalibela, Aksum etc. In contrary to this, informant 04 argued the opposite. This is because for informant 04 the ancient Ethiopian civilization is non-proofable and unknown. He also criticizes those believers in ancient civilization saying "they consider they clearly know the past, but not".

Throughout the narratives of the above-mentioned elites, it is obtained that there is a focus on elucidating the GERD as a matter of ensuring Ethiopian unity and togetherness. The GERD's importance in securing and ensuring Ethiopian ontological security is also convoluted in various occasions and discourses of elites.

In the artworks like music, poems and the government initiated 8100-A text system has principal contents of attachment with the GERD and consideration of it as a source of state's identity. This was realized and convoluted in an argument of Demeke Mekonnen<sup>37</sup> by which he asserted the GERD as an identity proofing project for Ethiopians. This argument further buttressed in the argument of Debretsiion G/Michael<sup>38</sup> by which he asserted the GERD as the national identity of all Ethiopians. Due to the importance and the status given to the GERD, as for KII 01<sup>39</sup>, the dam is attached with an Ethiopian identity.

### **5.1.3.2. Aesthetics to instigate support to GERD**

Many songs have become instigated to incite Abay and GERD in recent times. The major narratives seen in most of the songs are looking the GERD (Abbay as well) as a national identity marker and symbol of the nation. This shows the outrageous status given to the dam starting from the high ranking officials to the artistic ways of expression. From the beginning as well before that of the GERD many artists in Ethiopia have presented their gratitude, pride and respect to the greater Abbay/Blue Nile River. These music poems that were presented during the beginning and before that of the GERD are believed to bring a huge importance to the attachment of the Abbay/Blue Nile and the people of Ethiopia. To see some of the Music that

---

<sup>37</sup> Demeke M. (April 1, 2017:4). *Message of Demeke Mekonnen*. Annual Magazine of GERD.

<sup>38</sup> Debretsiion G. M. (April 1, 2018). *Message of Debretsiion G/Michael (the then Ethiopian electric power director, EEP)*. Annual Magazine of GERD. Addis Ababa.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with a senior expert at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MoFA. (June 1, 2021). Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Addis Ababa.

were for of the Abbay famous singers like Teddy Afro, GIGI, Genet Masresha, Ashebir Belay and many others sang for the Abbay River.

A singer named Genet Masresha in Apr. 2 2011<sup>40</sup> sang the song for the Abbay calling the River as “ጭስ አልባጧ ነዳጅ” means the “Smokeless oil”. In her song she praises the River saying that, “Abbay daily discharges its resources, why not I call it as smokeless oil? Abbay our great River, while you are here we wouldn’t be ashamed of our poverty anymore. If Abbay gives us energy, we wouldn’t be give aids anymore. Abbay now is under remorse and regret about its country, after many of years, time conciliated us with Abbay and we rose having spades and picks for development”. She also said in her music “since you are with me Abbay, I will not look at others hands”. In her very song, not only praising the River Abbay, but she also tries to call for the public to rise up for using Abbay with remorse. This song transmits the message of no more aid from outside while there is the Abbay River by the side of Ethiopians.

In a remorseful song, a singer named Ashebir Belay<sup>41</sup> also sang for Abbay after the construction of GERD started. This singer said in his music “you (Abbay) the grace and pride of my country, you have been fleeing for centuries, but everything has its own time”. He also calls for Abbay saying that “Abbay, no one is for us more than ourselves, let you get calm and let’s deal”. “Let you moist the land and the farmers seed: and let the light be lighted for us. Let poverty get down from us and the remorse of our people ended up”. In his song Ashebir Belay not only praising the Abbay River for its importance to the Ethiopians, but also he creates a deal with Abbay to get back to its own country and help the poor remove poverty. Ashebir calls for a deal between Ethiopians and Abbay after centuries of tussle. In the same stance, Ejigayehu Shibabaw (GIGI)<sup>42</sup> in her much known song praise Abbay for its beauty and it’s lost for a layover space. She says “the beauty that will never be ended, never to get dried up that cleaves through years”. She also calls Abbay “the water that gushes from heaven”. In her song she praises Abbay s it is “A grace for a state, an asset for the desert land”.

---

<sup>40</sup> Genet M. (April 2, 2011). “ጭስ አልባጧ ነዳጅ” “Smokeless oil”. On Ethiopian TV. “(Video)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEop441b-S4>

<sup>41</sup> Ashebir B. (October 8, 2011) *Abbay አባይ*. On Stankyleg. “(Vido)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hcwfs0kde9Y>

<sup>42</sup> Ejigayehu S. -GIGI (June 24, 2013) *Abay Abay*. On EthioMusic. “(Video)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEhG6TD7CuU>

Further in the same and interrelated content of song with others, the Southern Nation Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) singers<sup>43</sup> group presented a song that considers the GERD and Abbay as a source of pride and expression of Ethiopian identity. This group of singers contains of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds that came together in the name of Abbay/Nile. The literary translated lyrics of the music are;

“Abbay is full of seeds”

“Ethiopian-ness is my strength”

In different local languages, including Amharic, they praise Abbay/Nile. They show that unity while they have different ethnic backgrounds; they got bounded by Ethiopian identity. They consider that Ethiopian identity is their strength and Abbay is coming to shine.

Contemplating the GERD and Abbay as a source of remorse by Asegid Eshetu ft. Etenesh Demeke<sup>44</sup> is also a very known and figure in expression of GERD for Ethiopians. In this song a young girl expressing her grief over Abbay for its loss of layover space, sang slowly and the team of many youngsters collected around her listening to the name of Abbay. The song that young girl sang is a publicly known sing for Abbay “Abbay the gift for a state and its grace, Abbay sand without the right rhythm and tune, it lives with no sign”. Another boy comes to the gathering and supports the girl under sorrow and began to sing saying “let sorrow get ended up, we shall praise Abbay, Abbay started its journey for sanctification”. He also praise the Abbay singing “our anger, regret and threats that passed through generations are to be ended up today. Let’s stand together for Abbay renewing our energy, working on the project that could pass through generations will give our mind ultimate rest”. He added “let the darkness ended up, let’s see the light, the importance of the dam (GERD) is for all of us”.

Further adding in the narrative and art’s contribution, the famous singer Teddy Afro <sup>45</sup>also sang for the Abbay that is seemingly patriotic content. The main content of the music is

---

<sup>43</sup> Wendiye A. ft. SNNPR singers group (November 6, 2017). *Wase Abay*. On HeniTube. “(Video)” Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbI0EkP6fIE>

<sup>44</sup> Asegid E. ft. Etenesh D. (April 29, 2011). *Abay Abay*. On Selam Tube, Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZUUcQJL698>

<sup>45</sup> Teddy Afro (Aug.3, 2020) *Demo BeAbay*, on TeddyAfro, Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btuC2IfwmfQ>



“Which citizen would keep silent while being an Ethiopian?”

“While he is an Ethiopian, he would never compromise on the issue of his country”

He warned those who transgress on Ethiopia saying “there will be no more tolerance if they transgress this much on us”. Teddy afro, 2020, ‘Demo Be’Abbay’. As seen in the contents of the song, he is mainly narrating Abbay as an Ethiopian and an African in which all together can grow up. Further as seen in the content, he tries to motivate all Ethiopians to stand together since the Abbay River belongs for all.

Similarly, various peoples have been expressing their extraordinary devotion to the dam & Abbay River through poems. For instance, the poem by Ayelech (2013) mainly conveys the dam as a measuring scale of Ethiopians' heroism and sees it as a comparable stage with the previous Ethiopian history. Presented in Addis Zemen newspaper in 2013 by Ayelech Kasaye,<sup>46</sup> the poem mainly has the message as literary translated by the researcher as “With our previous martyr state loving heroes”

“Thousands are born, warriors for development”

“All of us with no getting back (retreat)”

“To work for greater renaissance”

Further, in the same devotion, another poet named Andualem<sup>47</sup> in his poetry of “with Golden Generation” conveyed the dam as peoples that swear in their fathers and mothers get grappling (Addis Zemen Newspaper, March, 10, 2013:14).

While overviewing the elites and other related narratives (for instance music, poems) it is grasped that, GERD is considered as a source of unity by which it has brought all Ethiopians together. This was witnessed by the speech of Catholic Father Cardinal Birhane Eyesus<sup>48</sup> in which he presented the GERD as an identity and uniting factor of Ethiopians. Additionally in the

---

<sup>46</sup> Ayelech K.. (March 10, 2013:14). Poem: *Doubt not/አትጠራጠሩ*, Addis Zemen Newspaper. Addis Ababa.

<sup>47</sup> Andualem . (March, 10, 2013:14). Poem: *With Golden Generation (በወረቀማዊ ትውልድ)* Addis Zemen Newspaper. Addis Ababa.

<sup>48</sup> Cardinal Berhane Eyesus. (April 1, 2017). *Message of Cardinal Berhane Eyesus*, Annual Magazine of GERD. Addis Ababa.

same path of resonating the GERD as a source of unity, Debretsion G/Michael<sup>49</sup> (The Ex higher official) added the dam as a sign of unity and strength for all Ethiopians. Further, the dam is also elaborated as "Language of Unity" (8100-A, January 21, 2021) and this dam is also rumbled as a symbol of solidarity and togetherness of the people.<sup>50</sup>

As of my observation, when the late PM of Ethiopia Meles Zenawi announced the beginning of the GERD (the then millennium dam), huge number of public has gathered to express the support of government's decision and expressed the happiness for the ending of remorse over the Abbay River. During the then times, I was an elementary student in Woldia town, by which I could witness the happiness and pride of me and my mates due to the announcement of the dam project. Though the idea came from the school administration, all students across the school were able to contribute to the dam via buying bonds. In several days there have been huge public mobilizations to increase moral and financial supports to the dam. Throughout those times, the topic of the GERD gets a bigger space in all of public gatherings to glue the public. As for Andebet & Belayneh (2021), symbolic projects like GERD create trust among contradicting actors and bridges them to come together in Ethiopia. This Grand National symbol could bring shared identity among various actors in the national politics (Ibid).

In other way, this idea of OS is supported by the social constructivism since both focuses on the issue beyond material and territorial aspects of security. This is realized that, the GERD as for Ethiopian elites has become an issue beyond a project due to social constructions of identity and constructed meaning over the material entity.

GERD as a marker of Ethiopian state identity is further scrutinized through the expressions of various artists in several music and poems. For instance the song of SNNPR music team in their song that praises the Abbay River and GERD clasps of the dam as a way of expressing their Ethiopian identity. Their music lyrics contain "Abbay full of seeds, the way I express my Ethiopian identity". This music has a view of 158,000 and more than 50,000 views on other YouTube channels.

---

<sup>49</sup> Debretsion G. M. (April 1, 2018). *Message of Debretsion G/ Michael*. Annual Magazine of GERD. Addis Ababa.

<sup>50</sup> Hailemariam D. (March 29, 2012). *Message of Hailemariam Desalegn*. Annual Magazine of GERD. Addis Ababa.

#### **5.1.4. The Constructed Identity on GERD and Its Implications to the Negotiations**

The main intent here is to show that the theoretically interpreted ramifications of the identity construction around the GERD that could possibly cause strenuousness to the negotiations over GERD. Here is argued that, there is a cause and effect relationship between negotiations held over the GERD and emerging OS in Ethiopia.

In Ethiopia, after the coming of GERD, several scholars have been narrating pertinent discourses. The major contents of their discourses and narratives have been looking at the GERD as a national anchor by which unity and identity of the state get strengthened. For that matter, the dam has become the government's center of attention and the elites curiously attend to the dam's construction. As seen above the major political actors of Ethiopia have narrated the GERD inter-relating with the state's identity and honor. For this, mentioned are the narratives of Meles, Abiy, regional presidents, and other higher officials. Conceiving the dam as a matter of identity, from the naming of the dam as 'Renaissance' to the discourses of elites (including religious) and to the incitement songs and poems that praise the dam is presented as major data of inter-linkage between state identity and the GERD.

Scrutinizing further in the governments' and elite's discourses I tried to examine and understand the main narratives and their goals. The final goal of the researcher is to analyze the ramifications of the emerging ontological of Ethiopia to the ongoing negotiations on GERD. Negotiations on the new Ethiopian dam-GERD have held since its embarking in 2011 though all have been in vain. This is because understanding how they consider the GERD directly or indirectly affects the negotiations. To analyze the negotiations over GERD considering the debates of the Ethiopian negotiation team members in different international media is one and critical way of the researcher. In doing this the researcher will be able to analyze the attachment of those negotiation team members on the GERD/ Abbay.

While Zerihun Abebe<sup>51</sup> a member of the negotiation team for GERD elucidated the challenges of the negotiation as "fixation of positions of states" Hailemariam Desalegn (the Ex-Prime

---

<sup>51</sup> ETV. (October, 2, 2020). Zerihun Abebe: *Meet EBC*. "(Video)" YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSXCqrXtISc>

Minister) witnessed the use of GERD to easing internal issues of Egypt as a very deep-rooted challenge to the negotiations. In the same bearing accusing Egypt, Fekahmed Negash<sup>52</sup> further elaborated the constitutionalizing of the Nile as a challenge for the government of Egypt in which it gives no space for negotiating. Blaming Egyptian attitude towards the Nile, Yacob Arsano<sup>53</sup> negotiation team member for GERD, asserted the Nile as it is used by Egyptians as political and ideological means. Adding to this KII01<sup>54</sup> contends of Egypt as a challenge to the negotiation due to their unchanging sentiments towards the Nile River. Even though all these challenges are mentioned, others have advised that the dam is not a threatening force if cooperative management is applied.<sup>55</sup>

Though all elites of Ethiopia contend with this, it seems important to see the implication of the above-mentioned identity construction on GERD toward the negotiations. As elucidated above, it is realized that there is an already entrenched attachment between the GERD and Ethiopian state identity. Contending Ethiopian state identity constructed on GERD its effect on the negotiations is the main purpose of this study. While studying this, it is not ignoring material aspects of benefits as a challenging factor to the negotiation. Rather it is to scrutinize the emotional attachment and ontological security construction as an element affecting the negotiation arena.

To assess the intended objective, besides the speeches of elites, I have used the negotiation team members for GERD as key informants and others closely related to Ethiopian water resource affairs by which it is considered their emotionally attached view to GERD and consideration of the dam as a source of state identity to be affecting the negotiation platforms.

While explicating the importance of the GERD to Ethiopians, Zerihun Abebe<sup>56</sup>, a scholar & GERD's negotiation team member asserted the dam as a matter of necessity and survival of

---

<sup>52</sup> Habesha View. (August 18, 2020). Fekahmed Negash: Ethiopia, *Talks Over the Nile Dam GERD*. "(Video)" Youtube.

<sup>53</sup> Ethiopian News Network-ENN TV. (January 17, 2018). Yacob Arsano: *Fitlefit*. "(Videos)" YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10B\\_2esI6qc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10B_2esI6qc)

<sup>54</sup> Interview with a senior expert of Transboundary Rivers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-MoFA. (June 1, 2021). Addis Ababa.

<sup>55</sup> Aljazeera English. (March 31, 2021). *Inside\_Story: Will Egypt attack Ethiopia?* Aljazeera. "(Video)" YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdlGMP-0mjQ&t=261s>

<sup>56</sup> ETV. (October, 2, 2020). Zerihun Abebe: *Meet EBC*. "(Video)" YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSXCqrXtISc>

Ethiopians. Further another scholar KII01<sup>57</sup> articulated the dam as a matter of survival and a non-negotiable matter. Additionally Yacob Arsano<sup>58</sup>, GERD's negotiating team member has manifested the GERD as a paramount move for Ethiopia and a more important project than other projects constructed before. Further GERD for KII03<sup>59</sup>, is the unshakable and non-negotiable project. He further added, "we have immeasurable pride. Our unity is non-negotiable; you can't measure Ethiopian-ness in financial terms". This argument of KII03 seems to make the GERD a source of Ethiopian-ness and national unity.

The focus of the negotiation as for Gedion Asfaw<sup>60</sup>, head of GERD's negotiation team is on the technical issues like filling and operation of the dam. Further Gedion unveils that they focus on creating trust amongst riparian states. The idea of creating trust as for William Davison,<sup>61</sup> a senior analyst on Ethiopia could lead those riparian states to get rid of predicaments. In the notion of ontological security theory, creating trust amongst states is a means of relieving ontological insecurity feelings.

Contrary to this notion, Ethiopian elites have focused on the consideration of the GERD as untouchable and source of Ethiopians unity by which it seems to be seen as a provider of ontological security. This was witnessed by KII03<sup>62</sup> GERD's negotiation team member, in which he articulated "the dam is a linking project since the river by itself connects about 6 of regional states of Ethiopia". Further KII03 also agrees with the importance of GERD for Ethiopia's revival. In the same mean, KII01<sup>63</sup>, senior expert at MoFA noted the GERD as a springboard for Ethiopia's revival. He also remarked as it is impossible to detach Ethiopians and the GERD since the dam is a result of the blood and sweat of the people.

---

<sup>57</sup> Interview with a senior expert at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MoFA. (June 1, 2021). Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Addis Ababa.

<sup>58</sup> Ethiopian News Network-ENN TV. (January 17, 2018). Yacob Arsano: *Filefit*. "(Videos)" YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10B\\_2esI6qc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10B_2esI6qc)

<sup>59</sup> Interview with GERD's negotiation team member at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MoFA (Jul.6, 2021) MoFA, Addis Ababa.

<sup>60</sup> Aljazeera English. (June 28, 2020). Gedion Asfaw: *What's behind the dispute over Africa's largest dam project?* "(Video)" YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=aljazeera+on+dam+march](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=aljazeera+on+dam+march)

<sup>61</sup> Aljazeera English. (March 31, 2021). *Inside\_Story: Will Egypt attack Ethiopia?* Aljazeera. "(Video)" YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdlGMP-0mjQ&t=261s>

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Member of GERD's negotiation team at Ministry of Foreign Affairs-MoFA. (July 6, 2021). Addis Ababa.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with a senior expert at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MoFA. (June 1, 2021). Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Addis Ababa.

Throughout these narratives of elites and negotiating team members, it is revealed that the GERD is seen as a stabilizing pillar of Ethiopian identity. This is further convoluted on various occasions GERD's negotiation team members have been conveying the GERD in a continued and rigid routine. Rigid routine in this notion is the unchanging emotional attachment and fixed attitudes towards the subject (GERD and Abbay in this context) and negotiation. This according to the Ontological Security theory is while actors follow the unchanging emotional attachment with an object throughout their routines with other actors. So the foremost conception here is, objects (for instance GERD, Nile) are seen as providers of ontological security of the state, negotiations would be strenuous, challenging, and unresolvable.

The unwavering stance of Ethiopia towards the GERD is noticed through various narratives of elites in the above sections. The GERD as a matter of national unity and as an ontological security provider is also witnessed by various elites.

As obtained on various occasions, GERD's negotiation team members have expressed the GERD as an anchor of Ethiopian unity and paramount project. For instance, KII04<sup>64</sup>, GERD's negotiation team member articulated "GERD united all from individual to organizational level, from village to state-level". Further, he elucidated that "many people have supported the GERD both in finance and labor aspects". In the same bearing another GERD's negotiation team member, KII03<sup>65</sup> witnessed the GERD as a source of Ethiopian national consensus. He further asserted the dam as a uniting factor for all Ethiopians. By the same token, the other three key informants have also discerned the GERD as an anchor of Ethiopian state unity and identity. This is an ontological security essence is an attachment with biographic continuity of a state.

As stated above, Egyptians consideration of Abbay as a matter of their biographic continuity has made the negotiations strenuous and forced them to have rigid routines with other riparian states. Further, Egypt due to its securitization of the Nile has been following a rigid and unchanging routine towards upstream states especially with Ethiopia. As revealed and discussed above, the Egyptian consideration of the Nile as its source of ontological security has made the scope of the negotiation tremendously narrow and this has made agreements strenuous.

---

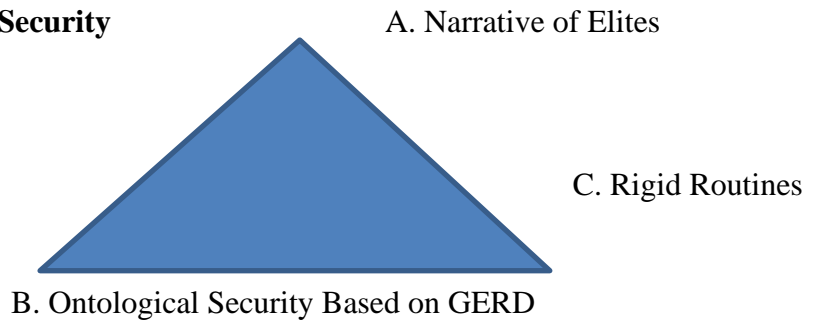
<sup>64</sup> Interview with GERD's negotiation team member and scholar at AAU. (July 10, 2021). Addis Ababa University.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Member of GERD's negotiation team at Ministry of Foreign Affairs-MoFA. (July 6, 2021). Addis Ababa.

In the context of Ethiopia, the entrenched attitude and emotional attachment of those elites especially GERD’s negotiating team members, have realized that they consider the GERD as a source of ontological security. In this manner, the absence of this ontological security provider (GERD) could lead those elites including negotiation team members towards ontological insecurity. The absence of the GERD (the ontological security provider) threatens the biography of those who stand surrounding the GERD (Mitzen, 2006; Zarakol 2017).

Though GERD is a project aimed at providing electric power to its people, the consideration of elites (GERD's negotiation team members) as is a source of ensuring biographic continuity could lead to strenuous negotiation and rigidity of routines amongst riparian states. In the conceived notion of the Ethiopian elites, especially by those GERD's negotiation team members, it seems strenuous to negotiate on GERD since their consideration of the dam is as a matter of biographic continuity of the state. In this manner, the GERD's negotiation team is expected to follow the rigid and narrow sense of routine with counterparts. For that matter, through the endeavor of ensuring this essence of ontological security, and to remove insecurity of ontology, states could go towards the unhealthy routine (Mitzen, 2006, Kinval & Mitzen, 2016). The main issue here is narratives over the GERD, which led to the consideration of GERD as an OS provider would possibly have ramifications over the negotiations.

*Figure 2: Route of Ontological Security*



While narratives go in advance to support a project (an object) for instance GERD, due to its importance to the nation's identity, an attachment is to be constructed and through that states would be considering the object as a source of ontological security. Through the time of narratives, there would be a sense of inseparability between the subject and an object, and due to this fact; the absence of an object (GERD in this case) creates ontological insecurity to the subject. For that matter, the state having this threat (for instance Ethiopia) would be forced to follow the rigid routine with counter and contending states to keep its ontology secured.

### **5.1.5. Findings**

In examining the above presented sections, this study has made findings in which the researcher has intended to explore. As per the study, the Elite's narratives since the beginning of the GERD and also before that have focused on expressing the dam and Abbay as national pride and honor. Throughout time, various elites labeled the GERD as a national identity marker. Narratives' puissance to create identity seems to work here. In this manner with no division based on ethnicity, religion, and political ideology several elites manifested the GERD in a persistent trend. GERD became seen as the main nation nationalities project in which it is expressed to be a linking project for all regional states of Ethiopia. GERD, as for many elites including key informants is considered as a revival project that could make it unique from other projects. Cognitive Bridging of elites, which is the center of ontological security theory, seems to transpire in Ethiopia due to the new revival dam. All key informants including two of the negotiation team members have perceived the GERD as a source of national pride, honor and uniting project. Under this study, it is realized that the narratives of GERD as a matter of survival for Ethiopians, and inseparability between Ethiopia and GERD seem affecting the negotiation. Egypt's unchanging attitude and perception towards the Nile River and its destructive view on GERD is seen as a challenging factor to the negotiation in the eyes of Ethiopian negotiators. The view of Ethiopian negotiators 'GERD as Ethiopians source of togetherness and pride' seem uncontrovertibly influencing their attitude towards the dam and the negotiation arena. In the meantime, the study has realized the main essence of ontological security "absence of material aspect as an ontological insecurity" (GERD in this context) seem the main issue that led to have rigid routines.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1. Conclusion**

In this regard, the newly emerging concept of ontological security has become an important essence to study such inextricable confrontations and to provide solutions in this regard. Through



the conventional conflict studying methods, the major issues studied are of the material and other related issues that would lead states to confront. Without disregarding the scheme of conventional security, Ontological Security conceptualizes identity construction on an object as center of contestation.

This study has revealed the GERD and its narratives of elites that focus on contemplating the GERD as a matter of sovereignty by itself and reveals the GERD as a matter of honor for Ethiopians. Elites of Ethiopia having similar and continuously unchanging narratives have manifested the GERD's importance to bring the Ethiopians national unity and togetherness. For that matter, several elites (from government officials to non-political) have reverberatingly labeled the GERD as an anchor for Ethiopian national identity.

The Nile River under the cover of centuries of discourse has been internalized in the minds and emotions of Egyptians. The river beyond its significance in terms of financial and economic aspects has become part of Egypt's state identity. Discourses like 'Egypt is a gift of Nile' by Aristotle have made the Egyptian identity inseparable from the Nile River.

In the same bearing, the capacity of narratives to create a bond among elites and the public has also been revealed in the study. Various Ethiopian elites regardless of the usual trend of having ethnic and identity-based political aspects have got united through GERD. In a persistent trend, GERD's importance of making nation nationalities one-hearted is narrated by various elites from different backgrounds. Ethiopian government officials and other elites have narrated the GERD as Ethiopian property that could be considered as a project that the public has emotionally attached with. This emotional attachment to GERD has got manifested through the unchanging and consistent discourse of elites. Having a sense of nurturing all, the Ethiopian dam has become an example of uniting factor for all politicians regardless of political confrontations. Examples of this are presented as the discourses of Yeshiwas, Obang Metho, and others. Further, the dam has united all regions of Ethiopia as seen in the narratives of regional leaders.

Art as a method of narrative in an identity construction is also considered as part of this study. Music and poetry have a significant role in the narrative in which the importance of GERD for Ethiopians is expressed. Those artworks have manifested the attachment created among Ethiopians and the GERD. Unlike several projects that existed in Ethiopia, the GERD is given a

special place in the minds of many Ethiopians. This was witnessed by many elites including all of the key informants of the study.

Through various narratives of elites, the study has manifested that GERD is seen as more than a project with which people have attached with. Separating the public from GERD seems impossible and that could be a source of insecurity. This is because the dam is considered as a binding and bridging of "nation nationalities of Ethiopia". Further, the government through its daily narratives tries to make the GERD a stabilizing anchor of unity of all Ethiopians. The government through its narratives about GERD both intentionally or by default has created and elaborated the dam's importance for the state's unity. Further, the government throughout its policies has consistently national pride as a springboard for state's development. Correspondingly, the GERD is also considered a source of pride for the state. This shows there is a consistent narrative construction over GERD and state identity.

As contemplated in the study, there have been several negotiation platforms on the Nile River and the GERD especially among the major riparian states-Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan. Despite all the efforts no agreement has been attained yet. Due to the failure of the negotiated agreement, those states have been officially declaring and threatening to wage war (mainly Egypt over Ethiopia). This according to scholars is due to the securitization of the Nile River by those riparian states. Some others have also argued that the challenging factor to the negotiation was Egypt's unlimited interest on the Nile water.

Comprising all the scholarly views given on the negotiation, the study has articulated the challenge of the negotiation as the need to ensure the security of ontology of those basic riparian states due to the status they give to the Nile River and the emotional attachment they have with the resource.

The security of ontology emerges when the subject is emotionally attached to the material and when the material becomes the source of security to the subject. Through various narratives, various elites have been mentioning the GERD and Abbay River in their daily discourses. Due to the content and timing of narratives of those elites, the study has manifested that there is a construction of emotional attachment on GERD and Abbay River. In this regard, the finding of the study disclosed that the elites of Ethiopia have attached themselves with the river and the

dam narrating it as a matter of state identity and source of unity. Based on all the shreds of evidence presented, the study divulged that the GERD is given the status of a source of state's security and identity continuity.

After all the very challenges of the negotiation platform areas mentioned in the above 'seeing Nile & GERD as a matter of state identity and ontological security. To resolve these challenges, creating a pact of trust should be given priority. This means as of OST's main idea 'uncertainty and mistrust create unknown anxiety' could only be settled through creating a knowable status quo. Further, considering the Nile and GERD as a matter of state's security and source of identity continuity for Egypt and Ethiopia should be a halt to reach an agreement.

## **6.2. Recommendation**

- Trust building among contending states through strong public diplomacy.

As revealed and discussed above, Ethiopia and Egypt have a mistrust of the coming phenomenon and for that matter they tried to construct identity on the GERD and Nile respectively. Rather than competing on narratives and construction of mistrust amongst themselves, those riparian and contending states shall focus on constructing trust by which no one threatens the other side. This concept of trust building is mentioned in the Declaration of Principles-2015 art.VI which mention about giving downstream states priority from GERD's electric production to let them have confidence on each other. Lack of trust as for ontological security theory is a source of mistrust for states by which states would be forced to construct their ontology to ensure the continuity of their biography. So to let the states be confident on the status quo, there should be measures taken to assert confidence on each other.

- Egypt and Ethiopia should be Considering the Nile and Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam for regional development and integration purpose.

Nile and GERD should be the means of constructing regional integration and cooperative means. Those contending states should emphasize making the Nile and GERD as a means of socio-economic cooperation. Through inter-related means, while they consider GERD and Nile for socio-economic benefit, the trust would transpire. This could be ensured by planning bilateral projects to strengthen their mutual relationship.

- Trending new narrative constructions and focusing on flexible routines.

As discussed above, rigid routines occur while states consider an entity as their matter of identity security. As seen in the above discussions Ethiopia has focused on narrating the GERD as its state identity and matter of securing its biographic continuity. So the best-recommended solution to bring flexible routine is by changing narrative constructions and be out of rigid routine with other counterparts. The terms used by Egyptian counterparts ‘non-negotiable’ are seen as a challenge to negotiate over the GERD and Nile in general. In order to change the challenges, change in narratives seems required.

- The Nile should be the stabilizing means of routine for Ethiopia and Egypt.

Historically the religious liaison has been stabilizing and harmonizing relations between Ethiopia and Egypt. If properly managed and cooperatively administer the Nile River, it could be the means of stabilizing those states' routines. Rather than grasping the Nile as a source of contention, Ethiopia and Egypt better construct a new way of routine discerning the Nile as a means of stabilizing their routine.

- Negotiations should be based on African solutions for African Problems (AfSol).

This is to mean that, African issues should be resolved by Africans to prevent any political and economic interest of the intervening parties. In making negotiations African based it could boost the Africans ability to resolve problems by themselves, and integration among African states (including the strengthening of African Union, AU), could be strengthen. This could be further seen through the mechanisms of using regional and sub-regional organizations like AU, IGAD... to be at the medium of disagreements.

- Terms of negotiations should be held based on the consideration of Nile and GERD as developmental projects rather than as state identities

The negotiations over GERD have been ongoing for more than 10 years now and still, there is no agreement reached. The major challenge as explored above is the perception of the GERD and Nile as a source of the state's identity. Terminating this perception, negotiation should be held considering the GERD and Nile as sources of development rather than as stabilizing anchors of the state's biography. This is because; the challenges seen here are, while elites go to the

negotiation arenas, they primarily consider the object (GERD and Nile in this context) in an emotionally attached sense. This according to Ontological Security theory has a direct implication to the results of the negotiation. Here is conceived that, these conception of the Nile and GERD as an ontological security provider for these states has made the negotiation non-compromising.

## REFERENCES

- Abdo M. (2004). *The Nile Question: The Accords on the Water of the Nile and Their Implications on Cooperative Schemes in the Basin*. p. 45-57. *Perceptions-Journal of International Affairs*. <https://biblio.ugent.be/publication?q=parent+exact+%22>
- Agreement on Declaration of Principles between the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia & the Republic of the Sudan on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Project (GERDP). (23 March 2015). Khartoum, Sudan. (Retrieved, December 12, 2021).
- Agreement on the Nile Basin Cooperative Framework. (May 14, 2010). (Retrieved, December 12, 2021).
- Ahmed T. & Elsanabary H. (2015). *Hydrological and Environmental impacts of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Nile River*. Vol. 5 –No.4. p. 260-271. *International Water Technology Journal, IWTJ*.
- Aljazeera English. (May, 23, 2010) Meles Zenawi: *Talk to Aljazeera*. “(Video)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9S83SVAumsQ&t=893s>
- Aljazeera English. (June 28, 2020). Gedion Asfaw: *What’s behind the dispute over Africa's largest dam project?* “(Video)” YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=aljazeera+on+dam+march](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=aljazeera+on+dam+march)
- Aljazeera English. (March 31, 2021). *Inside\_Story: Will Egypt attack Ethiopia?* Aljazeera. “(Video)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdlGMP-0mjQ&t=261s>
- Arsano Y. (2007). *Ethiopia and the Nile: Dilemmas of national and regional hydro-politics*. PhD Thesis. Center for security studies, Swiss federal institute of technology. Munich.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2018). *Going beyond BATNA (Best Alternative for Negotiated Agreement)*. In *Discourse*. Vol. II. Ethiopian Foreign Relation strategic studies Institute (EFRSSI). Addis Ababa.

- Attalla R. A. (2015). *The “Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam”*. Bachelor Research. QP-GFS-1504. Worcester polytechnic college. Chrome extension://mhjfbmdgcfjbbpaeojofohoefgihjai/index.html
- Belachew T. (2017). *Benefit of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Project (GERDP) for Sudan and Egypt*. EIPSA Communicating Article: Energy, Water, Environment & Economic. University of Huddersfield, UK. <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/>
- Beyene B.M. (2017). “*The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and the Ethiopian Diaspora*”. *Conference paper*. Aiga Forum. <http://mhjfbmdgcfjbbpaeojofohoefgihjai/index.html>
- Cascao, A. E. & Zeiton M. (2010). *Power, Hegemony and Critical Hydro-Politics*.
- Cascão, A. E. (2009). *Changing power relations in the Nile river basin: Unilateralism vs. cooperation?* *Water Alternatives* 2(2): 245-268 volume 2. (www.water-alternatives.org)
- Chaillot C. (2018). *Nile: EOTC and the Coptic*. In Discourse (ed.). Vol. II. Ethiopian Foreign Relation strategic studies Institute (EFRSSI). Addis Ababa.
- CNBC International. (August 28, 2014). Haiemariam Desalegn: *Ethiopia's Great Renaissance Dam*. “(Video)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2csKJOrKo3w>
- Costantinos B. (2015). *State Building & Ontological Security in the Greater Horn (GHA) & Great Lakes of Africa (GLA)*. Addis Ababa University. Ethiopia. <https://www.researchgate.net/deref/http%3A%2F%2Fdx.doi.org%2F10.21275%2FART20162735>
- Creswell J. W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among five Approaches*. Sage publications. Lincoln.
- Degaut M. (2015). *What is Security?* University of Central Florida. [www.researchgate.net/publication/310495076](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/310495076).
- Dormer R. (2017). *The Impact of Constructivism on International Relations Theory: A History*. Vol. 2. Nishinomiya, Japan.
- Erlich H. -in Discourse. (2018). *The Nile, the GERD, the Middle East, and Africa*. Vol. II. Ethiopian Foreign Relation strategic studies Institute (EFRSSI). Addis Ababa.

- Eshetu M. T. (n.d.). Sink or Swim: Alternatives for unlocking the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Dispute. P. 67-116. Colombia journal of translational law.
- Ethiopian News Agency. (July 16, 2020). Abiy Ahmed: *Parliament Speech*. “(Video)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKn68kQ2E3I&fbclid=IwAR0TDoCDOPtFIAz4hMfmcqGkcywpcUt5k9fReU0ZSbHr0qMwJskBO15Xs4>
- Ethiopian News Network-ENN TV. (January 17, 2018). Yacob Arsano: *Filefit*. “(Videos)” YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10B\\_2esI6qc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10B_2esI6qc)
- ETV News. (September 10, 2020). Seleshi Bekele: ኢትዮጵያ ጠቅላይ ሚኒስትር. “(Video)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdzsXUe2hMU&t=3s>
- ETV. (June 21, 2013). Ambassador Dina Mufti: *Meet-ETV*. “(Video)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCBscM0FZPE>
- ETV. (October, 2, 2020). Zerihun Abebe: *Meet EBC*. “(Video)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSXCqrXtIsc>
- Gebresenbet F. & Yohannes D. (2021) New Dimensions in the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Negotiations: Ontological Security in Egypt and Ethiopia, *African Security*, 14:1, 80-106, DOI: 10.1080/19392206.2021.1905921
- Habesha View. (August 18, 2020). Fekahmed Negash: *Ethiopia, Talks Over the Nile Dam GERD*. “(Video)” Youtube.
- Hassani H. (2018). *Egypt and the Nile: Mythologies and Real Politics*. In *Discourse*, Vol. II. Ethiopian Foreign Relation strategic studies Institute (EFRSSI). Addis Ababa.
- Howe L. (2009). *Hydro Politics of the Nile River: conflict, policy and the future*. Hamilton. [https://www.hamilton.edu/documents/levitt-center/Howe\\_article.pdf](https://www.hamilton.edu/documents/levitt-center/Howe_article.pdf)
- Jackson II, Ronald L., Drummond, Darlene K. & Camara, Sakile (2007). 'What Is Qualitative Research?' *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication*. 8: 1, 21 — 28 DOI: 10.1080/17459430701617879.
- Kehl J. R. (2010). *Hydro-Political complexes and asymmetrical power*. *Journal of world-systems research*. Vol.17. Rutgers University-Camden. <https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2011.429>



- Knaepen H. & Byiers B. (2017). *Understanding the Nile Basin Initiative Balancing historical rights, national needs, and regional interests*. European center for development policy management. <https://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/NBI-Background-Paper-PEDRO-Political-Economy-Dynamics-Regional-Organisations-Africa-ECDPM-2017.pdf>
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2017). Political Economy Dynamics of Regional Organizations (PEDRO). Policy Brief. ECDPM. <https://ecdpm.org/dossiers/political-institutional-dynamics-regional-organisations-africa/>
- Ludwig E. (2018). *The Life story of the River*. In Discourse, Vol. II. Ethiopian Foreign Relation strategic studies Institute (EFRSSI). Addis Ababa.
- Mihretab W. (2018). *Geopolitics of Nile Basin Countries: Cooperation as a sole option for Contemporary Egypt: the case of Egypt and Ethiopia*, Vol. 4, American Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences.
- Mitzen J. (2006). *Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma*. Ohio State University USA. SAGE Publications and ECPR-European Consortium for Political Research. Vol. 12(3): 341–370 [DOI: 10.1177/1354066106067346]
- Nazret.com. (April 17, 2012). Meles Zenawi: *Parliament Speech*. “(Video)”. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILWYNjR4-TQ&t=98s>
- Nile Basin Initiative. (n.d.). NBI strategy 2017-2027. Abridged Version. (Retrieved, December 12, 2021).
- Question pro. (2020). *exploratory research: definition, methods, types, and examples*. (Online source). <https://www.questionpro.com/blog/exploratory-research/>
- Richards. (2006). *Qualitative Research Design*. Chapter 4. P.73-103. Sage publications. [https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/13172\\_Chapter4.pdf](https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/13172_Chapter4.pdf)
- Shay S. (2018). *The “Renaissance Dam Crisis”*. Herzliya Conference Paper. <https://www.idc.ac.il/en/research/ips/2018/documents/shaulshayrenaissance%20damen22.4.2018a.pdf>

- Soliman, G., Soussa, H., & El-Sayed, S. (2016). Assessment of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam impacts using Decision Support System. Vol. 18.
- Soltani F. & Yusoff A. M. (2012). *Concept of Security in the Theoretical Approaches*. Research Journal of International Studies. [http://www.eurojournals.com/international\\_studies.htm](http://www.eurojournals.com/international_studies.htm)
- Srikanth D. (2014). *Non-Traditional security threats in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: A Review*. International Journal of Development and Conflict. P. 60–68. Rajaratnam School of international studies.
- Stebbins R. (2001). *Exploratory Research in the social science: What is exploration?* (P. 2-17) Sage publications, Thousand Oaks. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412984249>
- Subotic J. (2016). *Narrative, Ontological Security, and Foreign Policy Change*. Foreign Policy Analysis. 12, 610–627. Georgia State University. <https://academic.oup.com/fpa/article-abstract/12/4/610/2469903>
- Swain A. (2009). *Ethiopia, the Sudan and Egypt: The Nile River Dispute*. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. 35, 4 (1997), P: 675-694, Cambridge University press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2011). *Challenges for water sharing in the Nile basin: changing geopolitics and changing climate*. Hydrological Sciences Journal. 56:4, 687-702.  
DOI:10.1080/02626667.2011.577037
- Tesfaye T. (2018). *Changing Hydro-Political dynamics*. In Discourse, Vol. II. Ethiopian Foreign Relation strategic studies Institute (EFRSSI). Addis Ababa.
- Towfique B. & Epsey M. (2002). *Hydro-politics: socio-economic analysis of international water treaties*. American agriculture and economic associations.
- Theys S. (2018). *Introducing Constructivism in International Relations Theory*. <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/02/23/introducing-constructivism-in-international-relations-theory/>.
- Waterbury J. and Whittington D. (2009). *Playing Chicken on the Nile? The Implications of Micro dam Development in the Ethiopian Middle Eastern natural environments Highlands and Egypt's New Valley Project*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-8947.1998.tb00725.x>.

- Wuhib G. (2018). *Egypt's Nile Hegemony: Truth and Myth*, In Discourse, Vol. II. Ethiopian Foreign Relation strategic studies Institute (EFRSSI), Addis Ababa.
- Yihdego Z., Rieu C. A. & Cascão A. E. (2016). *How has the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam changed the legal, political, economic, and scientific dynamics in the Nile Basin?* IWRA GERD webinar. University Of Aberdeen. DOI:10.1080/02508060.2016.1209008
- Zarakol A. (2017). *States and Ontological Security: A historical rethinking*. Vol. 52(1) 48 –68, journals.sagepub.com/home/cac. DOI: 10.1177/0010836716653158
- Zewde B. (2018). *The Elusive Quest for the Tana Dam*. In Discourse, Vol. II. Ethiopian Foreign Relation Strategic Studies Institute (EFRSSI). Addis Ababa.
- ኃይሉ ወልደጊዮርጊስ. (Hailu Woldegiorgis). (ed.). (2005). *ለአባይ ውሃ ምግብ (Debate for the Abbay River) አክዩ ፕሬስ፣ አዲስ አበባ* (Addis Ababa University press. Addis Ababa.) (Amharic Book)
- ተፈሪ ሙከንን. (Teferi Mekonen). (2012). *የአባይ ውሃ ጉዳይ (The issue of Abbay River)*. ታሪክ አሳታሚ. አዲስ አበባ (Tarik Press፣ Addis Ababa). (Amharic Book).

## Appendices

### Appendix A

- The researcher reviewed Addis Zemen Magazine archives from the year 2011 to 2016 which are seen as very important sources of elite narratives. In doing these the researcher has inquired about continued discourses and identity construction on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam-GERD.
  - In the searching of major narratives of elites, various data sources were explored. Among them, the Annual of Grad Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which is published every of the anniversary years is considered as the major source of data.
1. Hailemariam D. (March 29, 2012). *Message of Hailemariam Desallegn, the Ex-Prime Minister*. Addis Zemen newspaper. Addis Ababa.
  2. Demeke M. (April 1, 2015:4). *Message of Demeke Mekonnen*. Addis Ababa.
  3. Roman G. (April 1, 2016:6). *Message of Roman Gebreegziabher-the late GERD's Public mobility council director*. Annual Magazine of GERD. Addis Ababa.
  4. Demeke M. (April 1, 2017:4). *Message of Demeke Mekonnen & Annual Magazine*. Annual Magazine of GERD. Addis Ababa.
  5. Abune Mathias, Cardinal Birhane Eyeses, Sheikh Mohamed Amin. (April, 1, 2017:6&7). *Messages of Abune Mathias, Cardinal Birhane Eyeses, Sheikh Mohamed Amin*. Annual Magazine of GERD. Addis Ababa.
  6. Annual Magazine of GERD. (April 1, 2018). Front page: *GERD's Public Support & Mobilization Council's Vision, Mission, and Goals*. Addis Ababa
  7. Debretsion G. (April 1, 2018:2) *Message of Debretsion G/Michael (the then Ethiopian electric power director, EEP)*. Annual Magazine of GERD. Addis Ababa.
  8. Annual Magazine of GERD. (April 1, 2019). *Logo of the Year*. Addis Ababa.
  9. Regional Presidents. (April 1, 2020:2-10). *Messages of Regional Presidents*. Annual Magazine of GERD. Addis Ababa.

10. Mustefe M. & Shimeles A. (April 1, 2020:11). *Message of Mustefe Mohammed & Shimeles Abdisa*. Annual Magazine of GERD. Addis Ababa.

➤ While exploring narratives through government policy, I try to see two of the Ethiopian Foreign Policies by which they are considered as expressions of governments actions to be taken.

1. Ministry of Information Press & Audiovisual Department. (November, 2002). *The Federal Democratic Republic Of Ethiopia Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy*. Addis Ababa

2. Ethiopian Draft Foreign Policy. (May 2019). የተሻሻለ የኢ.ፌ.ዴ.ሪ የውጭ ግንኙነት ፖሊሲ ረቂቅ አዋጅ (New Ethiopian Foreign Policy Draft).

➤ The 8100-A text system is one of the data source used by the researcher by which major narratives of the government has been channeled through. From January 16 till now, I tried to collect all daily discourses and interpreted the concept of Ontological Security Theory.

“Our dam is the symbol to be seen with honor” Jan.16,

“8100-A, a language of Unity and development” Jan.21---

“GERD is people’s Unity and State’s stringer” Jan.31

“Our dam is the sign of Ability” Feb.2

“GERD is our national Agenda” Feb.6

“It’s My Dam! Let ideal and practical unity be for GERD”! Feb.15

"Adwa and GERD are the symbols of Unity and victory" Feb.20

"GERD for our unity; to the flamboyance of Ethiopian-ness" Feb.20

“Our dam-is our honor of patriotism” Mar.28

“GERD is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adwa” Apr.8

## Appendix B

1. Interview with academic head at AAU & member of the draft committee of the 2019 draft Foreign Policy document. (August 24, 2021). Addis Ababa University.
2. Interview with Member of GERD’s negotiation team at Ministry of Foreign Affairs-MoFA. (July 6, 2021). Addis Ababa.
3. Interview with a senior expert of Transboundary Rivers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-MoFA. (June 1, 2021). Addis Ababa.
4. Interview with a negotiation team member and scholar at AAU. (Jul. 10, 2021). Addis Ababa University.
5. Interview with a senior expert of transboundary water affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Jun.9, 2021). Ministry of water, irrigation and energy. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

**Table, 1.** *Background Information of Key Informant Interviews (KII)*

No.	Profession	Sex	Academic background	Interview Date
KII01	Senior expert at MoFa_Trans-Boundary resources Affairs	M	MBA	June 01, 2021
KII02	Senior Expert at Water, Irrigation and Energy Ministry	M	MA in Management	June 09, 2021
KII03	Director at MoFA_Trans-Boundary Resource Affairs (Former Ambassador of Ethiopia)	M	Assistant Professor of Law	July 06, 2021
KII04	Lecturer at AAU & negotiation team member	M	Professor of Political Science and International Relations	July 10, 2021
KII05	Academic head at Addis Ababa University and member of the draft committee of the 2019 draft Ethiopian Foreign Policy document	M	Assistant professor of the Department of Political Science and International Relations	August 24, 2021

## Appendix C

1. Ejigayehu Shibabaw GIGI. (June 24, 2013). *Abay Abay*. On EthioMusic “(Video)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEhG6TD7CuU>
2. Genet Masresha. (April 2, 2011). “ጭስ አልገጧ ነዳጅ” “Smokeless oil”. On Ethiopian TV “(Video)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEop44Ib-S4>
3. Ashebir Belay. (October 8, 2011). *Abbay አገይ*. On Stankyleg. “(Video)” YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hcwfs0kde9Y>
4. Contemplating the GERD and Abbay as a source of remorse by Asegid Eshetu ft. Etenesh Demeke <sup>66</sup> is also a very known and figure in expression of GERD for Ethiopians. In this song a young girl expressing her grief over Abbay for its loss of layover space, sang slowly and the team of many youngsters collected around her listening to the name of Abbay. The song that young girl sang is a publicly known sing for Abbay “Abbay the gift for a state and its grace, Abbay sand without the right rhythm and tune, it lives with no sign”. Another boy comes to the gathering and supports the girl under sorrow and began to sing saying “let sorrow get ended up, we shall praise Abbay, Abbay started its journey for sanctification”. He also praise the Abbay singing “our anger, regret and threats that passed through generations are to be ended up today. Let’s stand together for Abbay renewing our energy, working on the project that could pass through generations will give our mind ultimate rest”. He added “let the darkness ended up, let’s see the light, the importance of the dam (GERD) is for all of us”.

**Addis Zemen\_ Ayelech Kasaye, (2013:12). Doubt not/አትጠራጠሩ**

“With our previous martyr state loving heroes”

“Thousands are born, warriors for development”

“All of us with no getting back (retreat)”

“To work for greater renaissance”

“We received consign from Meles (the Late prime minister)”

“For the developmental policy of our government”

---

<sup>66</sup> Asegid E. ft. Etenesh D. (April 29, 2011). *Abay Abay*, on Selam Tube, Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZUUCQJL698>

“Our defense force has become its backbone”  
“For the production of 6000 MW of electricity”  
“Our people are highly cooperating”  
"Not only for us, but the dam is also for our neighbors”  
“Though enemies are conspiring”  
“We are going on our way”  
"The world is amazed by our success"  
“Doubt not, it will be ended up soon”

**Addis Zemen Newspaper\_poem by Andualem, (2013:14) With Golden Generation  
(በወርቃማዉ ትዉልድ)**

“We have great faith”  
“In the heaven...we made our flag”  
“With Green, Yellow...  
“And red color we tied”  
“We have great hope”  
“We see it standing in today’s bridge”  
“In Africa’s capital”  
“In the book of History...to write it newly”  
“In the desert land...in this hottest place”  
“A pioneer...”  
“Is with no sleeping”  
“There his mother”  
“Over the hill...pressuring him to get stiff”  
“Sends money from her pocket”  
“Swearing in his mother and father”  
“Flows his sweats”  
“By Damming the Nile”  
“Needs to get his rest”