



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND**  
**COMMUNICATION**

**News Framing Analysis of First Round Filling of GERD:  
Comparative Study on *The Ethiopian Herald, Sudan Tribune and  
Ahram Online Media outlets.***

**By**  
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**COMMUNICATION**

*This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Alemayehu Taye Alemayehu, entitled: **News Framing Analysis of First Round Filling of GERD: Comparative Study on The Ethiopian Herald, Sudan Tribune and Ahram Online Media Outlets** and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master's of Arts in Journalism and Communication complies with the regulation of The University and meets the accepted originality and quality.*

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## ABSTRACT

*The issue of the GERD has reached its climax when Ethiopia was ready to impound the reservoir leading the three riparian countries /Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt/ to a new round of intense debate disagreement and controversy. Taking this crucial historical moment as an interesting and significant topic of research, this thesis is set out with a key purpose of examining how the media outlets in the three countries reported and framed issues related to the first round filling of the GERD. The Ethiopian Herald, Sudan Tribune and Ahram online with their news stories written from June 1st to July 31st have been examined. Ten news stories from each media outlet have been studied in conjunction with in-depth interviews and close examination of related literatures to provide the thesis with additional substance. Theoretical framework utilized for the study is framing and agenda setting theories. Research findings revealed that the Ethiopian Herald and Ahram online have reported extensively about the first impoundment of the GERD than Sudan Tribune. Prominent frames observed in The Ethiopian Herald were Natural rights frame, exclusion frame and mutual benefit frame. Sudan Tribune has prominently used economic consequence frame and conflict frame while Ahram online inclined to dominantly utilize historic rights frame and conflict frame. The issue of the first round filling of the GERD has been reported and framed in a distinctive manner that goes in line with the interest of their respective countries and the agenda setting policy of the media outlets in focus. Drawing a recommendation from the research a couple of reflections has been forwarded for further studies to be conducted on the issue of the GERD. Impartiality, balance and professionalism have also been recommended for the three media outlets studied under this research.*

*Key word: GERD, Nile River, Impoundment of the GERD Reservoir, Controversy over the GERD, Blue Nile/Abbay*

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**አልልታ! መንበርከክ! መገዛት!**

**ለ ልዑል አግዚአብሔር!**

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## **ACCRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS**

AAU Addis Ababa University

EPA Ethiopian Press Agency

AP Associated Press

UN United Nation

UNSC United Nation Security Council

US United States

NSC National Security Council

AP Associated Press

BBC British Broadcasting Corporation

GERD Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

NBI National Basin Initiative

CFA Comprehensive Frame of Agreement

TECCONILE Technical Cooperation Committee for the Promotion of  
Development and Environmental Protection of the Nile Basin

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. CHAPTER PREVIEW**

This chapter is discussing about the background of the study giving sufficient information as to how large hydroelectric projects with geopolitical significances around the world are oftentimes controversial garnering a high volume of media attention and media coverage. Furthermore statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, methodology employed to conduct the research and the scope/delimitation of the study are discussed briefly in chapter one.

### **1.2. Background of the Study**

Media is becoming one of the main engaging activities of people's life of the time. The increasing invisibility of media is exemplified by their disappearing from consciousness when used intensively by the logic of immediacy (Duez, 2011). In the age of globalization and the Internet along with people's life style and the technology has created a forum by which information flow is facilitated easily and instantly around the world. The Internet's instant and easy accessibility offer an immediacy of information that no other news medium can match (Sagan and Leighten, 2010).

Even though the media is interested to report events and issues very quickly, they report the issues with in the angle of their interests. Almost all conflicting issues in the world are reported but with a reflection of interest from the media organization. Accordingly, news organizations apply their own preference and/or criteria in identification, selection, and highlighting of some features of events or issues and trying to make connections among them so as to magnify and promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or action (Entman, 2004). In other words, news stories are framed inline with the interest of the news organization in order to ascertain and clearly magnify certain messages to their readership/audiences.

Conflicts, disagreements and disputes are the main interest of the media. Issues creating dispute in relation to big projects like hydroelectric dams constructed in Trans Boundary Rivers like Nile has always been a point of controversy and the focus of media around the world. As many hydro politicians highlight the history of human behavior, exhibits conflict over water is an intrinsic

feature. Warfare associated with the protection and destruction of vital water systems is traceable for centuries (Klare, 2013)

Accordingly large hydroelectric projects with geopolitical significances are often controversial and reported extensively on the media around the world. For instance the a dam on Colorado River has sparked a lot of disagreement not only between USA and Mexico, but also ignited hot debate and interstate disagreement between the bordering states within the USA. The media has reported about the issue extensively about the negative effects of the dam and framed it according to their interests.

For instance, (Finely, 2019) Wrote on *Denver Post* that there was increasing anxiety in booming Colorado and other upper basin states- New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming about their plight of being legally roped into sending more water downriver, even if dry winters, new population growth and development made that impossible without shutting faucets.

The dam on Colorado River was a hot issue and highly reported and differently framed by the media of the two countries US and Mexico as well. Lakhani (2019) wrote that the Colorado River that originates in the Rocky Mountains and traverse seven US states, before reaching Mexico, where it is supposed to low onwards to the sea of Cortez is dammed at the US-Mexico border, leaving the Mexican side river channel empty and locals are now battling to bring it back to life.

The Mega project Myitsone dam of China which has been constructed outside of its territory has also been an issue of controversy and extensively reported in the news as Burma decided to halt the billions worth construction following strong disagreement and public outcry in Burmese nationals (Kiik, 2020).

The Hoover dam in America, the Tucurui dam in Brazil, the Xiluodu dam in China has also been extensively reported on the media.

Modern day Africa has also become interested in construction of hydroelectric dams which, has garnered a lot of dispute and media attention. The dams constructed on the river Nile in Egypt and Sudan is no exceptions in fueling controversy and garnering media attention. Despite The geopolitical situation and the fact that Egypt was the last riparian country in the Nile basin,

construction of Aswan high dam has also entertained high volume of disagreement objection and media coverage. As Fahim (1934) noted, no other dam like Aswan High Dam has received so much world concern and media coverage, publicity and controversy/debate.

In the same manner, Merowe dam of Sudan constructed on the river Nile has also been center of media attention and controversy (Askouri, 2004) The Merowe is a huge and controversial project that promises intensified social unrest and misery for tens of thousands of citizens displaced forcibly.

Similarly, the Millennium Dam that has later been called Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam in 2003 EC has also created a lot of disagreement. The Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam GERD constructed on Abbay (Blue Nile), and which is the largest hydroelectric dam in Africa is a 4.8 billion Dollar project. GERD is one of the most recent dam projects in the Nile Basin and one of the 33 Abbay basin water development projects that were identified in the 1958-64 Ethio-USBR study (Yakob, 2018).

*GERD is constructed to generate electricity with total installed capacity of 15,759 GWh/yr. It will have significant contribution to the national electricity demand. It will increase rural electrification supply from 56% to 90 %. The GERD has an altitude of 145 meters and constructed with a capacity of 10.1 million cubic meters by RCC technology (EPA, 2019).*

The country, Ethiopia financed the Mega project through fund raising bond selling and contributions from Ethiopians including the diaspora community as Abitew and Degu (2019) noted that Ethiopia's commitment to build the dam by the money generated from its citizen's contribution was a result of Egypt's alleged persistent campaign and ability to block any assistance from international funding institution like International Monetary Fund and World Bank to maintain presumed hegemony on the Nile water share (ibid).

Like many other mega hydroelectric projects, GERD has sparked a lot of controversy leading the international regional and local media to report extensively and frame differently about the issue. In its endeavor to build the hydroelectric dam, Ethiopia claims to experience a lot of obstacle from time immemorial, Egypt being the main actor of the challenge.

According to Lawson (2018). Egypt is always insisting on the motto of "historic rights" to receive two thirds of the down river flow of the water of the Nile basin irrespective of the upper

riparian country's right to use their natural resource for development. *"Egypt's resistance arises from two colonial era agreements. The 1929 Nile Water Agreement and the 1959 Agreement for the Full Utilization of the Nile which entitled Egypt and Sudan an unfair advantage over other riparian states"* (Siyabonga, 2013. p.2).

Nile is a natural resource of all the riparian countries and no country including Egypt can claim exclusive right and control over the river is Ethiopia's repeated argument. Gebresellasie (2020) Stated, Ethiopia contributes over 85% to the Nile water and gets nothing while Egypt contributing not a drop of water is using almost everything and repeating the old Mantra of "Historic Right".

Ferede (2018, p 55) 'Egyptians think the notion of other peoples in the basin entertaining the idea of sharing the Nile water is like advancing an agenda of killing Egyptians indiscriminately.'

Even though there is a strong opposition firstly on the construction of the dam from the very beginning and secondly on the first filling of the dam by Egypt and Sudan claiming that environmental factors such as reduction in the amount of water flow and drought (Jamaid, 2019) Ethiopia remained committed carrying on with the project with a key objective of necessity for development and transformation.

Building a dam and coming out of poverty is a priority to Ethiopia, which is a landlocked country and one of the poorest nations in the world. Ethiopia, with one of the largest economic and population growth rates in Africa sees the construction of the dam as a way of developing the country and transforming from poor to a rich country (Daniel 2018).

Constructing the dam Ethiopia has always claimed to be transparent and positive in seeking for a win-win situation where all the lower riparian countries will benefit from the project. As (Nuru, 2020) wrote Ethiopia initiated and proposed an international panel of experts (IPOE) to be established in 2011 to assess the benefit and impact of the dam.

Ethiopia's transparency and willingness to invite international and independent studies to be conducted on GERD's benefits and impacts seemed to bear fruit as some of the studies have convinced hydrologists even from Cairo that GERD will substantially benefit the lower riparian countries.

As noted by Egyptian hydrologist, Milas (2008), the suitability of the present site of the GERD along with others for hydropower generation and for the promotion of interregional trade in power supplies. Experts clearly indicated the amount of water available to the downstream riparian states would not be affected by the filling of the dam. Even if Ethiopia drew significant quantities of water, Egypt and the Sudan would still benefit from the construction of the reservoirs in Ethiopia.

Furthermore, Ethiopia reiterated that GERD is not limited to power supply. It has a lot of advantages such as benefiting the downstream flow of the river by removing silt and sedimentation, regulating the water flow and conserving water in Ethiopian highlands. Thus the GERD has local regional and international significance such as reducing air pollution, mitigating climate change, creating electric connectivity in local countries and bring about economic growth” (Ethiopian Electric Power, 2019).

Due to the many technical and scientific explanation provided by Ethiopia Sudan’s position has been shifted to side with the construction of the dam and support Ethiopia’s endeavor of constructing and finalizing the largest hydroelectric dam. As “Sudanese former president Umar Al Bashir had gone on Television to say that the GERD represented an asset to Ethiopia and Sudan alike” (Lawson 2013).

Sudan’s support to Ethiopia of the GERD project can be attributed to various factors (Tafese, 2018) noted, The dam will siphon off more water for downstream irrigation, Sudan will get a regulated and sustained water flow, the dam will hold back immense quantities of silt and sediments resulting in 86 % reduction, GERD can prolong the life span of Sudanese dams, and improve flood control etc.

Sudan’s position has swayed to opposing the filling of the reservoir after the coming to power of the new government as clearly noted in the data presentation and analysis of this thesis.

When it comes to the government in Egypt the GERD has always been portrayed as a threat. Egyptians have taken various measures to thwart the construction of GERD using various mechanisms such as lobbying the Italians to interrupt and possibly halt the construction of the

dam by Salini Impregilo Construction Firm, approaching the EU US China and Saudi Arabia, The UAE, Japan, The World Bank etc. and soliciting their support, contemplating of taking the case to the International Court of Justice and the UN Security Council etc. (ibid).

Egypt's main concern at this juncture has shifted from opposing the construction of the dam to insisting on delaying and/or slowing the filling of the dam with an argument of significant harm may happen if the GERD is filled as planned. Egypt proposes the filling to take 12 to 21 years while Ethiopia asserted that it would start filling the dam in the rainy season of June/July 2020. Ethiopia has a strong stance for completing filling the reservoir in four to six years to avoid any concerns of reduction of water to the lower riparian countries and to eventually advance in to generation of electricity in full capacity in the coming few years (Alemtsehai, 2020).

Despite the factors that have been entertained to stop the GERD progressing forward to the point of filling the dam, Ethiopia has announced finalizing all the preliminary construction of the project and embarked on the important stage where the first filling of the dam becomes crucial and manageable during the rainy season in June/July 2020.

Following the announcement, there was a strong opposition from both Sudan and Egypt and a series of negotiation by three countries regarding the filling of the dam. The Ethiopian Herald, *Sudan Tribune* and *Ahram online* have written news stories extensively about the issue. The media has also framed their news differently. No research that I know of has been done on the news framing of the three media outlets during the first filling of the dam. The issue of the first filling of the dam is current and fresh, so this writer is inspired to conduct the research in this specific area. Investigating how the three media outlets framed the first round impoundment of the dam and examining the similarities and differences among them to come up with a possible reason behind framing the news stories in such a manner will be the main focus of this research.

Accordingly, the research is investigating how *The Ethiopian Herald*, *Sudan Tribune* and *Ahram online* have framed the first filling of the GERD. The three media outlets were chosen as a subject of the study due to various reasons including but not limited to their easily accessible nature, and the fact that there is easily distinguishable distinction in reporting the same issue with a different framework. The study will highlight on finding out the main frames of media outlets in reporting the first round filling of the GERD, understanding the similarities and differences



among the three media organizations in framing the issue and figuring out the factors that might have affected the medias to frame the issue in such a manner will also be dealt with thoroughly in this research.

### **1.3. Statement of the Problem**

The issue of the GERD has been agenda of the region as Ethiopia tried to explain the benefit of the dam for the lower riparian countries and Egypt/Sudan voicing their indifference allegedly creating obstacles to the construction and advancement of the GERD and denouncing the usefulness of the dam to the lower riparian countries with mainly fear of lower share of the water. Egypt particularly voices repeated concerns that the planned filling of the GERD reservoir would diminish its water supply from the Nile on which it relies for vast majority of its fresh water“(Ahram Online, 2020)

Ethiopia’s repeated argument regarding building and using the GERD indicated that the Dam will be vital for energy production and a key factor for food production, economic development, and poverty reduction in Ethiopia and the Nile basin including the lower riparian countries. AbdelahI, D., Aggestam, K., andersson, D., et al.2015).

Furthermore, Ethiopia indicated that the filling of GERD in June/July 2020 is very important and something that has to be done irrespective of bilateral or trilateral agreement, with the lower riparian countries arguing that unreasonably delaying of filling the dam will bring tremendous damage such as large economic and social costs (Alemtsehai, 2020).

The country stressed on its commitment to fill and operate the GERD arguing that it is Ethiopia’s right of using its equitable share of the Nile water. Furthermore, Ethiopia shared its filling plan of the GERD during negotiations not only recently but also back in 2017 to Sudan and Egypt which the country claimed to be entirely compatible with the principles of the 2015 DOP (Ibid). However, Sudan and Egypt strongly opposed Ethiopia’s commitment to filling the dam before a concrete agreement has been reached. Sudan and Egypt’s main concern among others was the significant harm that might be caused due to filling of GERD.

Accordingly, a round of meetings and negotiations has been conducted between the three countries in person and sometimes virtually /due to Covid19/ including with the involvement of

mediators from other states and organizations such as African Union, World Bank, South Africa, and USA etc.

As the negotiations and disputes as well as the media coverage was on progress, Ethiopia announced the completion of the first filling of the dam on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and claimed that the dam was filled without causing any harm as feared by lower riparian countries.

The first filling of GERD has been given a wide coverage on international media including BBC, CNN, and Aljazeera etc. For instance BBC reported the issue of GERD six times in the month of July 2020 on its official website while Aljazeera reported about it three times same period on the website. This figure doesn't reflect the number of times these international medias reported about GERD in their Radio's Televisions and other social media outlets.

Ethiopia's firm stance regarding the filling of GERD in contrast with Sudan and Egypt's serious objections has been extensively reported and differently framed in the respective media news stories as well. In addition to media coverage, several studies have been conducted on the issue of GERD. For instance Deasalew (2018) Muez (2020) and Roman (2020) and Yeshiwas (2020) etc. has written research and articles.

Desalew (2018) examined the media coverage and roles of Ethiopian print media in achieving consensus in regards with the GERD building. His study was situated within Agenda setting and consensus theory of Ideology. His research asserted that since GERD is very important in bringing economic development and eradicating poverty in the country, roles of print media in creating consensus towards GERD among the society is significant.

Muez (2012.) has investigated National and International Press Coverage of Ethiopia's Decision to Construct GERD on Nile River. Utilizing theories of agenda setting, framing and economy of mass media, he studied *Addis Zemen*, *Sudan Vision*, and *Al Ahrām weekly* newspapers. His study asserted that all the three media generally covered about GERD positively and neutrally.

Roman (2018) studied the disagreement on utilization of Nile River as ignited by the construction of GERD. She underscores that there is a quest for comprehensive fair and acceptable legal authority, and she suggested that Nile riparian countries should come to comprehensive agreement regarding the utilization of the waters of Nile Rivers.

Yeshiwas (2020) examined how *The Reporter*, newspaper in Ethiopia, salient frames pertained to the dam project and how these frames reflect Ethiopia's dominant perspective on Nile politics. His article that employed longitudinal qualitative research method to analyze the contents, he has argued that the newspaper, using official sources mostly, engaged in cautious and selective framing to promote a particular interpretation to the project that is consistent with its editorial agenda in corollary with Ethiopian government interest and perspective on Nile politics. A significant amount of knowledge and lessons has been obtained from each researchers works.

As indicated above researchers have contributed studies on the issue of GERD but no research has been done specifically on the news framing of the three countries selected media outlets during the first filling of GERD. In addition to absence of research conducted on the GERD reservoir impoundment, there is also a gap in research regarding comparing and contrasting the news framing tendencies and/or preferences as well as the sociopolitical implications of the three countries media outlets. So there is a gap that needs to be filled. The gap discovered regarding absence of research about the issue of news framing during the first filling of the GERD by the three countries will be filled by this thesis. Thus, news framing of the GERD from June 1<sup>st</sup> to July 31<sup>st</sup> 2020 by *The Ethiopian Herald*, *Sudan Tribune* and *Ahram online* will be examined.

Greater emphasis will be given on how the three media framed the filling of GERD. The paper also identify the similarities and differences among the media organizations in framing the issue and try to come up with the factors that influenced the media outlets to frame the filling of GERD in such a way.

Framing theory is employed as a theoretical framework. Employing framing theory to investigate the framing issue and it's effects among the readers would be the best framework for a research directed towards analyzing news stories making it the choice of this writer's theoretical framework. Since framing theory is inherently related to agenda setting theory, the research will also look into how the aforementioned theories correspond each other to influence the three medias in focus to frame the issue of first filling of GERD in such a manner. The origin of framing theory, types of framing theory, strength and critics of framing theory will also be included in the research.

The research will be qualitative. Content analysis of the news stories is the focus of the study. The qualitative research approach was used because this approach is more convenient and effective to study this content.

Maxwell, J A (2012) stated that qualitative research design has a flexible structure as the design can be constructed and reconstructed to a greater extent. Also, this research approach is flexible in terms of collecting, interpreting and analyzing data. The researcher has used a variety of techniques to gather data. The primary data for this research is collected from the three newspapers in focus and interviews has been conducted to strengthen the content because; the interview will enable the researcher to get information directly from the source. The secondary data are obtained from previously published materials such as books, senior essays, scholarly articles etc.

#### **1. 4. Objective of the Study**

The general objective of this research is to examine how the three media in focus have framed the first filling of GERD in their news stories during the period of June/July 2020.

##### **1.4.1. Specific Objectives**

1. To find out main frames of media outlets in reporting the first filling of the GERD
2. To understand the similarities and differences among the three media organizations in framing the first round impoundment of the GERD reservoir.
3. To examine the factors that might have affected in framing the first impoundment of the GERD in such a manner.

##### **1.4.2. Research Questions**

1. How did Ethiopian Herald, Sudan Tribune and Ahram online frame the filling of GERD in June/July 2020?
2. What were the similarities and differences among the media organizations in framing the issue?
3. What were the factors that influence the media outlets to frame the filling of GERD in such a way?

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

This study will provide significant insight on how the three media in question framed the first filling of the GERD. News framing has implicit and explicit implications and effects upon the readership thus analyzing the similarities and differences of media that stand in an opposing view on what could have been a binding issue will be of greater interest and document for reference. This study will have academic contribution for further and deeper researches. It would also help the Ethiopian Herald *Sudan Tribune* and Al Ahram newspapers to examine their editorial policies and formulate or revise their policies that would have strong impact on its readership. The research would also contribute for further news framing studies on the issue of GERD.

### **1.6. Delimitation/Scope of the study**

The study dealt with content analysis and comparative investigation of the main media in Ethiopia Sudan and Egypt. The Ethiopian Herald, *Sudan Tribune* and Al Ahram, which are English newspaper in the three countries, are selected for the study.

These media are selected because they are voices of their respective governments except *Sudan Tribune*. I have chosen *Sudan Tribune*, which is independent online newspaper due to its easily accessible nature. *Sudan Tribune* newspaper, which is owned by the government, doesn't have online publication. The researcher tried to contact and collect the hard copy of *Sudan Tribune* newspaper, which doesn't have online existence, and which is owned by the Sudanese government through the Embassy in Addis, but there was no positive response from the embassy compelling the writer to depend on the independent "*Sudan Tribune*" online newspaper. Since the two media's selected for Ethiopia and Egypt are government owned, having a privately owned media for the third party/ Sudan would give a different perspective and flavor to the research. It would also allow the researcher to examine how the independent newspaper frames the issue in focus. Regarding the sample time, a two-month data June 1<sup>st</sup> to July 31<sup>st</sup> 2020 will be collected and ten news stories from the three media has been studied and relevant news stories has been analyzed.

### **1.7. Organization of the Research Report**

This research report is composed of five chapters. The first chapter will give introduction/background of the study along with research questions, problem statement, significance, scope and

limitations of the study etc. The second chapter will be literature review. The third chapter will deal with methodology. The fourth chapter, which is the main part of the study, will critically and scientifically analyzes the news selected/gathered for the study. The fifth chapter concludes the study with conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1. CHAPTER REVIEW

This chapter discusses about the presentation of review of related literature that relates to the over view of the Nile, overview of the GERD, disagreement over The GERD, over view of colonial Era Agreements and The Filling Of GERD. Moreover, Framing Theory, Typology of news framing, Agenda setting theory and its relationship with framing and background of the three newspapers included in this chapter.

#### 2.2. Overview of the Nile (Abbay)

Nile is the longest river in the world, flowing 6825 km over 35 degrees attitude from 7South to North. The Nile waters system consists of numerous tributaries and headwater lakes. Lake Victoria in the equatorial region and Lake Tana in northwestern Ethiopia are the most significant natural reservoirs in the Nile upstream (Yacob, 2007:25).

The Nile gets its name from the Greek word ‘Nelios’, meaning River Valley. It flows through eleven nations of central, East and North Africa, comprising: the DCR (Democratic Congo Republic), Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, the Sudan, South Sudan and Egypt (Petros, 2010:7).

“The Nile valley is one of the oldest places in the world where its ancient inhabitants husbanded the water resources that engendered the valley a cradle of civilization, thereby creating ancient polities and empires” (Yacob, 2007:25). He further noted, “The famous pharaonic civilization of Egypt is inseparable from the great Nile waters. The ancient Sudanese state of Merowe and the Aksumite Empire of ancient Ethiopia were firmly rooted in the Eastern Nile Basin (Ibid).

The Blue Nile, which is called Abbay in Ethiopia, has other names such as

*“Takkaze found for example in the Geez Bible and the Miracles of Mary (Ta’ammera Maryam) The Blue Nile also known as Abbay in Ethiopia is identified with the biblical name of the river called Ghion. Gish Abay is the very popular place where the Blue Nile Commences, takes off with the local population surrounding it believing the source as a heart of the holy water” Christine, 2018: 28).*

The four major tributaries, the Abbay, Tekeze (Atbara) and Baro- Akobo (sobat) originates in the Ethiopian highlands. The Ethiopian headwaters provide 86 percent of the total Nile river water,

while the remaining 14 percent come through the White Nile system of the Equatorial Lakes area (Yacob, 2007:25).

### **2.3. Overview of the GERD**

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), formerly known as the Millennium Dam, is located in the Benishangul-Gumuz region of Ethiopia, on the Blue Nile River, about 40km east of Sudan. Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation (EEPCO) owns the project. Construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam started in April 2011 after the (\$4.7bn) engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contract was awarded to Salini Costruttori.

GERD is constructed for the purpose of generating electricity with total installed capacity of 15,559 GWh/yr. Up on completion; GERD will increase rural electrification supply by 90%. GERD is one of the most recent dam projects in the Nile Basin and one of the 33 Abbay basin water development projects that were identified in the 1958-64 Ethio-USBR study (Yakob, 2018).

The dam will create a reservoir with a width of 1,874 square km and 74 billion cubic meters. It will provide sailing transportation and fishing opportunity for the area. The project will also play significant role in increasing the capacity of the country's electricity generation and to implement energy export plan. Since the hydroelectric plant is free of carbon emission, GERD contributes to the protection of environment ecosystems. (Ethiopian Electric Power, 2019).

The country financed the Mega project through fund raising bond selling and contributions from Ethiopians including the diaspora community Abitew and Degu noted (2019) Ethiopia's commitment to build the dam by the money generated from its citizen's contribution came from Egypt's alleged persistent campaign and ability to block any assistance from international funding institution like International Monetary Fund and World Bank to maintain presumed hegemony on the Nile water share (ibid).

GERD will reduce pollution, mitigate climate change, create electric connectivity in local countries and bring about economic growth. The dam will benefit the lower riparian countries Sudan and Egypt. Sudan will be benefitted in receiving consistent flow of water in addition to



reduced risk of flood, deforestation and degradation etc. Egypt will also benefit in water conservation, flood protection, sustainable access to water and deforestation etc(Ethiopian Electric Power, 2019).

However, like many other mega hydroelectric projects, GERD has sparked a lot of controversy leading the international regional and local media to report extensively about the issue. In its endeavor to build the hydroelectric dam, Ethiopia, has experienced a lot of obstacle from time immemorial, Egypt being the main actor of the challenge. The following subtopic will discuss issues related to the controversy over the Dam.

#### **2.4. Disagreement over the GERD**

Since Ethiopia commenced and announced construction of the GERD in 2011, the country has faced a lot of opposition leading to long and arduous controversy from the lower riparian countries, Sudan and Egypt with a louder resistance from Egypt. The critical argument coming from Egypt is supported with colonial era agreements, which, are not inclusive of all the Nile basin countries' interests and rights.

For the past two hundred years, numerous interested parties, the majority of whom were representatives of colonial powers, negotiated among themselves about the rights and ownership of the Nile. Since all previous negotiations and the agreements that arose out of them, were biased in favor of downstream interests, such agreements have resulted in varying degrees of tension and hostility and in unsustainable assumptions about the use and management of the shared waters of the Nile (Nebiyu, 2013).

As indicated by Yacob, (2011), current controversies about the use and management of the Nile all originate in colonial and neocolonial assertions about the alleged geopolitical interests of the parties concerned. All of these players strive to control the Nile waters from the downstream vantage point and to perpetuate the alienation of the upstream nations from their legitimate national rights and interests.

He further noted that there is no trans boundary river in the world except Blue Nile where the lower riparian countries utilizes majority of the water disregarding the demand and right of the upper riparian countries.

*There are over 240 cross Boundary Rivers in the world and in most cases upper and lower riparian countries utilize the water in a comprehensive manner with the exception of some powerful upper riparian countries consume maximum share. For instance, he pointed the originator of Tigris and Euphrates rivers, Turkey takes the lion's like in water usage while the " US, origin of Colorado and Rio Grande rivers exploit the two rivers to the maximum level" with out denying Mexico the remaining portion of the water. (The Ethiopian Herald (2020)*

“When it comes to cooperation utilization of cross boundary water resources, there are a lot of countries working hand in gloves for mutual benefit leaving their political differences aside. For instance, India and Pakistan works in cooperation in using the Indus River mutually setting aside their differences. Danube River is used in cooperation by thirteen European countries and Rhine River is developed and utilized by eight countries in the same continent.” (ibid)

*In the case of Western and Southern Africa, Senegal River is being developed and utilized by three countries, namely Senegal, Mali and Mauritania based on a tripartite agreement. In a similar fashion, some 10 West African countries jointly make use of the Niger River with a multilateral agreement signed among them. In those cases, countries who utilize rivers through mutual understanding and cooperation usually set aside differences to focus on mutual benefits (The Ethiopian Herald (2020)*

Ethiopia's argument is always that the country is excluded from using its natural resources. Ethiopia further argues, Sudan and Egypt should shift from the old and unfair water share and water monopoly to cooperation and mutual benefit. The main reason for disagreement and controversy over the Nile River especially the Blue Nile part is the colonial Era agreements signed by the then colonial powers and their colonies namely Sudan and Egypt. The following subtopic will give an overview of the colonial era agreements.

## **2.5. Overview of colonial Era Agreements**

The following excerpts from historical evidences as noted by (Yakob, 2011) lists the colonial era agreements.

### **2.5.1. The 1891 Anglo-Italian Protocol**

In terms of the 1891 Anglo-Italian Protocol, Great Britain and Italy demarcated their 'respective spheres of influence in North-Eastern Africa'. This agreement allowed United Kingdom to maintain control over the headwaters of the Tekeze (Atbara) River.

### **2.5.2. The 1906 Tripartite agreement between Great Britain, France and Italy**

In a secret tripartite agreement between Great Britain, France and Italy in 1906, the latter two countries completely ceded all Nile basin interests to the British. The agreement was between King Leopold II of Belgium and Great Britain. The colonial ruler of Congo, King Leopold II of Belgium, formerly agreed with the British that he would not attempt to construct any structures (such as dams or other irrigation facilities) on the Semliki and Isango rivers. These inter-colonial agreements and protocols gave Great Britain a controlling influence over the Nile waters.

In spite of the fact that the Ethiopians resisted these claims and the Egyptians made it clear that they were inimical to British rule, a succession of United Kingdom governments continued to play a dominating role in the Nile basin during the first half of the 20th century.

### **2.5.3. The Anglo-Egyptian Agreement of 1929**

After the formal independence of Egypt had been recognized by the United Kingdom in 1922, the High Commissioner of Great Britain in Cairo, in an Exchange of Note with the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Egypt recognized the ‘historical and natural rights’ of Egypt over the Nile waters. None of the upstream riparian nations was even mentioned or considered in this assertion of presumptive ‘rights’. Not even Ethiopia – at that time, long independent of foreign rule – was consulted or briefed in this comprehensive assumption of rights between Britain and Egypt. Since all the other countries that should rightly have been consulted about this far reaching agreement were still under colonial rule, they were given no say whatsoever over the water resources that the Nile conferred on them because of their proximity to its waters.

### **2.5.4. The Egyptian-Sudanese Agreement of 1959**

The negotiation process that culminated in the 1959 Agreement for the Full Utilization of the Nile Waters was stimulated in the 1940s when the Sudanese rejected the 1929 Anglo- Egyptian agreement that allowed the Sudan to use only what was ‘left over’ once Egypt’s needs had been fully satisfied. Various Sudanese politicians persisted in demanding a modification of the 1929 Agreement, which was widely perceived by the Sudanese as being too restrictive of the Sudan’s obvious claims to fair usage of the water of the Nile. According to this agreement, only Egypt and Sudan were legally recognized for the use and ownership of the Nile waters. In terms of the agreement Egypt would be allocated a lion’s share of the available 55.5 bcm of the water while Sudan was to be allocated 18.5 bcm (Yakob, 2011:2-3).

As clearly drafted by the colonial powers all the agreements proposed and implemented were merely a replica of each other in terms of lacking cooperation and inclusiveness of all the Nile basin countries. The remaining riparian countries including Ethiopia did not accept all the colonial era agreements.

*“The upper riparian states had a good cause to object the agreement’s validity. No single upper riparian country was a signatory to the agreement and none was consulted in the negotiation leading up to the agreement. As per article 34 of the VCLT, “a treaty does not create obligation or right for a third party without its consent”. Ethiopia could also avail itself of this argument to repudiate the 1959 agreement, since it was an independent state not represented by Great Britain in negotiations ” (Nebiyu, 2013).*

Following the 1959 agreement, the Ethiopian government, Emperor Haile Selassie submitted a letter explaining Ethiopia’s legitimate rights and interests as noted below.

*“... Just as in the case of other natural resources on its territories, Ethiopia has the right and obligations to exploit the water resources of the empire [Ethiopia] ...for the benefit of the present and future generations of its citizens ... in anticipation of the growth in population and its expanding needs. The Imperial Ethiopian Government ... reasserts and reserves now and for the future, the right to take all such measures in respect of its water resources ... namely those waters providing so nearly the entirety of the volume of the Nile...” (Ibid).*

Until recently and Ethiopia’s historic move of building the GERD, Nile status quo has been so biased to the point of ignoring the development need of the other riparian states and condemning them to be onlookers while Egypt and the Sudan have almost the entire water flow of the Nile to themselves. ”Additionally, and to make matters worse the two riparian countries kept on introducing new mega-irrigation projects and do not permit other states to do the same. The upper stream countries desperately need water to undertake development projects and to feed their fast growing populations” (Siabonga, 2013).

Accordingly, the agreements that bestowed Egypt absolute rights to the Nile ownership knowing that the country contributes nothing to the river has been claimed to be unfair by the upper riparian countries and later sparked a lot of disagreement and challenge leading to necessity to formulate new and cooperative Framework and construction of mega hydroelectric projects on the river like the GERD.

## 2.6. New Agreements and Pending Negotiations

After Ethiopia announced commencement of construction the GERD the country has elevated herself from silent partner in the negotiation forum to active and influential Stakeholder. Ethiopia's active involvement didn't come at any cost. Egypt was conscious of the disagreements and oppositions of Ethiopia and the upper riparian countries. Knowing the colonial agreements are turning obsolete and unacceptable by the other riparian countries, Egypt has tried to manipulate future negotiations in favor of her using various methods such as establishment of initiatives as "Hydromet in 1967, Undugu in 1983, and Tecconile in 1992. The purposes of these initiatives were to increase water supply for Egypt, to create divisions and animosity among upstream countries, and to isolate key upstream countries such as Ethiopia in particular" (Yakob, 2011: 4).

However, none of the negotiations bear fruit and bring a positive cooperative framework that is agreed upon by every one of the riparian countries. The best Initiative, which has been given greater value and acceptance by the majority of the Nile basin countries, is the Nile Basin Initiative that was established in 1999. Nebiyu, (2013) explains.

Before mentioning details regarding formation of the NBI and the Cooperative Frame of Agreement CFA designed by NBI, I will discuss about the agreement reached/signed between Addis and Cairo that has been hailed by politicians in Ethiopia and Egypt as the first bilateral framework of cooperation after the colonial period. The late Ethiopian prime minister Meles Zenawi, and former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak signed the 1993 Framework for General Cooperation.

The framework highlights future negotiations between the two countries concerning the utilization of the waters of the Nile, would be based on the rules and principles of international law.

The 1993 frame of cooperation signed between Ethiopia and Egypt was hailed for providing a forum for future negotiations, but criticized as bringing competition rather than cooperation as "it failed to provide detailed rules. The fact that the "no harm" principle was part of the agreement, it is argued that it was not the only principle on which water divisions would be based since the rules and principles of international law are excluded" (Ibid).

Coming back to Nile Basin Initiative, it was established on 22 February 1999 in Dare Salaam, Tanzania and the Office for the NBI Secretariat was opened in Entebbe, Uganda.

*“The goal of the NBI is to achieve sustainable socio-economic development through the equitable utilization of, and benefit from, the common Nile Basin water resources. The cooperation in the Nile Basin includes two parallel processes: a) the NBI, which is a transitional institutional mechanism; and b) the negotiations for a new legal and institutional Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) that, once concluded, will provide a permanent status to the Cooperative Institution” (Ibid).*

Under the NBI Panel of Experts (PoE) and Joint National Committees (JNC) took ten years to formulate a draft cooperative framework agreement (CFA) in 2007.

*“Article 4.1 of the CFA states that “the Nile basin states shall in their respective territories utilize the water resources of the Nile water system and basin in an equitable and reasonable manner.” While, Article 5(1) asserts “Nile Basin States shall in utilizing Nile River System water resources in their territories take all appropriate measures to prevent the causing of significant harm to other riparian nations” (Ibid).*

The CFA has been exemplary in flickering hope for future meetings discussions and negotiations regarding equitable water sharing and basin wide cooperation amongst the riparian states, however, disagreement between up and downstream countries occurred due to the inclusion of one sub Article 14b, that deals on ‘water security’. The downstream countries insisted on change on the phrase “not to cause significant harm to the water security of any other Nile basin countries” They proposed the change to be “not to adversely affect the water security of current users and the rights of any other Nile basin countries” (Ibid).

The CFA is signed by six out of ten Nile Basin Initiative states. The signatories are Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya and Burundi. Even though, six upstream states, which is more than 2/3rd, signed the CFA a deadlock is created due to the above-mentioned disagreements by the lower riparian states. The new agreement and negotiation is then still pending which is also another reason for the continuation of the controversy during the filling of the GERD.

## 2.7. The Filling of GERD

After Ethiopia has indicated its plan of filling the dam during the rainy season June/July 2020 there was strong objection from Sudan and Egypt arguing that agreement should be reached regarding procedure, and timetable for the filling before the GERD start its first phase of reserving water.

Ethiopia remained the door for discussion open but stressed on the importance of filling the dam irrespective of bilateral or trilateral agreement, with the lower riparian countries arguing that “unreasonably delaying of filling the dam will bring tremendous damage such as large economic and social costs” (Alemtsehai, 2020).

The country stressed on its commitment to fill and operate the GERD using Ethiopia’s right of using its equitable share of the Nile water. However, Sudan and Egypt strongly opposed the Ethiopia’s firm stance in filling the dam during the rainy season of June/July 2020 stating that doing so before an agreement is reached may cause lower flow of water leading to significant harm to their respective states.

Accordingly, a round of meetings and negotiations has been conducted between the three countries in person and virtually /due to Covid19/ sometimes including with the involvement of mediators from other states and organizations such as African Union, World Bank, South Africa, and USA etc.

As the negotiations and disagreements as well as the media coverage was on progress, Ethiopia announced the completion of the first filling of the dam on 22<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and claimed that the dam was filled without causing any harm as feared by lower riparian countries. In his congratulatory address to the world Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmad stated,

*I guess that the world would now better understand the fact that our Dam is a turning point in our effort of taking the next height and can stand upright. Now, we behold, achieved the filling of the Dam per our schedule without soliciting finance from nobody and without harming any party. We are just two-and-half months away from the end of the major rainy season; the precipitation is still increasing than ever. And here, God helped us that the water overtops the Dam well ahead of the schedule. (The Ethiopian Herald, 2020)*

Ethiopia's announcement and successful first round filling of the dam was rejected by Sudan and Egypt their argument being a binding agreement should have been reached between the three lower riparian countries before Ethiopia impounded the reservoir.

The Sudanese irrigation minister Yasser Abbas remarked, "The Ethiopian action is a worrying and harmful precedent in the path of cooperation between the concerned parties. Ethiopia's unilateral measure is unacceptable and has caused multiple negative impacts on Sudan." (*Ahram online*, 2020)

Egyptian president Abdel Fattah El-Sisi also provided a statement opposing Ethiopia's action of filling the dam without reaching a comprehensive legal agreement. El-Sisi stressed, "The importance of forging a comprehensive legal agreement between all parties concerning the rules for filling and operating the dam, and rejecting unilateral measures that would inflict harm upon Egypt's rights to the water of the Nile." (*Ahram online*, 2020)

Ethiopia's commitment of filling the dam in contrast with Sudan and Egypt's serious objections has been extensively reported and differently framed in the respective media news stories as well. Chapter four of this thesis will give content analysis of how *The Ethiopian Herald*, *Ahram Online* and Sudan Tribune framed the issue in detail.

In the diplomatic forum the country, Ethiopia claims to have done a remarkable job in initiating and establishing the national Basin Institute NBI and creating a favorable condition for dialogue cooperation and understanding among one another in the upper riparian countries. Sudan was key participant in the NBI until there was change in government in the country in April 2019. Negotiations on the issue of GERD and the filling of the dam are still on progress. Ethiopia asserts that the Dam is important to bring development in the country, alleviate poverty and provide electricity to majority of the population who are still in darkness. Egypt in the other side expresses her fear that the GERD and filling the reservoir would cause significant harm posing threat to the water supply of the country. While the tension is on the rise Ethiopia has completed the first round filling of the dam and with out causing any harm to the lower riparian countries. The disagreement is still in the air and Ethiopia is reiterating that the best way forward is cooperation and mutual understanding and a win- win situation. The three countries are using their media's to express their sides of story regarding the issue of the impounding of the GERD



reservoir in their respective media outlets. This thesis will examine the news stories of the media outlets in a comparative frame analysis.

## **2.8. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.8.1. Framing Theory**

Framing is a concept that can easily be understood when it's present in a text meaning, news stories articles and other publications that purposefully relay a message with a targeted influence in the minds of the readership or the audience.

Framing doesn't have a single definition that's agreed upon and used by most scholars like other concepts in the field of social sciences (Entman, 1993) referred framing as a fractured paradigm.

However many scholars have given their own definition regarding the concept of framing. Tankard, Silberman, Bliss et al(1991) defined a media frame as "the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration (p3)."

Gitlin (1980) stated that somehow shares the ideas of the above mentioned scholar's views as he stated that persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, as well as emphasis and exclusion, are present persistently by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse.

Gamson and Modigliani (1987) on their part elaborated on the concept and came up with a definition of framing as they defined framing as images, phrases and presentation styles that a speaker like media outlets, politicians and other concerned parties uses when relaying information about an issue or event to an audience.

Bateson (1972) stated that, a frame specifies the relationship between several connected elements in a text. A text can be a news story or an article and specifying this relationship can lead to a better understanding of the issue or topic that is covered in the text. Thus, he elaborated that any message contains two elements: first, the specific content and second, the frame that shows how the message as a whole should be interpreted.

Entman himself, who doubted the presence of concrete definition for framing, has defined it as the process of deliberately choosing certain aspects of reality and then laying more stress on

them. This defines the problem, identifies its causes, proposes moral judgments and also suggests suitable solutions.

Within the many definitions of framing we can deduct that framing has two contributions namely theoretical and empirical (Sophie and Claes, 2019). Conceptually news frame can be defined as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events weaving a connection among them.”

So framing can be simply summarized as a method by which a message is transferred with a purpose of influencing people into understanding a text according to the context of the sender of the message.

When it comes to the pioneer in formulating the study of framing, most scholars agree that, Goffman is the first scholar to formulate the study of framing as a mass communication theory. But as cited in Muez (2012) “it was Tuchman (1978) and Gitlin (1980) that introduced the notion of frames in the area of communication research. Whereas, Saqib traced back the beginning of the framing theory some 50 years into Walter Lippmann’s publication.”

Goffman (1974) stated that people frame their experiences and organize them to make better understanding of the world around them. He explained, Framing experiences are similar to framing a picture. The frame excludes certain things and directs the eyes to focus on particular object. Human use frames to direct themselves to what to focus on, what to link with each other, and how to react based on current perception and previous experience.

Goffman, further stated that people tend to understand the issues taking place around the world on the basis of their own “primary framework” (1974:21). Like a frame that can give a picture a greater sense of structure and meaning, the primary framework can be “seen as rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful.”

### **2.8.2. Equivalency frames and emphasis frame**

Another important point to be discussed regarding framing is a fundamental distinction between studies employing equivalency frames and those employing emphasis frames (Chong & Druckman, 2007). “Equivalency frame refers to logically similar content that is presented or

phrased differently. Emphasis frames are closer to “real” journalistic news coverage and present “qualitatively different yet potentially relevant considerations” (Ibid).

The concept of equivalency stems from the series of Asian disease studies, which demonstrated their prospect theory. Simple question wording differences that reverse information are not easily compatible with more complex politics and communicative situations (Sophie and Claes, 2019).

As noted by Bart Schutz (2013:2) “Emphasis framing is a persuasion technique where focus is placed on those specific aspects of a solution that encourage certain interpretations of the meaningful context, and discourage certain others. This way the meaningful context in which the choice at hand will be evaluated is influenced.”

## **2.9. Typology of news framing**

### **2.9.1. Issue specific and generic frames**

According to (Claes, 2005), newsmakers may employ various kinds of frames in their coverage of an issue; scholars agree that this abundance in choice in how to tell and construct stories can be captured in analyses as certain distinctive characteristics. In order to synthesize previous research and the different types of news frames that have been suggested, a more general typology or distinction with reference to the nature and content of the frame is suggested.

When it comes to typology and distinction De Vreese (2005) suggested a general distinction with reference to the nature and content of news frame. As he elaborated certain frames are pertinent to specific issues or events, which then can be labeled as issue specific frames. He stated that the other frames that are Generic frames transcend thematic limitations and can be identified in relation to different topics, some over time and in different cultural contexts (Ibid).

As issue specific approach allows a high level of specificity and detail relevant to the event or issue under investigation. Sophie and Claes (2019) highlighted this advantage, however, is potentially an inherent disadvantage as well. “A high degree of issue sensitivity makes analysis that draw on issue-specific frames difficult to generalize, compare, and use as empirical evidence for theory building” Sophie and Claes (2019: 4).

*“The absence of comparability has led researchers to ‘too easily finding evidence for what they are looking for’ and to contribute to ‘one of the most frustrating tendencies in the study of frames and framing [being] the tendency for scholars to generate a unique set of frames for every study’ (Hertog& McLeod, 2001).”*

Generic frames which are chosen to have better applicability due to their quality of transcending thematic limitations and identification in relation to different topics, some over time and in different cultural contexts (ibid).

### **2.9.2. Types of Generic News Framings**

As scholars in the field of framing pointed out, some of the most common generic frames are conflict frame, human interest frame, attribution or responsibility frame, morality frame, economic consequences frame, the game frame, strategy frame, episodic frame and thematic frame.

However, (Entman, 1991) identifies five popular ways for framing news stories:

1. Conflict – conflict between parties can be editorialized, as opposed to the actual decision made.
2. Human Interest/ Personalization – presenting a story with human face, personality is promoted over more important aspects.
3. Consequence – consequences can be wide ranging. Pursuing a policy may be unwise in terms of unity within a party or coalition or in terms of the status of a nation globally.
4. Morality – media coverage can often moralize, sometimes due to the indiscretions of political actors; or alternative, policies can be seen as morally questionable. E.g Michael Moore’s editorializing of the US Patriot Act, worldwide critique of US foreign policy all takes a moral tone.
5. Responsibility – attributing responsibility, either for a cause or a solution. In the wake of Asian Tsunami, one frame was “global responsibility” for finding solution as well as blaming the lack of preparedness on the local governments.

### **2.9.3. Inductive and Deductive approaches of news framing**

There are two approaches of news framing namely inductive approach and deductive approach. Scholars have argued in favor of applying inductive or deductive approach in content analyses. In inductive approach themes emerge from the data, while deductive implies a pre-existing theory or framework. Therefore, qualitative data analysis tends to be inductive, where the researcher identifies categories in the data, without predefined hypotheses. (Laurence, Kohn, Wendy et al.,2018) In the other hand As stated by Sophie and Claes (2019 :4) :“*An inductive approach produces rich knowledge about the framing of the issue at hand, but makes it hard to*

*extrapolate and replicate the findings. A second approach is deductive in nature and investigates frames that are defined operationalized prior to the investigation.”*

## **2.10. Identifying frames in the news**

Scholars like Tankard within the empirical approach to measuring frames agree that frames are specific textual and visual elements or ‘framing devices’. These elements are essentially different from the remaining news story, which may be considered core news facts. Price et al. (1997, p. 488) operationalized a frame by varying ‘introductory and concluding paragraphs to establish a unique journalistic frame’ with information exclusive to the frame while the other paragraphs in the news articles were kept identical. In the same vein, Neuman et al. (1992:126) in their content analysis divided news articles in to sections containing ‘frames’ and sections containing ‘facts’. The distinction between core elements and frame-carrying elements has effectively been applied in the operationalization of news frames in most studies of framing effects (e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Iyengar, 1991, Price et al., 1997; Valentino et al., 2001; de Vreese, 2004).

As depicted in most framing studies and pointed out by (Tankard, 2001) there are 11 framing mechanism or focal points for identifying and measuring news frames: Headlines, Subheads, Photos, Photo captions, Leads, Source selection, Quotes selection, Pull quotes, Logos, Statistics and charts, and, Concluding statements and paragraphs. In support of this Eldridge highlighted, “The more authoritative the source, the higher the credibility, and authoritativeness is often associated with those who hold high positions.” (Eldridge, 1993)

Entman (1993:52) further suggested that frames in the news could also be examined and identified by ‘the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments.’

Gamson and Modigliani (1987) As cited on Sophie and Claes (2019) identified five ‘framing devices’ that condense information and offer a media package of an issue and listed metaphors, exemplars, catch-phrases, depictions, and visual image.

### **2.11. Criteria a Frame Must Meet**

Capella & Jamieson (1997) as cited on (Sophie and Claes, 2019, p. 4) argues the frame identified in a study would merely be a figment of the researcher's imagination unless there is some parameters set to identify the presence of framing. Accordingly, "they suggest that

1. News frame must have identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristic.
2. News frame must be possible to distinguish the frame reliably from other frames.
3. News frame must have representational validity, which means be recognized by others."

### **2.12. News framing effects**

News framing are employed for no reason other than creating effects on the readership/audience. Nelson, Oxley and Clawson came up with strong practical evidence to show the impact of news framing (Nelson, Oxley and Clawson, 1997).

In a local news story about the Ku Klux Klan /KKK/, the researchers exposed audiences to two pieces of news stories that has been framed differently to assess the effects of news framing. Accordingly, one group of respondent was exposed to a news story that framed a planned KKK rally as a free speech issue. The other respondents were given the news story that framed the rally as a disruption of public order (Sophie and Claes,2019).

Those reading the free speech issue frame exhibited more tolerance for the KKK than those reading the public order disruption frame. The researchers asserted that a different frame in a news story could lead to significant and meaningful differences in how recipients think about even controversial issues like the Klan (ibid).

The above study asserts how news framing is effective upon the people in processing understanding and perception of issues as relayed by the government or any party with vested interest on the message through the media. Entman (1993:417) highlights on the interrelatedness between framing, manipulating people's attitude and the influence behind the whole framing business as the central process by which government officials and journalists exercise political influence over each other and over the public.

### **2.13. Agenda setting theory and its relationship with framing**

The theory of agenda setting describes the "ability of the news media to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda" (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002). As stated by Maxwell, "The

concept of agenda setting is an assertion that the audience learns what issues are important from the priorities of news media and incorporate a similar set weight in their own personal agendas (Maxwell, 1991:2).

He further elaborated “agenda setting is a relational concept specifying a positive connection between the emphasis of the news media and the perceived importance of these topics to the news audience”

McCombs (1992, p:8-9) further explained, “Agenda-setting is about more than issue or object salience. The news not only tells us what to think about: it also tells us how to think about it. Both the selection of topics for the news agenda and the selection of frames.”

Thus agenda setting provides the readership on how and which topics to give greater importance among the news stories prescribing salience of certain topics over the others, while framing manipulates the salience towards becoming prominent, noticeable and loud so that greater focus is given to a certain issue in the news over the other.

As cited in (Olubela, 2018), In relation to the theory of agenda setting, framing theory refers to the media’s ability to direct attention to certain things and influence how the public interprets these situations (Scheufele, 1999). The media deliver information in frames. Frames are heuristics way the public process information. Hansen and Nicolini (2017) defines frames as “a central focus placed on a specific aspect of a message that helps consumers make meaning and construct their social reality in relation to a particular topic of media coverage” (p: 2).

After a media has already set its agenda, the frames with in the agenda will be presented to the public, (Olubela, 2018:12) argued, “the public then uses these frames to create ideas about new information or to reinforce pre- conceived ideas. Any new information is perceived and manipulated within the frames of the public’s already existing beliefs and the media’s frame.”

So agenda setting is a stepping-stone to manipulate the readership/audience to focus on certain messages on the selected news, which is framing. Although this research is focused on news framing discussing some features of agenda setting and its similarities with framing theory would serve the purpose of clarity on the relatedness on the mentioned theories. Even though there are similarities between the two theories, there obviously are some differences pointed out by scholars.

Accordingly, Weaver (2007) compares agenda-setting and framing theories on the basis of their similarities and differences. He noted, the first similarity is “the focus of both theories lies with how various issues and topics are presented by the media. They do not consider ‘which’ are given more or less representation. Secondly, the theories deal with the most important aspects of an issue and finally, both the theories emphasize on ways of thinking, not considering the objects of thinking.”

Weaver extracted that the difference as “while agenda-setting only deals with the salience of an object’s attributes, framing takes into account a broader range of cognitive processes.” He noted, “It goes a step further in establishing the problem, making moral judgments, and even suggesting probable solutions” (ibid).

#### 2.14. Brief history of The Ethiopian Herald



Ethiopian Press Agency, established in 1940, is a public media enterprise operating in Ethiopia. It is the sole publisher of the only daily Amharic language newspaper known as “Addis Zemen.” The enterprise also publishes “The Ethiopian Herald”, a daily newspaper except on Mondays in English language. Among its tabloids are the weeklies: “Berissa”- in the local Affan Oromo; and “Al-Alem”- in the international Arabic languages. The agency has yet another by-monthly magazine, known as “Zemen” in Amharic. With a current staff of more than 300, the Ethiopian Press Agency runs its own business affairs through own-generated incomes



## 2.15. Brief History of Sudan Tribune



*Sudan Tribune* is a non-profit website based in Paris that was started in 2003. As described in the about us section of the online media the goal of the media is to promote plural information, democratic and free debate on Sudan. In 2011 *Sudan Tribune* started an Arabic version of the site. [www.sudantribune.net](http://www.sudantribune.net).

The online Newspaper has clearly identified it self as having no relationship to the newspaper *Sudan Tribune*, a low circulation daily distributed in Khartoum and Juba. *Sudan Tribune* is run by a team of independent Sudanese and international journalists and editors.

## 2.16. Brief History of Ahram Online

# ahramonline

*Ahram Online* is the English-language news web site published by Al-Ahram Establishment, Egypt's largest news organization, and the publisher of the Middle East's oldest newspaper. The daily Al Ahram widely considered as an influential writing style was founded in 1875 and is mainly owned by the Egyptian government. The newspaper is criticized to work under close surveillance and censorship from government.

Ahram Online, which is owned and administered by Al Ahram, was launched 26 November 2010. Hani Shkralah founded the online newspaper and the current chief editor is Ezzat Ibrahim.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. CHAPTER REVIEW**

Chapter three deals with the main topics to be discussed in the method part of the study. In this part, research design, research approach, subjects of the study, sampling technique, data sources, data collection tools and procedures as well as methods of data analysis and ethical consideration for the study will be discussed.

#### **3.2. Research Design**

The main purpose of this study is to examine how media outlets in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt frame stories of GERD during the first round its filling. To carry out such study, the research has found that case study is the best research design. Case study research design is used because the research will be focusing on analyzing news stories as written by three media outlets from the above-mentioned countries. It is also my argument that case study is the most suitable design to study specific cases in a certain period of time. Since the study research questions included questions related to why and how which is easily answered by case study. In support of this idea, Wimmer & Dominick (2000) articulated that “case study is most appropriate for questions that begin with why and how in the research questions”. They also reiterated that case study becomes pertinent for such kinds of study as it is going to deal with what constitute the study. “A case is an individual or several individuals or an event or several events. If information is gathered about each relevant individual, the results are reported in a single or multiple case study format” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000, p. 126)

Case study is also appropriate and common mechanism in investigating issues using qualitative method and content analysis, which this study is focused on. Accordingly, the case of the first round filling of GERD in the three countries media outlets would be the main focus of the study. Scholars have highlighted on the importance and appropriateness of using case study when studying specific cases as projected in the research question. According to Stake (2005) case studies are common way to do qualitative inquiry in to a study directed towards analyzing a

social phenomenon or event. In case of studying and bringing understanding to a content analysis of news framing in media outlets, case study is the best tool to be employed.

Case study is further conceptualized as a method by which individual events and or phenomenon are being observed closely to answer a problem and provide sufficient explanation to an issue that has not been studied from the researcher's perspective yet. Case study is more human in handling its subjects other than other methods. (Ibid)

In a similar vein Yin (2003a, p.2) stated, "The distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena because the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events,"

Thus case study will be productive given all the advantages of employing the technique to research a particular case in a given period of time through the qualitative content analysis method. Accordingly, the case of the first round filling of GERD in the three countries media outlets would be the main focus of the study.

### **3.3. Research Approach**

The research approach employed for this thesis is qualitative research content analysis to examine how the three Nile riparian countries, Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt framed the first round of filling the GERD in 2020 in their media. Qualitative research method is utilized because this method is the most appropriate and ideal for the study of content analysis. This study is also purely exploratory in nature. that goes in congruent with the type of study as well as the research questions. It also helps the researcher to discover events thoroughly. Wimmer & Dominick (2000, p.106) noted that using qualitative analysis allows the researcher to use inductive approach to try to find commonalities or general themes. The exploratory nature of the study has provided the research to come up with new framing concept during the data analysis process. Avoiding the conventional way of utilizing a prior defined frame, the research has explored new frames.

In support of this idea, (Campbell, 2014 p 1.) argues, that, the exploration and discovery of data via a qualitative research method often indicates that there is not much written about the participants or the topic of study. Some of the characteristics of qualitative research include

taking place in a natural setting, using multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic, emerging data rather than prefigured data, and being fundamentally interpretive.

Furthermore qualitative research is all about observing studying and analyzing a given phenomena or subject to reflect on understanding of the social world. For instance, Hammersley and Campbell (2012 p 15 ) defined qualitative research as:

A form of social inquiry that tends to adopt a flexible and data-driven research design to use relatively unstructured data, to emphasize the essential role of subjectivity in the research process, to study a small number of naturally occurring cases in detail, and to use verbal rather than statistical form of analysis.

Kelle, Prein and Bird (1995) explained “qualitative methods are valuable when we wish not to count or measure phenomena but to understand the character of experience, particularly how people perceive and make sense of their communication experience. This involves interpreting meanings and other unobservable dimensions of communication”.

Scholars have identified five strategies within the qualitative research method. Which are ethnographies, grounded theory, phenomenological research narrative research and case studies (Campbell, 2014 )

The preference of implementing case study for this research has shown that the study has focused on one of the most important strategies to conduct a research in qualitative method.

As listed by scholars in the field, qualitative research works have a number of manifestations, which would allow the researcher to have a variety of choice to conduct the study in that specific method. Qualitative method, however, has its own advantages and disadvantages as compared to the quantitative method, which relies on numerical and structured way of data collection. Some of the notable advantage of qualitative data is having flexibility for data collection, analysis and process, which would allow the researcher to adopt new ideas that is not drawn before the study is conducted. Collection of data in natural setting that occurs in real world context is another advantage of the method. The method further provides meaningful insights, feelings and comprehensions of an issue with detailed descriptions of the study in focus. Through open-ended responses, the researcher can also uncover novel problems or opportunities that wouldn't have

occurred otherwise. Disadvantages pinpointed by scholars about qualitative research method are unreliability, subjectivity, limited generalizability and labor intensiveness. (ibid)

Considering the pros and cons of qualitative method this research has been careful in examining the issue of the first round filling of GERD thoroughly. The research also gave greater attention to study the inclination and/or preferences of the news outlets in framing their news stories by analyzing the content through the eyes of the research questions. Accordingly, all the research questions are answered and the research objective is met. When necessary secondary data such as studies conducted by other researchers about the issue will be included. The interviews obtained from key informants would serve as an additional substance to be added to provide the thesis with strong and sound argument.

### **3.4. Subjects of the study**

The subjects of the study are media outlets of Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt. The countries are selected because the epicenter of the current Nile hydroponics is now circulating around these three countries. Ethiopia contributes over 86 percent of the Blue Nile and the two lower riparian countries are highly dependent on the water originated in the Ethiopian highlands. Sudan and Egypt have used the water flowing uninterruptedly for centuries and the building of the GERD and the move to fill the reservoir would in many ways concern the two countries as well. Thus Ethiopia Sudan and Egypt are the main actors in geopolitical discourse in which the study period is focused on. *The Ethiopian Herald, Sudan Tribune and Ahram online* are specifically the media outlets to be studied in this research. These media outlets are chosen for various reasons. *The Ethiopian Herald and Ahram online* are government organs of their respective countries. The Ethiopian Herald, which is a daily print newspaper and which has also a digital presence, and *Ahram online*, which is also a daily online newspaper are both influential foreign language media outlets targeting international readerships/audiences including organizations with strong impacts in the regional, continental and global socio political forum. As a result, these two media outlets extensively report about the GERD within the framework of the interests in their respective countries.

Studying the two media will provide the thesis with all the necessary substances as the media outlets have crucial role in reporting the hydro political discourse of the region. *Sudan Tribune* in contrast is a privately owned independent online newspaper, which has its own value judgment

and significance when it comes to reporting the issue of GERD. Including *Sudan Tribune* is believed to make the research comprehensive in that it would give all-inclusive picture of the issue in question. Analyzing two government owned media outlets and having a private media outlet, as a third option would provide wider and balanced perspective interpretation and substance to the study. It would also bring light as to how much private and government organs are reporting in convergence and/or divergence when it comes to issues that have a direct impact on national interests of the respective states.

### **3.5. Sampling Period and Sampling Size**

Under this section the research will discuss types and numbers of the news outlets studied along with the time period selected and the sizes of the news story analyzed in the research paper.

Types of newspaper: *The Ethiopian Herald* a print newspaper, *Sudan Tribune online* newspaper and *Ahram online* which is also online newspaper are the types of newspaper selected for this study. The three newspapers are chosen to investigate how they voice of their respective countries' interests during the first filling of the GERD. Furthermore, studying the selected media will provide the thesis with all the necessary substances as the media outlets have crucial role in reporting the hydro political discourse of the region.

Three newspapers The Ethiopian Herald, Sudan Tribune and *Ahram Online* are selected for the study.

A period of June 1st to July 31st 2020 is chosen for this study. This period was purposefully chosen because the core of disagreement between the three countries arises from Ethiopia's announcement of filling the dam during the rainy season in the year 2020 of June/July. Examining the news framing during this period would sufficiently answer the research questions and enable the study to have enough material to be analyzed.

Size of the news story: The researcher has chosen 10 news stories from each media outlet for the qualitative content analysis in the study. The Ethiopian Herald has published 89 news stories during the study period a little exceeded in number by *Ahram Online* with 92 news stories published. *Sudan Tribune*, which is an independent online newspaper, has published only 26 news stories. The researcher has made deeper studies on 10 news stories from each media outlet and analyzed the relevant news storie. The researcher has been careful in selecting the news stories for analysis and preferred unnecessary redundancy to be avoided. Thus out of the ten

news stories selected for *Sudan Tribune* seven of them has been quoted in the analysis section and the remaining three has been omitted for the purpose of avoiding redundancy. The time frame June/July and the limited number of news stories from each media outlet were selected for analysis after realizing that enlarging the time frame and working on more news stories would bring the paper out of proportion and lead to unnecessary enlargement of the study. The selected ten news stories are observed to be good enough and sufficient samples to clearly depict the general picture of framing tendencies/choices of the media outlets in the studied period of time. Additionally the news stories written in the specified time and the selected samples couldn't produce novel frames or ideas except repeating themselves in a uniform identical manner. Thus the study has to be limited in analyzing the news stories in the specified time frame with in the scope of closely observing ten news stories and analyzing only the relevant ones to avoid redundancy.

### **3.6. Sampling Method**

Sampling is crucial component of research weather its quantitative or qualitative method. "Sampling refers to the process of selecting a subset of items from a defined population for inclusion into a study." (Guest, Namey et al., 2013 purposive sampling also known as judgment sample has been utilized for this qualitative research. This sampling technique was chosen because employing this technique is appropriate and effective for the qualitative content analysis research. (Rosewell, 2003) stated, purposive sampling is the most common sampling technique as the researcher actively selects highly productive samples to answer the research question that can involve developing a framework of variables that has influence on an individual's contribution based on the practical knowledge of the researcher in the study on focus. Purposive sampling is further recommended due to the technique's intellectual strategy than other studies. Black, K. (2010) further elaborates, "purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method and it occurs when "elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher. Researchers often believe that they can obtain a representative sample by using a sound judgment, which will result in saving time and money". Ilker, Sulaiman et al. (1996) describes purposive sampling "It is typically used in qualitative research to identify and select the information-rich cases for the most proper utilization of available resources".

Accordingly the researcher used purposive sampling for the selection of countries, which are Ethiopia Sudan and Egypt. The same sampling method is employed in choosing the newspapers that are *The Ethiopian Herald, Sudan Tribune and Ahram online*. The time frame, which is June 1 to July 31 2020, as well as the number of news stories to be studied, which are 10 stories from each media outlet, is all selected using purposive sampling.

### **3.7. Data Collection tool and procedure**

#### **3.7.1. In-depth interview**

In depth interview is one of the most crucial method of qualitative data analysis. This research is employing in-depth interview because it is important in the qualitative data collection. “In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation.” (Boyce, 2006)

Furthermore, in depth interview has a value of strengthening a research, filling a gap and providing completion to a research. “The phrase in-depth interview conjures up the most iconic of qualitative data collection activities: a skilled interviewer engaged in a probing conversation with a suitably knowledgeable interviewee. Virtually all-qualitative researchers use this technique to some extent, and for many projects and researchers, in-depth interviews are the primary or sole source of data. And there is good reason for the pervasiveness of this method: it is versatile across a range of study topics, adaptable to challenging field conditions, and excellent for not just providing information but for generating understanding as well.” Guest, Namey, et al., 2014)

Carolyn (2006) further highlighted “The primary advantage of in-depth interview is that they provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys. They also may provide a more relaxed atmosphere in which to collect information— people may feel more comfortable having a conversation with you about their program as opposed to filling out a survey”

Thus, in-depth interview has been conducted to collect data that would help in answering the research questions and strengthening the content analysis for the thesis. Accordingly, the



informants' response is well in agreement with the findings of the research reassuring the researcher that the purposive choice of respondents has bear fruit in strengthening and affirming that the research is well triangulated through in-depth interviews and association of related literatures in analyzing the data exploring concepts and science based exhibition of research findings. For instance, responses obtained from water resource and media experts from Addis revealed what has been inductively explored in the research reflecting the deep rooted sense of omission or exclusion of the Ethiopians from using the Abbay River. The respondents' opinions from Egypt have also reaffirmed that news stories published on Ahram online or any government owned news outlets in Cairo are writing about the issue of the first filling of the dam only with in the interest and perspective of official press releases obtained from the government.

The researcher has done both e-mail and face-to-face interviews. The e-mail interview was a very well thought out research question focused and open ended one to enable the researcher to compare and contrast the responses of the interviewees. The e-mail interview has it's own advantage as it would provide the interviewee the opportunity to examine the questions and prepare for the answers before responding to the interviewer. The email interview would also give comfort to the interviewee, as immediate answers are not expected of them. Carolyn (2006) further highlighted "The advantage of in-depth interviews is that they provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys"

Noticing that some of the informants were not active in the Internet, the researcher has also conducted a face-to-face interview. During the face-to-face interview, the researcher has been able to exploit the interviewee by asking questions and discussing the issue in detail in a manner what scholars pointed out as semi structured interview. Accordingly the interview was conducted based on interview questions in addition to discussing the news framing tendencies of the three riparian countries in focus. The disadvantage with face-to-face interview is that it is time-intensive requiring the researcher to commute to the interviewee, listen to the interview again and transcribe the answers in preparing them for analysis. However, this writer has used both the face-to-face and e-mail interview for this thesis. List of informants which are selected as a representative of each country including and brief excerpts of their response is given in the appendix part of the study.

### 3.7.2. Textual Analysis.

The study, which is employing qualitative research method, is performing framing analysis through textual analysis. Textual analysis as highlighted by scholars is the conventional and often times utilized method of examining and interpreting texts in a comprehensive manner. Corbin and Strauss (2008) defines qualitative/textual analysis as “a process of examining and interpreting data in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge” (p. 1).

Textual analysis is the most preferred and proper mechanism in qualitative study of a subject, an issue or a problem. Textual analysis allows the researcher to closely study the issue in question and analyze it thoroughly using various scientific research methods such as content investigations, interviews, observations and related literature examinations. Textual analysis provides the researcher with an opportunity to understand and analyze what’s relayed in a text both implicitly and explicitly.

For instance, (Jack, 2019) describes, textual analysis as creative and qualitative in its approach and researchers oftentimes employ this method to illuminate and explain the core of a problem in a social context that they are investigating.

Thus, the research is employing textual analysis to provide explanations to the research questions regarding the framing of GERD in its first phase filling of the reservoir. This technique is employed because it’s the only appropriate method by which the study can be explored. Analyzing news framing of the first round filling of GERD in the selected news stories by the three different media outlets provided the opportunity to closely examine how each media outlets portrayed the issue in question according to their choice of framing.

The researcher employs inductive approach as opposed to deductive one. Avoiding predefined category and focusing on inductive approach to closely study and analyze the text has helped the research in meeting the requirements for a proper application of textual analysis. In inductive approach themes emerge from the data, while deductive implies a pre-existing theory or

framework. Qualitative data analysis tends to be inductive, where the researcher identifies categories in the data, without predefined hypotheses. (Laurence, Kohn, Wendy et al., 2018)

Accordingly after selecting the samples for textual analysis inductive approach was used to analyze the news stories without prior defined categories as explained above. However, the analysis was conducted with careful examination and focus with scientific treatment and approach as discussed in the research method and research design subtopics of this thesis.

As explained by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), there are three types of qualitative textual analysis approaches namely conventional, directed and summative. The research will use only conventional approach, which will give the researcher the opportunity to collect new idea from the data without prior categories.

In addition to using conventional content analysis, the research has further looked in to methods as described crucial by Entman regarding functions of key analytical components in conducting framing analysis. Thus to answer the basic research questions of a problem in the study, the four functions namely defining of a problem, looking into the cause of the problem/causal interpretation, moral judgments as to how the causal effects are evaluated and suggestion of treatment of the problems and/likely outcomes has been utilized to analyze the news stories in focus. (Entman 1993 pp 51-58)

The researcher has thoroughly and critically read the news stories in each media outlet to prepare for analysis. The major themes and tones of the stories were analyzed with the paradigm of Entman's frameworks. Then the stories were given classification based on their techniques followed by their frames with the parameter of their themes, tones and other frame indicative elements. The researcher then proceeded to give names to the most prominent and dominant frames and techniques that were observed in the news stories selected for analysis.

The researcher studied the news stories written by each media outlet separately. Accordingly, news frames in each media outlets were first investigated and analyzed distinctively without comparing one media's framing inclination/choice with the other one. For instance dominant frames in the Ethiopian Herald during the sample time was studied carefully and analyzed separately followed by *Ahram online and Sudan Tribune*. The researcher has given proper attention to make thorough investigation and analysis on each media outlet framing of the first

round filling of the GERD. (Headlines or excerpts of all the selected news stories for analysis are attached as an appendix.)

Prior knowledge of history culture and social coexistence of the three riparian countries in focus is crucial in understanding the context of the studied subject. Having that knowledge and exposure it was not very difficult to identify the meanings of the texts words, phrases and both connotative and denotative underlying meanings in the selected news stories. It was not also very difficult to make inferences about the hydro politics of the riparian states that influence the media outlets to frame their news stories in line with the interest of their respective countries. Thus analyzing the news stories was conducted with ample socio cultural knowledge of the states and geopolitical understanding of the region. All the selected media outlets are using English language, as a medium so translating news stories for the purpose of this thesis was not necessary.

Hence, the research used textual analysis to discuss and have sufficient comprehension of the news framing tendencies and preferences of the media outlets during the study/sampling period. Within the parameters and directions of textual analysis, the study was able to identify how the three media outlets framed the first round filling of GERD during the sample time in addition to identifying the similarities and differences among the media organizations in framing the issue. Factors that influence the media outlets to frame the first round filling of GERD in such a manner have also been identified in the study. In general the textual analysis employed has served the purpose of answering the research questions.

### **3.8. Primary and Secondary data Sources**

Relevant data for this study will be gained through primary and secondary data sources. The primary data collected through interview directly from the informants will be analyzed in combination with the news stories produced by the three media outlets. The secondary data will be obtained from previously conducted issue related materials such as researches, books, journals, thesis etc.

### 3.9. Ethical Consideration

This research has been conducted in a proper scientific manner where all the necessary and appropriate research methods are utilized and applied. Accordingly as clearly noted in the previous subtopics, the researcher has used two outstanding methods namely textual analysis and in depth interview as required in researching such kind of topic in a reliable manner. Both textual analysis and in depth interview are ideal research methods in conducting qualitative content analysis.

The textual analysis has used the following methods as forwarded by Entman (1993) regarding functions of key analytical components in conducting framing analysis to answer the basic research questions of a problem in the study. Thus, defining of a problem, looking into the cause of the problem/causal interpretation, moral judgments as to how the causal effects are evaluated and suggestion of treatment of the problems and/likely outcomes will be utilized to analyze the news stories in focus.

The research has also focused on inductive type of analysis to identify prominent frames used in the media outlets during the study period. Inductive approach differs from deductive approach in that it is totally focused on extracting novel frames from the text in focus as opposed to analyzing a text with prior defined news frames. Thus, this researcher believes that applying inductive approach will provide the study with original taste adding to the value of trustworthiness.

In addition to the aforementioned techniques reviewing literatures related to the topic and utilizing them as necessary has helped in keeping the trustworthiness of the research. Furthermore team review by experts in hydro politics of the region, content audit by my advisor, lecturers, public relation officers and journalists etc. has been used to check for completeness of the discussion in the study and trustworthiness of the research.

Another method of ascertaining trustworthiness in a qualitative research is triangulation. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources such as content analysis, deep interview, content audit, team review etc. to develop a comprehensive understanding of a study. (Carter, Bryant, DiCenso et al., 2014). Accordingly, the researcher has done multiple techniques as described above to triangulate the thesis and add to the value of trustworthiness of the study. The researcher has observed all the necessary principles of social science research ethical protocols and considerations.

Accordingly the researcher has been ethical and careful in protecting the rights of the interviewees by explaining to them that 1. They have the right to give or refuse the interview, 2. They have the right to remain anonymous if they prefer and, 3.that the interview is used only for the purpose of this research.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1. CHAPTER REVIEW

This chapter is dedicated to analyzing the news stories that has been collected through a qualitative framing analysis. Since the researcher conducted an inductive method the news stories will be studied and examined carefully to come up with frames that has not been preconceived, but rather observed in the news stories through the analysis to be used and dominantly employed during the study period. As clearly described by scholars, in inductive approach themes emerge from the data, while deductive implies a pre-existing theory or framework. Qualitative data analysis tends to be inductive, where the researcher identifies categories in the data, without predefined hypotheses. (Laurence, Kohn, Wendy et al., 2018)

As clearly indicated in the methodology of the research indicated that, the researcher studied the news stories written by each media outlet separately. Accordingly, news frames in each media outlets will first be investigated and analyzed distinctively without comparing one media's framing inclination/choice with the other one. For instance dominant frames in The Ethiopian Herald during the sample time will be studied carefully and analyzed separately followed by Ahram online and *Sudan Tribune*. The researcher has given proper attention to make thorough investigation and analysis on each media outlet framing of the first round filling of the GERD.

This thesis is a comparative framing analysis and investigating the media outlet's news framing tendency separately is very important before delving into comparing the frames as relayed in the news stories. After thorough investigation and discussion of dominant frames in each media the comparison would be conducted based on Entman's and other scholar's framing analysis methods. Thus, the researcher would move on to compare and contrast the framing preference in a paradigm where one can see the similarities and differences of the news framing in the media outlets in focus during the time frame selected for the study. The tone of news stories will be another important parameter for comparing the news framing of the first round impoundment of the reservoir on GERD. Thus the study would engage in exposing how positively, negatively or neutrally has the issue of the first impoundment in July 2020 been treated in the three media outlets. Clarity, vagueness and confusion as well as preferences in defining the problem, exploring and interpreting the cause, making moral judgments to the issue in question and

projecting a solution/remedy would also be examined in the news stories selected for the study. Through the above-mentioned content analysis techniques the research questions will be sufficiently answered and the research goal would be met. Hence this part deals with the overall results of the study as presented and analyzed thematically.

## **4.2. Research Findings**

### **4.2.1. Research Findings on the Ethiopian Herald**

The researcher has examined the most prominent and salient frames that have been observed and identified in the selected news stories during the study period.

The frames identified in the data were not limited in number as depicted in the analysis, as a matter of fact various frames were observed in each media outlet, especially in the Ethiopian Herald and *Ahram online* during data selection and preliminary study and examination of news stories. For instance, the most noticeable frames in the Ethiopian Herald newspaper were, natural rights frame, exclusion frame, mutual benefit frame, development frame, national image frame and to the lower extent conflict frame. However, it was important to focus on the most salient frames in the media outlet to be discussed and analyzed. Thus dominant frames in the Ethiopian Herald have been analyzed in this subtopic. Accordingly, findings of the research reveal that three dominant frames that are Natural rights frame, Exclusion frame and Mutual benefit frames have been identified in The Ethiopian Herald during the study period. Each frames has been noticeably and repeatedly employed in the news stories using various technical ways to highlight and ascertain that the first filling of the dam is very crucial and must be implemented irrespective of any objection/disagreement or dispute from lower riparian countries during the rainy season June/July of 2020. In advocating eloquently, persistently and aggressively, The Ethiopian Herald has shown strong support that goes in line with the Ethiopian Government stance. In addition to the detailed findings of the research, all the interviewees for the study have also observed the newspaper's reporting of the GERD issue in a complete support for the government. The Ethiopian Herald like that of *Ahram online* is a government owned newspaper. According to Editor in chief (Worku Belachew 2020) of The Ethiopian Herald, the editorial policy for the newspaper is reporting up-to-date information about the country to ensure the countries significance in the international forum as well as to portray the positive image of the country that goes in line with asserting the benefit and interest of the people. Hence The Ethiopian Herald news framing tendency is a reflection of the editorial policy of the newspaper.



#### 4.2.1.1. Natural Rights Frame

The burning issue of the geopolitics during the study period was the planned commencement of the first round impoundment of the reservoir at GERD. In reporting about this important specific issue The Ethiopian herald has given tremendous amount of salience to Ethiopia's natural and legitimate right to use the natural resource within its own boundary and to impound the reservoir without any restrictions from any party. "It's My Resource! It's my dam! It's my Natural Right! And nobody has legitimate power to stop me from filling the reservoir!" Was the main discourse and message relayed repetitively and aggressively to accentuate on the frame of natural rights. On its June 9th 2020 edition, The Ethiopian Herald published a story with a headline "no one stops Ethiopia from filling the dam: city residents" The headline itself Asserted to the lower riparian countries in particular and the international community in general that Ethiopia's right over progressing with its plan of filling the dam is unquestionable. The news story further states Ethiopia's strong stance regarding filling the dam to quote "Ethiopians will never compromise dam filling. As the Nile water is our asset, no one stop us from filling the dam." (The Ethiopian Herald, June 9, 2020)

Providing greater emphasis on Ethiopia's sovereign right as non-negotiable the same newspaper presents another strong statement about the filling of the GERD reservoir. "GERD as a sovereign project of Ethiopia shouldn't have been a subject of negotiation in the first place [...] adding that negotiation is only possible on the utilization and governance of the Nile River". (Ibid)

Ethiopia's natural right over the Blue Nile is further emphasized as follows by a news story written on June 19, 2020

"Ethiopia's Nile water natural right cannot by any means be compromised and set aside. If situations are treated otherwise, it would mean that Ethiopia would not have sovereignty over water rights"

In the same tone another headline from June 11th edition of the same newspaper asserted to its readership that's considered to be the international community that "Ethiopia has sovereign right to utilize the water resources within its territory without the consent of foreign countries" This story highlights its argument by citing a prominent scholar and further argued that "even if there is no agreement between riparian countries, Ethiopia has sovereign right to use its resource

within its territory. ... Citing Nyerere Doctrine, the scholar said, “any agreement between the three countries (Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan) will not be acceptable if it includes treaties of colonial legacy” (*The Ethiopian Herald*, 2020)

As clearly depicted in the above excerpt the Ethiopian Herald framed Ethiopia’s natural right over Abbay/ the blue Nile not only by merely stating Ethiopia’s repeated stance of “MY dam My Right” but also by including international law on trans boundary river water utilization. Just to mention one story as an example from the sampled news stories, the headline printed on July 25th 2020 clearly supports the same view with strong and explicit language.

“No Int’l law obliges Ethiopia to sign a deal before dam filling: International law expert”

The news paper again cited a prominent international law expert to give greater emphasis to the frame of the country’s natural right and to support Ethiopia’s argument that “There is no legal obligation for Ethiopia to sign a deal before filling the dam as highly pressured from the lower riparian countries and the international community.” The news paper continues “There is nothing in international law that obliges Ethiopia to sign a deal before it starts the filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam said Zelalem Moges (Ph.D.), an international law expert.” (*The Ethiopian Herald*, 2020)

One technique of framing a story is using prominent figures speeches to ascertain the importance of the issue and The Ethiopian Herald implemented this technique repeatedly to make a strong point. An excerpt from June 19, 2020 presents another scholar’s view with a strong language that reads

*“Ethiopia has the right to embark on filling the Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam without the interference of a third party in line with the principles of equitable and reasonable utilization without causing any significant harm to other riparian countries, said a Ph.D candidate Bamlak Yideg, a political scientist at the University of Gondar.”* (*The Ethiopian Herald*, 2020)

The news story didn’t leave out the important point here in it’s reporting about Ethiopia’s right to fill the dam, the news story taps on the crucial role of diplomacy along with exercising the natural right as enshrined on the international law stating “As there are no international rules that

limit Ethiopia from filling the Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam, Ethiopia should proceed with the filling of the dam and consolidating diplomacy works.” (The Ethiopian Herald, 2020)

In support of the same view another excerpt from The Ethiopian Herald issue of July 9th 2020 reads

*“International law is in favor of Ethiopia to utilize every natural resource including the Abay (Blue Nile) River. Countries do have permanent Sovereignty over their natural resources.... Egypt's move to oppose Ethiopia's legitimate right to use the Abay River is therefore a blatant violation of general international law and disrespect for Ethiopia's sovereignty.”*

The lower riparian countries especially Egypt was very active blaming Ethiopia for taking what it calls a “unilateral action” in executing the filling of the dam. Egypt was going above and beyond in the international diplomatic arena to stop Ethiopia from filling the dam and that strong opposition and accusation by Egypt was equally tackled by the Ethiopian Herald through various deliberate framing techniques. A news story written on July 9th 2020 responds to the Egyptian call as follows

*“There is nothing in international law that supports the Egyptian's stance in relation to GERD issues. But there are patchworks of international laws violated by Egypt when it opposes Ethiopia's unilateral move to fill its own dam... Neither general international law nor law of trans-boundary water courses prohibits Ethiopia from filling and operating its dam unilaterally.”*

The news story turns the table on Egypt and strongly accuses Cairo of violating International law. In line with counter blaming Egypt the news story blatantly enquires who ever is supporting Egypt to refrain from pressuring Ethiopia to sign a deal against the right and the interest of the country in a clear message that reads “Ethiopia is not required to seal a prior agreement to fill and operate its dam. All stakeholders must refrain from pressuring Ethiopia to accept an unacceptable deal. It is injustice and lawlessness ” (The Ethiopian Herald, 2020)

To wrap up, this frame clearly emphasized the filling of the GERD as a legitimate right of the country, which can never be questioned. The selected news stories repeatedly confirm that Ethiopia's right over its own natural resources is undeniable and well supported by international cross boundary rivers utilization rules and regulations. As news sources are one of the main framing methods, the news stories have purposefully utilized prominent figures to elevate the

relayed message to the extent of garnering greater attention using techniques of framing through source manipulation by quoting authoritative figures. Eldridge states “the more authoritative the source, the higher the credibility, and authoritativeness is often associated with those who hold high positions.” (Eldridge, 1993) Thus the Ethiopian Herald has used experts in the field of international cross boundary water management law to support the framing with strong argument.

In general this frame provides tremendous salience to Ethiopia’s natural right to fill the dam without begging for a blessing from a third party what so ever.

#### **4.2.1.2. Exclusion frame**

Another prominent frame exposed during the sample time in *The Ethiopian Herald* is the exclusion frame. A significant number of news stories have voiced the concern of the country through this frame explicitly and aggressively. The news stories repeatedly articulates, “ We are excluded” from

- A. Inclusion in the colonial era agreements that bestowed Egypt and Sudan the lion’s share of our own water
- B. Filling our dam constructed in our territory using our own natural resource.
- C. Utilizing our own natural resource equitably and fairly.
- D. Providing our people with electricity
- E. Supporting our booming development with the necessary electric power etc.

The news story written on June 12, 2020 denounces and frames the so called historical right that’s been claimed by Egypt for almost a century as exclusionist and an obsolete mantra that’s still in use to stop Ethiopia from filling the dam.

“The so-called historical rights which Egypt claims in reference to the 1929 and 1959 agreements have been the major bargaining chip of Cairo and it has for long tried to sugarcoat these exclusionist agreements as permanently binding sacred deals.”

Highlighting on the importance of giving up on an agreement which is not comprehensive and binding as well as unacceptable by upper riparian countries the news story on June 12th continues to direct and prompt Egypt to give up with the old mantra of ‘historical right’ and ‘veto right’ and embrace what is fair, just and an existing reality at this juncture “Attitudes that

imply “my way or the highway” aka “historical rights “; “veto rights” should give way to more collaborative mindsets.” (The Ethiopian Herald, 2020)

Counter blaming Egypt *The Ethiopian Herald* takes the issue from the lower riparian countries to the whole basin emphasizing on the rights and development needs of other riparian countries. The Ethiopian Herald news story published on June 19th 2020 brings the fact to light in a memorable frame to other riparian countries as follows, “Egypt’s interest should not, and it cannot, limit the welfare, rights, and development endeavors of other riparian countries. Egypt’s demand cannot always be imposed on others. It should bring to an end somewhere”

The Ethiopian Herald news story on June 24th 2020 voices it’s objection to Egypt’s reliance on the colonial era agreement strongly by incorporating how the other riparian countries has also been excluded from the obsolete treaty and that they are against the old treaty that denied them the right to use their own resources. Ethiopia has done intense diplomatic work with many of the upstream countries, including Burundi and Uganda, which resulted in some of the countries officially denouncing the colonial era treaty that has made them victims.

The following excerpt from the same newspaper emphasizes how Ethiopia has been engaged in the diplomatic work to the point of establishing comprehensive frame of Agreement/CFA to embrace the other riparian countries to join hands for a cause that is just against Egypt’s hegemony on the river. “Ethiopia took the approach of cooperating with the upstream countries to counter Egypt’s centuries- old hegemony on the river, as it took the lion’s share in making CFA happen.” (The Ethiopian Herald, 2020)

Reminding that Ethiopia has been denied and excluded from using Abbay which contributes 85 percent of the water a news story written on June 24th 2020 states that NOW is a high time for Ethiopia to move on utilizing it’s natural resource for the development of the country.

“Obviously, Ethiopia is the major source of Nile but unable to use a river to which it contributes significant portion of the water so far. Efforts have been well underway for more than two decades now to achieve socio-economic development and uplift its people from abject poverty”

The news story highlights the exclusion frame by reproducing a considerable empirical evidence to support its argument that 65 percent of Ethiopians live in darkness and the emerging industrial economy in the country needs energy, which without the generation of hydroelectric power from the GERD would be an unthinkable. The story continues,

“The nation is yet to give light to 65 percent of its population and its need for energy to the emerging industrial economy is far from being fulfilled. This makes Nile a very strategic resource and its proper utilization a matter of grave necessity than choice.” (The Ethiopian Herald, 2020)

In a very touching/irritating manner to the minds of the upper riparian countries, a news story written on June 16th 2020 portrays how unjustifiably Ethiopia and the other upper riparian countries of the Nile River has been excluded from utilizing their own natural resource.

*“There is no river in the world except the Nile where the lower riparian countries took the upper hand in utilizing the water... Unlike other river basin originators (in the world), the upper riparian countries (here) have never sought to utilize the water alone. Though those riparian countries, including Ethiopia had the interest to jointly utilize the river, the lower basin countries’ stand is always to use it alone as they had been using it for long,”*

Quoting Professor Yaqob Arsano, political science and international relations lecturer at Addis Ababa University and researcher of Nile water Affairs, the news story exposes the injustice by presenting a concrete example of trans boundary water use around the world

*“Turkey, which originates Tigris and Euphrates rivers, takes the lion share in water usage while the US, origin of Colorado and Rio Grande rivers, exploits the two to the maximum level though it shares some to Mexico... In the case of the Nile Basin, however, the water usage has been so unusual for ages”*

Another news has been framed to show how Ethiopia has been excluded from using its own natural resource by Egypt’s propagation of false scientific evidences and unreliable sources. This time the frame uses a statement by Egyptian scholar/ Geologist exposing Egypt’s reluctance to use its rich water sources, which would be enough for a hundred of years. An excerpt taken from Ethiopian Herald June 20th 2020 exposes

“There is untouched underground water in Jabal Al-Uweinat Mountain and surrounding in Egypt which is a huge potential to feed Egypt for a hundred of years...GERD never become a threat for water shortage or security to Egypt and the concerns by Egypt are not real threats.” The news

story slashes the existential threat rhetoric repeatedly forwarded by Egypt as baseless unfounded and as a political agenda of the government rather than a reality. Quoting The Egyptian famous scientist and Geologist the newspaper further revealed that Egyptian Government's claim about the adverse effect

*Filling The GERD is just a reflection of media propaganda, not a reality... GERD filling will lead for water shortage is a reflection of politicians and media propaganda, not reality... both claims of "safety and water shortage threats" for downstream countries are baseless and unfounded... these are media and politicians agendas, not public concerns of Egyptians" (The Ethiopian Herald, 2020)*

The news story written on July 9th 2020 points out that the River Basin Commission of the Nile River should be in charge of governance of the basin which Sudan and Egypt disagree with. The two lower riparian country's unfair exercise to exclude Ethiopia from filling the dam is again a quest for sticking to the hegemonic appropriation of the 1959 agreement. The news story asserts its point as follows

*"It also sets a permanent River Basin Commission tasked with governance of the basin. But Egypt and Sudan stood outside this basin-wide agreement for the sake of their water share appropriated in the 1959 agreement. Hence, Ethiopia has no any legal duty to sit for negotiation with Egypt and Sudan to fill its dam."*

To sum up, this frame provides substantive and empirical information to assertively vocalized the exclusion and feelings of disappointment of Ethiopians due to the colonial era agreement and Sudan's and Egypt's resistance to accept the new reality that emerged from the upper riparian country's quest for equitable, justifiable and fair utilization of the Nile River. The exclusion frame discussed above particularly points out that Ethiopia has been excluded from filling its own dam, which is constructed within its own territory using its own natural resource and finance.

#### **4.2.1.3. Mutual Benefit**

Mutual benefit is the third frame revealed by the research during the sample time. To employ this frame and magnify its argument, the Ethiopian Herald has tremendously used the word mutual benefit in conjunction with words and phrases such as cooperation, equitable use, fairness, justice, win-win approach, good faith etc.

The newspaper repetitively and strongly announced that the filling of the dam has no significant harm upon the lower riparian countries. Reflecting optimistic views and scientific facts about the benefit of the filling of the dam. The newspaper further underscored negotiation with good faith is an optimal avenue towards achieving mutual benefit amongst Ethiopia Sudan and Egypt.

In support of the cooperation as a sole option of the concerned parties, news story published on The Ethiopian Herald front-page headline reads, “Cooperation with Ethiopia on the Nile is the sole option of Egypt [... ] Establishing wholehearted cooperation with Ethiopia regarding the Nile waters is the only option for Egypt today and even in the future” (The Ethiopian Herald, 2020)

In the same tone a news story written on June 23, 2020 portrays Ethiopia as a country that deals with the issue of the Nile with good faith seeking a fair and equitable share of water. The news story also provides numerical evidence to support the claim and to make its point more valuable in the following manner “Ethiopia, which contributes 85 % of the Nile waters, is always on the win-win side, fair and equitable share of the waters. It is building the dam to provide electricity to more than 60% of its people who do not have access to power.”

Highlighting on the fact that Ethiopia is the major source of the Nile, the following excerpt taken from June 24th 2020 stated that the country has no intention of causing significant harm by filling the dam as oftentimes feared and complained by the lower riparian countries

*“Ethiopia is the major source of Nile but unable to use a river to which it contributes significant portion of the water so far [...] Ethiopia as always is committed to fair and equitable utilization of the Nile waters causing no significant harm to its neighbors and the lower riparian states in the spirit of good faith and brotherhood.”*

The news story on the same issue further indicated the country’s call for a fair and equitable utilization of the water as follows “Ethiopia as always is committed to fair and equitable utilization of the Nile waters causing no significant harm to its neighbors and the lower riparian states in the spirit of good faith and brotherhood.”

Besides consistently describing GERD and the filling of the reservoir as an indispensable process that doesn’t inflict significant harm, Ethiopia reiterates that impounding the reservoir is rather an opportunity for regional integration and mutual benefit instead of causing significant harm.



Counter blaming Egypt for insisting on reaching an agreement before filling the dam and pressuring Ethiopia through various techniques to stop or delay the filling of the dam the newspaper in its June 19, 2020 news story slashed Egypt of framing the issue as a project of conflict rather than accepting the reality on the ground and working on cooperation.

“Egypt is now exacerbating futile attempt and unreservedly seeking other options than cooperating with Ethiopia for mutual benefit and fair utilization of the Nile waters.”

The same news story continues with exposing what it calls “futile attempt” of Egypt’s alleged intention of inciting conflict and calling for a possible war as an act of foolishness.

*“The idea of war is not only wrong but also the reflection of being foolish. Egypt’s intention to meet its water needs through war against Ethiopia is an indication that it does not have interest to grow together and even it lacks expertise to work cooperatively and diplomatically with its sisterly countries especially with Ethiopia”* (The Ethiopian Herald, 2020)

In a similar tone another news story published on July 21st 2020 frames Egypt’s reluctance for cooperation and negotiation in good faith as follows

*“... some countries might present in such negotiation with dominant perception of power including military which hinders the negotiation[...] Among such countries that stand to achieve national interest through power hegemony is Egypt that’s why the negotiation on GERD is yet not bear fruit”*

The Ethiopian Herald accuses Egypt of disseminating false information regarding the size of the dam instead of highlighting on mutual benefit and coming to terms with Ethiopia. The following news story on July 17th 2020 exposes that

*“Egypt is making proxy use of well-intentioned false alarm bells on the Dam [...] Egyptians report regarding the overwhelming status of the dam is misinformed [...] Their reporting about GERD as the largest dam in Africa instead of stating it as largest hydro power plant is a case in point in this regard. The High Aswan Dam of Egypt itself is the largest dam of Africa, however. Surprisingly, GERD is twice less than Egyptian High Aswan Dam in size”*

To conclude, The Ethiopian Herald has employed the mutual benefit frame in a manner that exhibits the optimistic view of the government regarding the importance of filling the dam for a win- win situation, cooperation, regional integration and comprehensive benefit of the three riparian countries. The news stories repetitively portrayed the filling of the dam as indispensable

and beneficial for all the concerned parties regardless of any speculation and/or fear of negative outcome as forwarded by Sudan and Egypt.

TABLE 4.1 Dominant frames utilized in the sampled news stories of the three News outlets

The Ethiopian Herald	<i>Sudan Tribune</i>	<i>Ahram Online</i>
1. Natural right frame	1. Economic consequence frame	1. Historic rights frame
2. Exclusion frame	2. Conflict frame	2. Conflict frame
3. Mutual benefit frame		

#### 4.2.2. Research findings on *Ahram online*

The study has made a thorough and close examination on *Ahram online* news stories during the sample time. The news frames identified in the media outlet in June/July 2020 are, economic consequence frame, historic rights frame, conflict frame, blaming frame and war frame among others. Conflict frame and blaming frames are the most predominantly utilized frames in *Ahram online*. However, researcher findings led to avoiding taking blaming as a frame to refrain from redundancy, as there is strong interrelatedness between the phrases, words, ideas and/or rhetoric used to magnify the blaming and the conflict frame. Thus the research adopts blaming as a technique used by the media outlet to highlight and magnify the conflicts, which the media outlet considers to be created between the three riparian countries especially with Ethiopia and Egypt due to Ethiopia’s plan to commence the first phase filling of the GERD. The researcher will vividly show in the analysis how the blaming/counter blaming phrases words ideas and opinions strongly corresponded with the conflict frame.

Another seemingly prominent frame on *Ahram online* during the sample time is a war frame. The study and thorough analysis/scrutiny of the sampled news stories again reveals that war frame has not been utilized to the extent to be labeled as a war frame but, to the argument of this writer, seemingly war mongering phrases are utilized as a technique to magnify the extent of the conflict

that comes from the planned impoundment of the reservoir on GERD before a binding “legal agreement” between the three countries has been reached. Thus labeling the news stories selected for analysis on *Ahram online* during the sample time, as a war frame would be premature, hasty generalization as well as unnecessary exaggeration.

Hence, again the words, message and seemingly war mongering opinions that has been employed by the news outlet to call for the wrath of the Egyptian people and the attention and/or sympathy of the Arab world as well as the punitive measure against Ethiopia of the international community has not been taken as a major war frame but rather as a technique utilized by the news outlet during the first phase impoundment of the GERD reservoir.

Accordingly findings of the research revealed the most predominantly used frames by *Ahram online* in June/July 2020 are historic rights frame also referred as water rights frame and conflict frame. Each frames has been noticeably and tremendously employed in the news stories using various technical ways to highlight and ascertain that the first filling of the dam is detrimental to the lower riparian countries especially to Egypt. The news outlet has really been verbal, persistent, highly pressuring and aggressive in garnering sympathy towards Egypt and wrath against Ethiopia through the purposefully employed framing techniques. *Ahram online* is an online government owned newspaper that’s a part of Al-Ahram Establishment, Egypt’s largest news organization, and the publisher of the Middle East’s oldest newspaper. Thus the newspaper’s strong opinion in support is attributed to the government foreign policy regarding the Nile.

“Egypt’s successive administrations have concentrated on a number of geo-strategic foreign policy areas in order to ensure the free flow of the Nile River waters” (Hamady and Ahmad, 2007) Backing the government’s concrete policy on the River Nile, the news stories were target oriented, well crafted, persistent and intense in lobbying its target readership which is the international community against Ethiopia. *Ahram online* has been “remarkably” excellent in advocating for and supporting what it allegedly considers is a threat to Egypt’s “water rights” representing the interest of the Egyptian government. In addition to the research findings in the actual analysis of the news stories, related studies quoted on this thesis as well as interviewee’s responses regarding Egypt’s fears of significant harm coming from the filling of the GERD has also been observed during the research undertakings.

#### 4.2.2.1. Historic Rights Frame

The news stories on *Ahram online* during the sample time have dominantly reported about Cairo's fears that filling the reservoir would have detrimental effect on its Nile water share. In reporting about this important specific issue *Ahram online* has given paramount salience to Egypt's concern regarding losing the "historic" and "legitimate" water right that is "legally obtained" from the Nile water since time immemorial.

"Do not mess with my water that I have a legal right over that's enshrined in the 1929 and 1959 agreement of utilization of the River Nile" was the main theme and discourse relayed in a manner that can be described as "reservedly" and aggressively by *Ahram online* to hammer on the frame of Historic Right/Water Right. The most important and almost daily reported issue during the study period was the ongoing and/or failed negotiations conducted by the three riparian countries regarding technical aspects of the first filling of the GERD. Accordingly, *Ahram online* has focused on framing the issue in the light of Egypt's portrayal of the filling of the GERD with out a legal agreement by the three riparian countries as an infringement of the historic right bestowed to the Sudan and Egypt in the treaties signed in 1929 and 1959.

The following excerpt from *Ahram online* (02 June 2020) highlights on how important and sensitive is the Blue Nile to Egypt to the point of being considered as a lifeline. In the news story numerical explanation along with the phrase "Egypt's water rights" has been given/written to emphasize on the frame.

"Some 85 percent of the Nile water that reaches Egypt flows from the Ethiopian highlands, mainly from the Blue Nile. Egypt receives 55.5 billion cubic meters of water from the Nile annually, but requires over 80 billion cubic meters to cover its needs. [...] Egypt has said it is ready for a revival of talks but stressed the importance of "serious and constructive" talks between the three countries' irrigation ministers to contribute to a fair, balanced and comprehensive agreement that would preserve Egypt's water rights and the interests of both Sudan and Ethiopia." (Ahram Online, 2020)

A news story from June 10th 2020 presents another strongly framed numeric description of how the Blue Nile is important to Egypt and that there is a fear from Cairo's side that filling the GERD would diminish the water supply of Egyptians.

“Egypt receives an annual release of 55.5 billion cubic metres from its High Aswan Dam, while it requires over 80 billion cubic metres to meet its needs. The country bridges the gap by water recycling and reuse. Cairo fears the dam will diminish its water supply from the Nile, on which it relies for the vast majority of its fresh water.

The news story further reiterates on the importance of the Nile water and provides seemingly a disturbing figure about emerging scarcity of water in the future of the country in a way calling for the interference of concerned bodies to stop Ethiopia from filling the dam.

“The populous country currently has a water share of around 570 cubic meters per person annually, well below the water scarcity level of 1,000 cubic meters per person per year. The figure is expected to drop further to 500 cubic meters by 2025.” (Ahram Online, 2020)

Egypt's strong stance to pressure Ethiopia to halt commencing filling the dam before a binding deal is reached at the negotiations conducted during the sample time has been repeatedly reported with a noticeable frame of historic water right. *Ahram online* presents comparative illustration of the issue to appeal for the sympathy of its readers referring Ethiopia as a hopeful state to be Africa's largest power exporter at the expense of the lives of many in Egypt. An excerpt from July 26th 2020 states, “Ethiopia hopes the massive \$4.8 billion dam will allow it to become Africa's largest power exporter. On the other hand, Egypt, which relies on the Blue Nile for 95 percent of its freshwater, fears the dam will diminish its water supply, which is already below scarcity level.” (Ahram Online, 2020)

A complete replica of the same idea with a little alteration in phrasing facts and switching figures has been published on the online media dated on June 15th 2020

*“Egypt, which is almost entirely dependent on the River Nile for its freshwater, fears the dam will diminish its water supply, which is already below scarcity level. Some 85 percent of the Nile water that reaches Egypt flows from Ethiopian highlands. Ethiopia hopes the massive \$4.8 billion megaproject on the Blue Nile, which would generate 6,000 megawatt when completed, will allow it to become Africa's largest power exporter.”*

*Ahram online* has been aggressive to manipulate the readership in many technical approaches such as representing Sudan and announcing that the filling of the GERD is infringement of water rights not only to Egypt but also to Sudan. The news story written on July 26th brought Sudan's interest and insisted on reaching an agreement before filling the dam to make a strong point.

“Egypt is not the only party that has repeatedly demanded the agreement be legally binding. Sudan has also raised the same concern at the end of the Khartoum-brokered negotiations that reached deadlock last month”

*Ahram online* has been resourceful in bringing the issue of its “Historic Rights” case over the Nile water. The online media has extensively used media outlets' news stories from other countries that it considers is written in the interest of Egypt advocating for the favorable rhetoric's of Historic Water Rights over the Nile. For instance associated presses' rhetoric that echoed Egypt's alleged accusation of Ethiopia's building and filling the GERD reservoir to be the major power exporter at the cost of Egypt has been re published on the first page fully on an issue dated on June 19<sup>th</sup> 2020.

“The years-long dispute pits Ethiopia's desire to become a major power exporter and development engine against Egypt's concern that the dam will significantly curtail its water supply if filled too quickly.” (Ahram Online, 2020)

Summing up, *Ahram online* has framed the Historic Rights through various technical methods including but not limited to omitting certain facts and information and repeating and paraphrasing the framed opinion and fact in almost all the news stories written about GERD. As Gofman (1974) pointed out frames exclude certain facts and information and directs the eyes/attention of the readership/audience to focus on particular object or issue. In manipulation of directing attention to a certain message *Ahram online* has been successful to bring the focus of the readership into the deliberately repeated/paraphrased ideas. The following sentences or ideas were very noticeable in the selected and analyzed news stories by Ahram online.

1. The legal and almost one century old Historic Rights of Egypt over the Nile water.
2. Egypt's dependence for fresh water on the Nile River.
3. The significant harm that would be caused against Egypt's water right.

4. Ethiopia's endeavor of becoming major power exporter in Africa against the concern of Sudan and Egypt etc.

To wrap up, the news stories have portrayed the first filling of the GERD as a move directed towards curtailing the water supply of Egypt. In portraying Ethiopia's endeavor to start the filling of the dam, the frames have been very aggressive in announcing pessimistic views that the GERD and the planned impoundment of the reservoir is detrimental to Egypt and Sudan. The news stories portrayed the first filling as an infringement of legally obtained water rights of the lower riparian countries and insisted that the GERD shouldn't be filled without reaching an agreement that re actualize the historic rights of Egypt/Sudan over the Nile river and eventually satisfy the need of water supply to both countries. In this frame Ahram online was focused on repeatedly propagating the Egyptian government's stance against the filling of the dam. In correspondence with the research findings, respondents/key informants of the in-depth interviews conducted for the thesis revealed the news outlet's aggressive pro government framing of the GERD impoundment. The natural right that Ethiopia is bestowed with in using its own resource that will bring positive economic change in the country has not been fairly mentioned in the news stories.

#### **4.2.2.2. Conflict Frame**

The second main frame examined inductively during the study period on Ahram on line is conflict frame. The prominence of this frame has been noticed as it has been employed explicitly and noticeably. The media outlet utilized this frame consistently using various techniques. Through its persistent framing, Ahram online has portrayed Ethiopia and the filling of the dam as a cause of the conflict creating sensitive regional issue. The online media further illustrated Addis as an obstacle in the negotiations while it presents Egypt and Sudan as solution providers for mutual benefit in the negotiations conducted during the sample time. The media outlet is focusing on aggravating the conflict by highlighting only on the disagreements and the prevailing and recurring significant harm that will be caused to the lower riparian countries due to Ethiopia's failure to come to terms with what it calls the best solution. Ahram online has used strong vocabularies to pressure for the benefit and/or the interest of Egypt.

In the following headline on June 15th, 2020 the news outlet quotes high government officials statement. "Egypt will seek other options if Ethiopia remains intransigent: Foreign minister"

Using Foreign Minister Sameh Shourky's speech Ahram online reported that the country would go to the United Nation's Security Council. /Note that Egypt has indeed reported the issue of the first filling of the GERD to the Security Council./

But, countries usually contemplate on reporting an issue to the UNSC when a war is waged against their sovereign state or when there is a significant sign and objective evidence that a neighboring state is armed to the teeth and beating a drum of war. Thus Egypt's planned action of reporting the filling of GERD to UNSC is nothing but creating fear and concern in the minds of its citizens and exaggerating the conflict. In this headline Egypt is utilizing war-mongering words as a technique to elevate the extent of the conflict to a higher level. The news outlet highlight's the government's concern emphasizing on framing the conflict that's created due to the filling of the GERD. The lead story of the same news story has echoed and pronounced the issue in the following excerpt

"Egypt will seek other options, including going to the United Nations Security Council, if Ethiopia remains intransigent during the new round of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) talks, Egyptian foreign minister Sameh Shoukry stated on Monday in Cairo."

Emphasizing on the conflict, the news story reports it's speculation that Ethiopia will remain intransigent, which may force Egypt to look for other options. The news story states that UNSC should compel Ethiopia from filling the dam and fulfill its responsibility of protecting international peace and security. In this framing Ahram online uses strong warmongering phrases to elevate the conflict to a higher level.

*"...The latest round of negotiations will not yield positive results as long as Ethiopia is intransigent, in which case Egypt will have to look into other options, such as going to the UN Security Council to shoulder its responsibility in protecting international peace and security by stopping Ethiopia from taking a unilateral action that will negatively affect Egypt's water rights." (Ahram online, 2020)*

The following headline published on June 7th 2020 is another representative and typical example of pessimistic and conflict focused perspective of Egypt against the planned GERD filling as framed on Ahram Online.



“Ethiopia 'would think twice' about filling GERD without prior agreement if met by strong stance from Egypt, Sudan: Sudanese FM” (Ahrām Online, 2020)

Ahrām online uses prominent figures and high government officials to press on the importance of the issue. In this news story the news outlet directly quoted Sudan’s Foreign Minister to emphasize on the sensitive nature of the filling that shouldn’t be neglected. The headline clearly states a collaborative and strong stance held against Ethiopia would halt the filling of the dam. In the news story words and phrases such as “ Strong Stance”, “would think twice” are repeated to reaffirm the frame.

Another news story published the same day June 7, 2020 utilizes blaming technique to emphasize on the conflict framing by portraying Ethiopia as a mastermind of the conflict in the region for planning to fill the GERD without reaching an agreement. The news story exaggerated the conflict using such phrases as “tensions have been building”, and “the project would diminish share of Nile Water” etc.

“Tensions have been building between Egypt and Ethiopia over technical details regarding the operation and filling of the dam, which is under construction near Ethiopia's border with Sudan.[...]Egypt, which is downstream from the dam, fears that the project will diminish its share of Nile water, on which it is almost entirely reliant for fresh water. (Ahrām Online, 2020)

In the same tone Ahrām online’s headline of June 10th 2020 calls for Ethiopia to refrain from taking unilateral action

“Egypt calls on Ethiopia to commit to 'no unilateral action' on GERD before end of negotiations”

The headline by itself is a statement that affirms that Ethiopia has no right to act upon unilaterally filling and operating the dam. According to views in the Ethiopian herald, the message relayed in this headline strongly opposes and violates the sovereign right of Ethiopia to use its own natural resource. The following quoted excerpt from Ethiopian Herald published on June 19th shows how the two media were engaged in blaming and counter blaming and/or defending each other’s accusations

“Ethiopia’s Nile water natural right cannot by any means be compromised and set aside. If situations are treated otherwise, it would mean that Ethiopia would not have sovereignty over water rights,” he noted.

A counter blaming idea of the above mentioned Ethiopia’s stance that appealed for a binding agreement irrespective of what Ethiopia calls “Its my sovereign right to fill the dam” published earlier on June 2nd on Ahram Online elaborated,

“For the positive impacts to be realised and for the negative impacts to be mitigated there has to be an agreement in place with Ethiopia on how to fill and operate the GERD, otherwise the GERD stands to cause substantial risk to Sudan," Khartoum said.” (Ahram Online, 2020)

Ahram online again uses Sudan’s letter to the UNSC to make a strong point that the issue of the dam and the alleged detrimental effect that would be caused, is not only the concern to Egypt but also to Sudan. The news story published same day on Ahram online further reiterates that Sudan has requested the UNSC of any unilateral action to be discouraged.

In the letter written to the UNSC

*“Sudan also requested the Security Council encourage all parties to refrain from taking unilateral actions such as filling the dam’s reservoir without reaching a comprehensive agreement. It also asked the Security Council to encourage the avoidance of any action, which jeopardizes “regional and international peace and security.”*

As in the above excerpt, the words and phrases that are highly indicative of conflict such as “jeopardize regional and international peace and security” are used by the news story as a technique again to exaggerate the extent of the conflict.

The blaming technique to emphasize on the conflict has repeatedly been utilized by Ahram online. The headline published on June 18th 2020 blames Ethiopia as explicitly stated below

“Egypt says dam talks deadlocked as Ethiopia rejects a binding deal” (Ahram Online, 2020)

The lead story continues in the same tone blaming Addis Ababa of refusing to enter into a legally binding agreement. The lead story uses high government offices' statement and words like "controversial" again to make the framing more salient.

"Renewed negotiations between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) remain deadlocked as Addis Ababa refused to enter into a legally-binding agreement over the controversial project, Egypt's irrigation ministry" (Ahram Online 2020)

This news story on the same issue has given detailed account of the issue blaming Ethiopia of refusing to accept deals forwarded not only by the lower riparian countries but also rejecting international law. "Ethiopia rejected the conclusion of a binding agreement in accordance with international law between the three countries, insisting on drafting "guiding rules that [it] can unilaterally amend,"

Ethiopia has repeatedly counter argued Egyptians' claims of the above-mentioned statements as faulty and unfounded by quoting international law experts. To quote one news story from The Ethiopian Herald headline dated July 25th "No Int'l law obliges Ethiopia to sign a deal before dam filling: International law expert"

However, Ahram online insists on portraying Ethiopia as a state bringing regional conflict and instability by refusing to adhere to international rules and regulations. The news story reminds the readership of the US sponsored meetings in Washington, which failed due to allegedly Ethiopia's indifference/objection. The news story further quotes as in the following excerpt high US official's opinion stating that the dam shouldn't be filled without an agreement between the three riparian countries.

*"In response, Addis Ababa told the UN body that it "does not have a legal obligation to seek the approval of Egypt to fill the dam." After US-sponsored meetings in Washington stumbled in February, US Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin said the "final testing and filling [of the dam] should not take place without an agreement."*

Ahram online continues its conflict frame by supporting Egypt's argument through various techniques including reposting previous positions of statements relayed by foreign countries

other than the three lower riparian states. For instance the online media quoted National Security Council /NSC/ of the US government.

“The US demand was reiterated on Wednesday when the US National Security Council (NSC) said that “it is time” to reach a deal over the GERD before Ethiopia starts filling the reservoir.

In a post on its official Twitter account, the NSC said "257 million people in East Africa are relying on Ethiopia to show strong leadership, which means striking a fair deal." (Ahram Online, 2020)

Ahram online has really been persistent demanding and critical of Ethiopia’s plan and commitment of filling the reservoir in the news stories published during the sample time. As mentioned repeatedly the online media utilizes other international media sources to highlight and appeal to Egypt’s interest.

The headline posted on June 19th and sourced from Associated Press echoes what is usually written on Ethiopian herald but to frame the issue as controversial the word “dispute” is added on the headline, which couldn’t have been included in the Ethiopian Herald newspaper.

“Ethiopia to fill disputed dam, deal or no deal” (Ahram Online, 2020)

Obviously Ahram online has chosen this news story and posted it due to the news stories value of directly or indirectly propagating what is in the interest of Egypt. The news story continues with the following framed rhetoric.

“It’s a clash over water usage that Egypt calls an existential threat and Ethiopia calls a lifeline for millions out of poverty. Just weeks remain before the filling of Africa’s most powerful hydroelectric dam might begin, and tense talks between the countries on its operation have yet to reach a deal. (Ahram online, 2020)

The words and phrases like “clash” and “existential threat” are exactly the same words and phrases used on Egyptian medias to frame the issue as controversial and disputable. That’s why, to the argument of this researcher, Ahram online has republished AP’s news on its page.

However, the online news outlet has tried to balance the news and reflect Ethiopia's view even though the tone and the general portrayal of Addis was negative. For instance the following excerpt from the same news stated.

“In an interview with The Associated Press, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Gedu Andargachew on Friday declared that his country will go ahead and start filling the \$4.6 billion Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam next month, even without an agreement [...] For us it is not mandatory to reach an agreement before starting filling the dam, hence we will commence the filling process in the coming rainy season.” (Ahram Online, 2020)

In the above-mentioned excerpt Ethiopia's position has been well reiterated and balanced as well as paraphrased that Addis Ababa has the right to fill the dam without reaching an agreement. The news story continues balancing the news stating Ethiopia's commitment for reaching a deal quoting the Ethiopian official as saying,

“We are working hard to reach a deal, but still we will go ahead with our schedule whatever the outcome is. If we have to wait for others' blessing, then the dam may remain idle for years, which we won't allow to happen [...] we want to make it clear that Ethiopia will not beg Egypt and Sudan to use its own water resource for its development,” pointing out that Ethiopia is paying for the dam's construction itself. (Ahram Online, 2020)

The same news story has still reinforced that there is a clash, a dispute and a controversy, which can lead to war. “Both Egypt and Ethiopia have hinted at military steps to protect their interests, and experts fear a breakdown in talks could lead to conflict. Ethiopia's foreign minister would not say whether his country would use military action to defend the dam and its operations.”

Since this researcher's finding revealed there is not much of a war frame employed during the study period again the abovementioned excerpt are taken as a technique by Ahram online to reinforce the conflict frame. The following excerpt forwarded by Ethiopia can be quoted as an example to make a point of how the war mongering phrases are used just as a technique by Egyptian government and their media,

“This dam should have been a reason for cooperation and regional integration, not a cause for controversies and warmongering [...] Egyptians are exaggerating their propaganda on the dam

issue and playing a political gamble. Some of them seem as if they are longing for a war to break out.” (Ahram Online, 2020)

To sum up, Ahram online has been busy sometimes publishing two or three news stories a day about the detrimental effect of the impoundment of the reservoir. The online media has gone above and beyond to announce and frame that the filling of the GERD will cause paramount conflict in the region. Accordingly the news stories published during what can be described as “critical time” /mid July, 2020/ were highly demanding, more strong and full of pressure against the impoundment of the reservoir.

The headlines lead stories and excerpts of news stories from Ahram online illustrate the framing of conflict through various techniques including warmongering statements and blaming of Ethiopia for taking unilateral action and filling the dam without the approval of the two lower riparian countries.

The online newspaper has utilized conflict frame in most of its news stories during the study period. The media has employed several techniques to magnify the framing and lead its readership to view/comprehend and react to the issue of the impoundment of the GERD through its mirror. As Entman, stated, one way of framing an issue is magnifying it through the use of certain keywords, stock phrases, sources of information and thematically reinforcing cluster of facts and judgments. Entman, 1993) Thus The online newspaper has been persistent in portraying and judging Ethiopia as the source of the conflict. Even though there were some instances as quoted in the analysis, Ahram online has not been professional in balancing the news stories and balancing Ethiopia’s view. Ethiopia has been explaining persistently with scientific evidences about the fact that impounding the reservoir wouldn’t cause significant harm. However, no mention of trust or recognizing the facts on Ahram online news stories was made. It has to be noted that Ethiopia’s repeated claim of the non-detrimental factor of the filling of the dam has been proved to be true through the process and during the sample time before and after the impoundment of the GERD. However, it has not been reported on Ahram online.

#### 4.2.3. Research findings on *Sudan Tribune*

The researcher has chosen to include *Sudan Tribune* in the study to provide the research with comprehensive all-inclusive perspective on the issue of the impoundment of the GERD by the three riparian countries media outlets in question. Studying *The Ethiopian Herald* and Ahram online which are government organs of their respective states in conjunction with *Sudan Tribune*, which is an independent media, has revealed a tremendous amount of distinction amongst the three Medias' amount of coverage and choice of framing during the study period. *Sudan Tribune*, as compared to *The Ethiopian Herald* and Ahram Online has been more professional than frame focused in reporting the specific issue of the GERD during the sample time. The online media has covered the issue in a balanced manner exposing the opinions and views of the three countries. *Sudan Tribune* has posted only 26 news stories from June 1st to July 31st which is very minimal as compared to the Ethiopian Herald with eighty-nine 89 news published albeit the high volume of opinions, views, editorials, articles, commentaries, interviews, poems plays etc. in the same period. In a similar vein, Ahram online has been busy oftentimes posting more than two news stories a day and a total of ninety two 92 news stories published during the same period in addition to several articles, interviews, views and opinions etc.

The volume of publication and coverage of the specific issue of the GERD filling during the sample time by *Sudan Tribune* indicates that the online media has not given paramount importance to the issue. The study revealed that there were not many frames employed to highlight on the interest of Sudan as compared to the researched medias, along with it, which are *The Ethiopian Herald* and Ahram online.

Accordingly research findings during data selection and preliminary examination of the news stories revealed that very few framings were utilized to magnify the interest of Sudan during the impoundment of the reservoir. Thus, economic consequence frame, mutual benefit frame, conflict frame, water rights frame has been utilized in the news stories. However the research findings revealed that economic consequence and conflict frame as prominent frames utilized on the online media June/July 2020. *Sudan Tribune* has employed various techniques to magnify on both frames. The following analysis will look into how the online media framed the impoundment of the reservoir and its projected negative/positive impact.

#### 4.2.3.1. Economic Consequence Frame

The economic consequences frame, presents an event, problem or issue in terms of the economic consequences it will have on an individual, group, institution, region or Country. De vrees (2005).

*Sudan tribune's* framing of economic consequence has been employed in various ways including but not limited to repeatedly stating that the filling of the dam will have negative effect on the dams constructed in the country. To quote an example on *Sudan Tribune's* news published on June 10th 2020,

“While Sudan seeks to ensure a coordination mechanism on the filling process to avoid any negative impact when the water is released from the GERD” (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

Expressing the same opinion on the economic consequence that might affect the country, the following excerpt on June 12th discusses the usually failed negotiation regarding the operation and release of water and reemphasize Sudan's fear of economic consequence inflicted upon the country unless coordinated mechanism is conducted to protect Sudan's dam on the blue Nile.

“...they failed on the volume of water that will be stocked and what will be released for the downstream countries mainly Egypt. Also, Sudan wanted a coordination mechanism to protect its dams on the Blue Nile.” (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

The economic consequence frame was echoed on the online newspaper posted on June 17th. Sudan's interest to pressure Ethiopia not to start filling the dam before a deal is reached is reflected in the news story. Quoting high government official, which is Minister of Irrigation, *Sudan Tribune* highlights on the damage that might be caused on the Roseries Dam due to the impoundment of GERD.

*“The minister who was flanked by the members of the Sudanese negotiating team said that his country refuses to start the GERD filling before the conclusion of a legally binding agreement. He stressed they refuse the filling because this would damage the reservoir of the Roseires Dam, which is at 15 km from the Sudanese-Ethiopian border.”*

In support of the above-mentioned framing *Sudan Tribune* provides numeric illustration of how the filling and releasing water of the GERD may damage the Roseries dam.



“Ethiopia initially wanted to release 400 mm<sup>3</sup> per day of water while Sudan demanded 200mm<sup>3</sup> per day pointing that the reservoir of the Roseires is very small compared to the GERD (1 to 10).” (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

The demand of Sudan versus that of Egypt in the release of water after the filling of the dam clearly portray the difficult situation the three riparian countries are stuck in. The increased amount of water Egypt is demanding in contrast with minimal amount of water Sudan requested for is by itself an implication that’s hard to accommodate in case of Ethiopia. Getting back to the framing of economic consequence on *Sudan Tribune*, a headline published on June 20th expressed Sudan’s rejection of Ethiopia’s plan to fill the dam. The headline paraphrases its strong stance about the possible economic consequence in the following manner.

“The Sudanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Asma Abdallah, renewed on Saturday, Sudan’s "categorical rejection" of any unilateral move that would harm the country from a unilateral filling of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam” (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

Echoing the same fear and highlighting on the importance of coordinated work to protect the dams in Sudan the online media stated

*“Unlike Egypt, Sudan wants technical coordination between its dams on the Blue Nile and the GERD to control the water release of water and protect it, knowing that the reservoir of the first Sudanese dam is at 15 km from the border and that the new dam is located at 15 km on the other part inside Ethiopia.”*

June/July 2020 was the epicenter of the disagreement when Ethiopia and Egypt were engaged in blaming and accusing each other of failing to come to the negotiation table with a good faith. Ethiopia was blaming Egypt of diverting the agenda of the negotiation to a water sharing deal, which Addis strongly opposes. Examining *The Ethiopian Herald* news story on June 24th the following excerpt clearly depicts Ethiopia’s disappointment over Egypt’s “purposeful” refusal of reaching to an agreement during the negotiation accusing Cairo of insisting to include the hydro hegemony practice and deal on the negotiation that could have been focused on water filling and dam operation.

“Egypt’s latest efforts to undermine the trilateral talk are part of its longstanding strategy of maintaining the status quo of hydro hegemony on the Nile River, experts said.” (The Ethiopian Herald, 2020)

In the same manner Egypt was busy accusing Ethiopia of being very reluctant and hard to compromise and to reach a deal about the operation and the first phase filling of the dam. In Its June 18th headline Ahram online framed Ethiopia as an obstacle as usual for reaching a deal during the negotiation.

“Egypt says dam talks deadlocked as Ethiopia rejects a binding deal”. (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

With this disagreement and blaming of one another between Addis and Cairo, on the table Ethiopia has tried several times to convince Sudan for a bilateral agreement excluding Egypt. However, Sudan has repeatedly rejected Ethiopia’s offer fearing of losing the water share that may result in economic consequence. Thus *Sudan tribune* has been very persistent about reporting and/or framing Sudan’s refusal of bilateral agreement with Ethiopia contemplating economic consequence would probably result from it. The following excerpt re capitalizes that Ethiopia’s proposed offer for a separate agreement with Sudan is declined.

“Ethiopia proposed to sign a separate agreement with Sudan on the coordination mechanism and GERD’s operation in drought, and prolonged periods of dry years but Khartoum declined the offer, calling for a tripartite agreement.” (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

*Sudan Tribune* has reiterated the same view throughout the sample time that no bilateral negotiation with Ethiopia is possible, which may lead to economic consequence to Sudan. The news story on July 21st paraphrased

“Sudan had refused to sign a bilateral agreement with Ethiopia over its demand for technical cooperation and close coordination between the GERD and Sudanese dams on the Blue Nile.” (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

As mentioned in the introductory part of this subtopic *Sudan Tribune* has often times been very optimistic about the general existence and the filling of the GERD as well as the smooth process of the negotiation embracing Ethiopia’s perspective. While Egypt’s Ahram online was busy announcing that the negotiation wouldn’t bear any fruit due to Addis’ purposeful indifference,

*Sudan Tribune* was able to frame the issue in a positive light as well, as reported and written in the following excerpt on June 16th.

*“Talks between three countries on Monday focused on drought management rules during the long term filling and operation of the GERD. The Sudanese government said that “great progress” was achieved on the operation of the GERD, the safety of the dam, the long-term operation, data exchange and the technical committee for the needed coordination between the upstream and downstream countries.”*

In a similar tone the negotiation on GERD, which has been portrayed by *The Ethiopian Herald* and *Ahram* online as a failure, waste of time and power struggle to retain and reinstate Nile water hegemony by Egypt versus to introduce and champion Nile water control by Ethiopia, *Sudan Tribune* in the following excerpt written on June 17th provides a paramount positive perspective relaying a positive numeric illustration of the negotiation.

“Yasir Abbas Sudanese Minister of Irrigation stressed that between 90% to 95% of the technical issues related to the GERD filling and operation have been agreed.” (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

Highlighting on the interest of Sudan, the online media has been very accurate and professional in reporting about the GERD filling and the negotiations during the study period in a balanced manner unlike that of *The Ethiopian Herald* and *Sudan Tribune*. For instance Ethiopia’s and Egypt’s side and concerns was reflected on the news posted on June 10th as depicted in the following excerpt.

*“Ethiopia plans to impound 4.9 bcm in the first year of filling 13.5 bcm in the second year, but starting from the third year Addis Ababa says it would release a minimum of 31 bcm per year. But Egypt rejects this proposal demanding at least 40 bcm starting from the third year. On 21 February, Washington filed a compromise providing that 37 bcm should be released every year to Egypt, but Addis declined it.”*

To conclude, reporting and framing about the economic consequence that would allegedly cause significant harm to the lower riparian countries in special conjunction with the interest of Sudan has been highlighted on *Sudan Tribune* during the study period, but not as extensively as in the *Ahram* online.

*Sudan Tribune* has not been very persistent and highly interested about the issue of GERD and the first filling of the reservoir like the other two researched media outlets. The very fact of the news outlet’s minimal coverage about the GERD during the sample time is indicative of the fact

that the independent media, *Sudan Tribune* has not been engaged in propagating the government's agenda of portraying the filling of the GERD as detrimental particularly to Sudan and the lower riparian countries in general.

#### 4.2.3.2. Conflict Frame

Conflict frame is another frame utilized in the *Sudan Tribune* as revealed during the research analysis, which has been conducted inductively. This frame has not been conducted intensively and persistently, as it has been observed on *Ahram online*. *Sudan Tribune* employed conflict frame very carefully and systematically using techniques such as blaming, utilizing strong vocabularies, and echoing the concern of Egypt regarding the detrimental effect of the impoundment of the reservoir. War mongering words and phrases has not been employed on *Sudan Tribune*, but words like dispute, controversial project, damage to Sudanese dams etc. are employed to highlight on the extent of the conflict that may result in causing significant harm to Sudan's interest. As it is usually implemented in conflict framing, *Sudan Tribune* has identified two parties to be engaged in the conflict, which are Ethiopia and the lower riparian countries. Portraying Ethiopia and sometimes Egypt as the source of the conflict for failing to reach an agreement during the sample time, the online media has repeatedly expressed its fear of damage to dams in Sudan emphasizing on the negative impact of the filling of the reservoir again reflecting the interest of Sudan. So conflict frame was another predominantly used frame during the study period on the media outlet.

As in the following headline written on June 20th *Sudan Tribune* has reiterated the firm stance of the country regarding the importance of reaching an agreement before filling the dam. Quoting high government official as usual *Sudan Tribune* affirms the conflict frame to highlight on the rejection of the country to what it calls "Unilateral move" of Ethiopia.

"The Sudanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Asma Abdallah, renewed on Saturday, Sudan's "categorical rejection" of any unilateral move that would harm the country from a unilateral filling of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)." (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

The lead story reinforces the frame calling for cooperation and good faith to break the conflict and resolve the issue in the interest of the three riparian countries.

*Sudan Tribune* has also utilized opinions reflected in Egypt to recapitalize on the frame of conflict. Quoting from government officials in Egypt was a technique used in *Sudan Tribune* to

press on the “sensitive” issue of the GERD and the first filling of the reservoir which Sudan fears would create conflict due to damages inflicted on its dams.

“Ethiopia retracted from what had been agreed in Washington process to settle the disagreement over the filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) said the Egyptian government last Friday.” (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

Quoting The Egyptian government’s press release the headline has brought the conflict frame to the attention of its readers as stated in strong vocabulary that’s very critical of Ethiopia’s refusal to settle the disagreement as proposed and deliberated on the Washington summit.

*Sudan Tribune* again utilized the strong opposition and resistance of Egypt against the impoundment of the reservoir to highlight on the extent of the conflict. The news outlet propagates what Egypt’s call of UN member states to step in and stop Ethiopia from implementing what Egypt considers as a move directed against their survival.

“Egypt has urged for an international intervention to prevent the unilateral filling of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) recalling that UN member states are entitled to protect their vital interests and ensure their survival. (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

In elevating the conflict frame, war-mongering phrases are utilized, as there would be repercussions that threaten peace. *Sudan Tribune* in the June 12th issue illustrated,

“...the unilateral filling and operating the mega-dam "could have serious repercussions that threaten international peace and security[...] international community to this situation underscoring that it might lead to international friction or endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.” (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

Comparing the intensity and seriousness, this frame has not been utilized as intensely as that of Ahram online. *Sudan Tribune* seemed to be in a difficult situation regarding the first filling of the dam in that it’s interest has been in conflict with Ethiopia’s offer and Egypt’s demand. Ethiopia has offered to release 400 mm<sup>3</sup> per day amount of water while Egypt insisted on more than that amount of water to be released after the filling of the reservoir. Sudan, which is stuck in the middle requesting only 200mm<sup>3</sup> amount of water to protect its dam has been indulged in a difficult situation. The following excerpt written on July 14th states.

“Ethiopia initially wanted to release 400 mm<sup>3</sup> per day of water while Sudan demanded 200mm<sup>3</sup> per day pointing that the reservoir of the Roseires is very small compared to the GERD (1 to 10).” (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

Accordingly *Sudan Tribune* has been partial in portraying and framing the conflict regarding the issue of the impoundment of the reservoir. For instance the online media has openly highlighted on its rejection to the unnecessary move of Egypt in referring the issue of GERD impoundment to the Security Council in a blatant opposition to Cairo.

“...Omer Gamar Eldin state minister for foreign affairs told the BBC Arabic that his country does not support resorting to the Security Council to resolve the dispute over the Renaissance dam.” (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

In a similar vein to Egypt’s resort to the Security Council, the Irrigation Minister re affirmed that seeking a solution through tripartite talks are the most effective way of settling the disagreement.

“The Sudanese irrigation minister Yasir Abbas said that his government still believes that tripartite talks are the most effective way to reach a settlement to the disagreement on the first filling of the GERD. (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

*Sudan Tribune* has utilized conflict frame but has been very partial occasionally portraying the issue in a neutral manner. The interests and arguments of all the riparian countries, Ethiopia Sudan and Egypt have been reflected in most cases. For instance the core point of the disagreement in the negotiation is described by Ethiopia as Egypt’s resistance to stick to the filling and operation of the dam in a quest for incorporating water sharing deal. Egypt on her part accuses Ethiopia of refusing to allow the water sharing deal to be incorporated in the deal, which it claims, is in the best interest of the lower riparian countries. However, Sudan’s neutral position and its support to Ethiopia is reflected very clearly in a news story posted on June 17<sup>th</sup>.

“A Sudanese negotiator told reporters on 17 June after the suspension of the negotiations that Sudan refuses to involve the water sharing issue in the talks saying this deal should be dedicated only to the filing and operation of the GERD.”

*Sudan Tribune* has also posted Ethiopia’s view to balance the repeated concern and report of the lower riparian countries. Regarding Egypt’s resort to the Security Council, Ethiopia’s response

has been balanced very well. The following excerpt on June 16th exposes Egypt's unnecessary resort to the UN in what Ethiopia described as disruption of the negotiation.

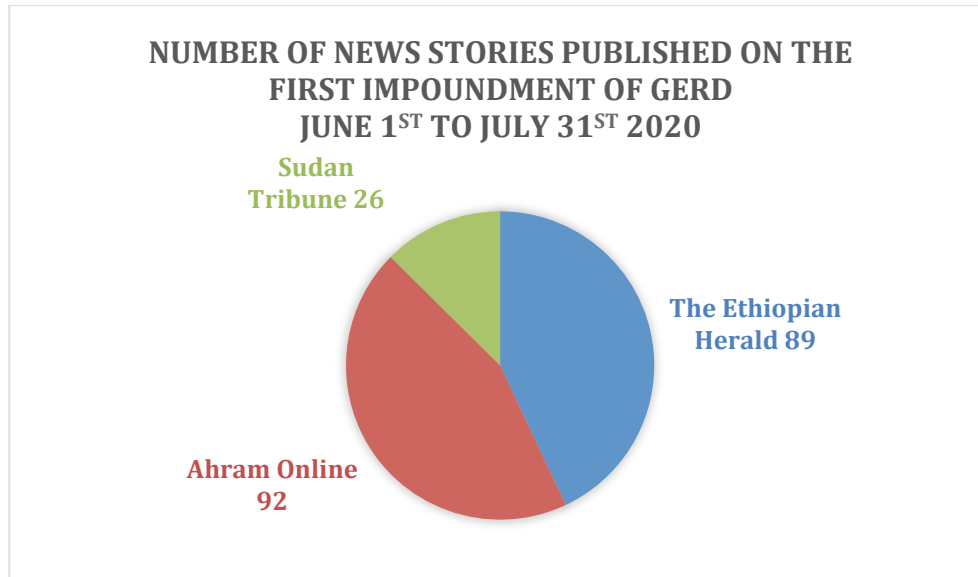
“Ethiopian Foreign Minister Gedu Andargachew told reporters in Addis Ababa that Egypt is making efforts to take the issue to the UN Security Council while negotiating with his country and Sudan [...] While we invite them for negotiation open-minded and discussing issues based on principles, Egyptians are thinking in a different way and to disrupt the negotiation,” (Sudan Tribune, 2020)

Highlighting on the repeated negative role of Egypt, the newspaper redefined Egypt as a major hurdle in the development of Ethiopia and called on the international community to put pressure on Cairo. *Sudan Tribune* further exposed in the same news story what Ethiopia called Egypt's unfair treatment of Ethiopia in the following manner.

*“Egypt has left no stone unturned to first stop the construction and then “hold us back when we already started...Now, they are working to defame and weaken Ethiopia... he stressed before to call on the international community to put pressure on Egypt to act as per the principles of a just and equitable share of the Nile water.”*

To sum up, the conflict frame exposed in the news stories were reflections of the views and speculations that significant damage might be caused on the dams constructed in the Sudan. Research findings revealed that the news outlet has been reporting about the issue of the impoundment of GERD in a relatively neutral tone and balanced manner as compared to that of *Ahram online* and *The Ethiopian Herald*. The volume of publication during the whole period of June 1st to July 31st and the minimal coverage of the specific issue of the GERD filling indicate that the online media has not given paramount importance to the issue.

CHART 4.1 NEWS STORIES ON THE THREE MEDIA OUTLETS JUNE 1<sup>ST</sup> TO JULY 31<sup>ST</sup>



### 4.3. Comparative Analysis

The research findings in the framing analysis of the three Medias have been discussed distinctively and thoroughly in the previous subtopics of the same chapter. The data presentation and analysis conducted on the Medias in question by itself is somehow a comparative discourse deliberating on how and why the news stories has been framed as such, however, the researcher will reanalyze the research findings in a comparative perspective utilizing certain important parameters based on the news stories discussed in the research. Accordingly the researcher would compare and contrast the findings of the research in a paradigm where one can see points of convergence and/or divergence of the news framing in the media outlets in focus during the time frame selected for the study. Clarity, vagueness as well as confusion in conjunction with deliberate tendencies in “defining of the problem, looking into the cause of the problem/causal interpretation, moral judgments as to how the causal effects are evaluated and suggestion of treatment of the problems and/likely outcomes has been utilized to analyze the news stories. (Entman 1993 pp 51-58).



The tone of news stories will be another important parameter for comparing the news framing of the first round impoundment of the reservoir on GERD. Thus the study would engage in exposing how positively, negatively or neutrally has the issue of the impoundment of the reservoir in July 2020 been treated in the three media outlets. This chapter will finally give some highlights regarding similarities and or differences observed in reporting about the issue and wrap up the comparison

### **4.3.1. Defining the problem**

#### **4.3.1.1. *The Ethiopian Herald***

Research findings reveal that *The Ethiopian Herald* through its deliberate framing of the issue has defined the problem, as Egypt's purposeful lack of will and objection to come to the negotiation table in good faith and a win-win approach. *The Ethiopian Herald* repeatedly framed and defined the problem to arise from Egypt's stubbornness and selfish tendency that insists on reinstating the obsolete colonial era hegemonic rules and regulations, which has given the two lower riparian countries the right to use the entire Nile River. *The Ethiopian Herald* further defined the problem to come from Cairo's administration denial of the sovereign/natural right of Ethiopia to impound the GERD reservoir using the natural resource of the country.

#### **4.3.1.2. *Ahram Online***

Ahram online on its part defined the problem as Ethiopia's intransigence to incorporate and redefine the historic right of the lower riparian countries in the Nile River water share. Ahram online consistently framed the problem to come from Ethiopia's dream of becoming the largest hydropower exporter in Africa in the expense and suffering of the lower riparian countries. Ahram online further framed the problem to be Addis Ababa's plan to control and have powerful dominance over the Nile River.

#### **4.3.1.3. *Sudan Tribune***

*Sudan Tribune*, which has been found to be moderate in framing the issue, has focused on projecting the solution to the problem at hand rather than pointing a finger on Ethiopia or Egypt in defining the problem. *Sudan Tribune* has however defined the problem to arise from failure of Ethiopia and Egypt to come to the negotiation table with good faith.

### 4.3.2. Exploring/interpreting the cause

#### 4.3.2.1. *The Ethiopian Herald*

*The Ethiopian Herald* has framed the major cause of the problem to be the old and obsolete colonial era agreement that has bestowed the two lower riparian countries the right to exploit the Nile River in a monopolist mentality. Egypt's move to oppose Ethiopia's legitimate right over the Abbay River is also described as the cause of the problem to reach an agreement in the filling and operation of the dam. The newspaper further emphasized on Egypt's wrong and unfounded perception regarding the harmful effect of the impoundment together with the purposeful exacerbation of the conflict as the main cause of the problem.

#### 4.3.2.2. *Ahram online*

Ahram Online turns the table on Ethiopia consistently blaming the country of objecting Egypt and Sudan's proposal for a better remedy to be the cause of the problem. Ahram online blamed Ethiopia to be the cause of the problem due to Addis's turning a deaf ear to the call of the lower riparian countries to observe international cross boundary water management law. According to the research findings, Ethiopia's failure to abide by the international cross boundary law, which clearly dictates avoidance of significant harm to the lower riparian countries, is the major cause of the problem. Ahram online further reiterated that the existential threat posed against Egypt due to the filling and operation of the GERD and Ethiopia's resistance to accept proposals rendered by the lower riparian countries as well as the US and other concerned bodies to be the cause of the problem.

#### 4.3.2.3. *Sudan Tribune*.

*Sudan Tribune*, which is stricken with a conflict of interest due to the nature of the situation, remained to be partial and seems to refrain from pointing fingers on any party. The online media however sometimes blamed Ethiopia/Egypt to be the cause of the problem. *Sudan Tribune* repeatedly blamed Ethiopia to be the cause of the problem as Addis Ababa was calling for a bilateral agreement, which Sudan repeatedly rejected. Sticking to and coming to terms with the lower riparian countries in a trilateral agreement instead of Addis' preference to make unilateral decision or requesting Sudan for a bilateral agreement has been pinpointed by *Sudan Tribune* as a cause of the problem. The online media also slashed on Egypt's move to incorporate a water

share deal in the negotiation, which could have been focused on the filling of the reservoir and management of the River Nile within its own boundary as a cause of the problem.

### **4.3.3. Making moral judgments**

#### **4.3.3.1. *The Ethiopian Herald***

In making moral judgments, *The Ethiopian Herald* has portrayed the lower riparian countries especially Egypt as selfish agent that has no sense of morality. In its argument, The Ethiopian Herald described the exclusion of the country from the 1902 and 1959 agreements as a blatant action of lack of morality in the first place. Insisting on reinstating the obsolete rule in the current negotiation, *The Ethiopian Herald* reiterates, is another manifestation of lack of morality, selfishness and historical injustice committed against Ethiopia. *The Ethiopian Herald* provided considerable empirical evidences to hammer of the issue of morality into the specific issue of GERD filling. Accordingly by stating

Ethiopia's exclusion from utilizing its natural resource despite contributing 85 percent of the Nile water

The fact that 65 percent of Ethiopians live in darkness while 90 percent of Egyptians has access to electricity.

Egypt's to deliberate failure to utilizing its untouched underground water in Jabal Al-Uweinat Mountains, which has the potential to feed Egypt for hundreds of years. Etc. puts the lower riparian countries especially Egypt onto the spotlight of the moral Judgment.

#### **4.3.3.2. Ahram Online**

Ahram Online on its part turns the table on Ethiopia and portrayed the construction and the "quick filling" /as per Ethiopia's plan/ of the GERD as morally wrong.

The online media supports its argument by bringing the issue of "Existential threat" rhetoric to the table.

Ahram online judges Ethiopia and the issue of impounding the reservoir without trilateral agreement as morally wrong by producing various numeric and factual evidences such as explaining about how the 85 percent of The Nile water which flows from Ethiopian highlands that provides 55.5 billion cubic meters of water to Egypt is already insufficient in comparison to the need of 80 billion cubic meters annually.

Ahram online emphasizes Ethiopia's construction and unilateral decision of filling the GERD without incorporating water sharing deal in the agreement is morally wrong in the eyes of millions of people that rely on Nile River for its existence.

Ahram Online further elevates the moral judgment appeal explaining that Ethiopia has so many water resources to utilize while Egypt has only the Nile. Accordingly Ethiopia's endeavor to exploit the Nile River is not morally right in the judgment of Ahram Online.

#### **4.3.3.3. *Sudan Tribune***

*Sudan Tribune* seems to have neutral stance in making moral judgments. The news outlet has been reporting about the issue in a balanced manner. Thus *Sudan Tribune* has provided the opinions of Ethiopia and Egypt with out judging one against the other. The online media however, insisted on giving consideration to protection of its dams build before the GERD. Ethiopia's "Unilateral" move to fill and release high amount of water /400 mm<sup>3</sup> per day/ is in a way morally wrong to the judgment of *Sudan Tribune*.

#### **4.3.4. Projecting Solution/remedy**

##### **4.3.4.1. *The Ethiopian Herald***

In projecting the remedy during the sample time, The Ethiopian Herald has insisted on the negotiation to be spearheaded by the three countries only and preferred to resort to the AU instead of other Western parties. Solving African problem by Africans was the main motto during the negotiation conducted to resolve the issue of disagreement regarding the impoundment of the GERD. *The Ethiopian Herald* highly suggested that the solution to the problem at hand is coming to the negotiation table with good faith, mutual benefit, win-win approach, cooperation and regional integration have also been forwarded by *The Ethiopian Herald* as a remedy to the problem.

##### **4.3.4.2. *Ahram Online***

*Ahram online* has also insisted on the importance of coming to the negotiation forum with good faith. However, the online media aggressively demanded and emphasized on and inclusion of water share and delaying of the filling of the GERD as a sole solution to the existing problem

during the filling of the dam. Reaching a binding legal agreement before impounding the reservoir and avoiding unilateral decision has also been forwarded as a solution to the problem. Furthermore including third parties such as the US World Bank and European Union in the negotiation and embracing their suggestion as a guiding principle rather than accepting them as a mere spectator has also been forwarded by the media outlet as a solution to the problem.

#### **4.3.4.3. *Sudan Tribune***

*Sudan Tribune's* suggestion as a solution to the problem is cooperation between three riparian countries for a win-win situation. The online media repeatedly emphasized on the solution to evolve from mutual benefit, cooperation and trilateral agreement between the three riparian countries.

### **4.4. Tonal Comparison**

#### **4.4.1. *The Ethiopian Herald***

*The Ethiopian Herald* has portrayed the first filling of the dam in a positive tone. The optimistic view of the government regarding the importance of filling the dam for a win-win situation, cooperation, regional integration and comprehensive benefit of the three riparian countries has been depicted in a positive tone. The news stories repetitively portrayed the filling of the dam as indispensable and beneficial not only for Ethiopia but also for all the concerned parties regardless of any speculation and/or fear of negative outcome as forwarded by Sudan and Egypt.

#### **4.4.2. *Ahram online***

*Ahram Online* portrayed it in a negative tone. The news stories have portrayed the first filling of the GERD in as a move directed towards curtailing the water supply of Egypt. In denying Ethiopia's endeavor to start the filling of the dam for hydroelectric generation purpose, the tone of the news stories have been very aggressive in announcing pessimistic views that the GERD and the planned impoundment of the reservoir is detrimental to Egypt and Sudan. The news stories portrayed the first filling as an infringement of legally obtained water rights of the lower riparian countries and insisted that the GERD shouldn't be filled without reaching an agreement that re instate the historic rights of Egypt/Sudan over the Nile River and eventually satisfy the need of water supply to both countries.

#### **4.4.3. Sudan Tribune**

*Sudan Tribune* highlights on the importance of reaching agreement before filling the dam and the tone of that outlet is not as positive as *The Ethiopian herald* and as negative as that of *Ahram online*'s exposition of tones. The news outlet's minimal coverage about the GERD during the sample time is one indication of the fact that the independent media, *Sudan Tribune* has not been engaged in propagating the government's agenda of portraying the filling of the GERD as detrimental particularly to Sudan and the lower riparian countries in general. Research findings revealed that the news outlet has been reporting about the issue of the impoundment of GERD in a relatively neutral tone and balanced manner as compared to that of *Ahram online* and The Ethiopian Herald.

#### **4.5. Clarity versus vagueness**

In comparing the clarity, vagueness or confusion in reporting the first phase filling of the GERD, all the three studied Medias has done a remarkable job. Although there were paramount salience of purposefully framed ideas and messages incorporated in the news stories, none of the media outlets have been observed to be drifting away from the topic. The news stories were clearly discussing the issue and reporting about the specific issue in a comprehensible manner but with aggressive and highly noticeable utilization of framing techniques that goes in line with the interests of their respective states.

To sum up, The Ethiopian Herald and *Ahram online* has served the interest of their respective states interest aggressively persistently and with a noticeable and deliberate frame while *Sudan Tribune*'s intensity of propagating the interest of the government of was not recognizable due to the media outlet's independence as clearly described on its editorial policy.

#### **4.6. Similarities versus Differences**

The research findings revealed that there are certain similarities and differences between the three media outlets in reporting and framing about the first impoundment of the GERD. *The Ethiopian Herald* and *Ahram Online* has been observed to be similar in consistency and deliberate framing of the issue in favor of or against the impoundment of the reservoir supporting their respective government's stance. The dominant frames observed in *the Ethiopian Herald* which are exclusive frame, natural rights frame and water rights frame are all manifestations of the strong opinion of the government's optimistic view and determination regarding the non-

harmful nature and the indispensability of the filling of the GERD. As clearly indicated in the analysis portion of *The Ethiopian Herald* news reporting, the news paper

Emphasized on the filling of the GERD as a legitimate right of the country, which can never be questioned. The selected news stories repeatedly confirm that Ethiopia's right over its own natural resources is undeniable and well supported by international cross boundary rivers utilization rules and regulations. The *Ethiopian Herald* has been observed to be in the same page with the government in advocating for the interest of its own country. Accordingly the analyzed news stories have provided substantive and empirical information to assertively vocalized/written the suffering and victimhood of the country due to the colonial era agreements. The new stories reiterated Ethiopia's quest for equitable, justifiable and fair utilization of the Nile River.

In its mutual benefit frame the news stories portrayed the optimistic view of the government regarding the significance of the filling the dam for a win- win situation, cooperation, regional integration and comprehensive benefit of the three riparian countries.

When it comes to *Ahram online*, the news outlet has been observed to be a complete replica of *The Ethiopian Herald* as it has been aggressively engaged in writing and framing against the impoundment of the GERD. The dominant frames observed in the *Ahram Online* Natural rights frame and conflict frame are both propagations of the strong opinion of the government's pessimistic view and portrayal of the GERD and its impoundment as a project that inflicts significant harm to the lower riparian countries. The news reporting strongly opposes the first filling of the GERD to be conducted with out a legally binding agreement between the three riparian countries. In its Natural rights framing, the news outlet portrayed the first filling of the GERD as a move directed towards curtailing the water supply of Egypt. *Ahram online* further portrayed the first filling as an infringement of legally obtained water rights of the lower riparian countries and insisted that the GERD shouldn't be filled without reaching an agreement that re actualize the historic rights of Egypt/Sudan over the Nile river and eventually satisfy the need of water supply to both countries. In this frame *Ahram online* was focused on repeatedly propagating the Egyptian government's stance against the filling of the dam.

*Sudan Tribune* as an independent news outlet has been reporting and framing the issue with in the interest of Sudan. The online media's utilization of conflict frame and economic consequence frame adds to the online media's support to the popular opinion of Sudanese government. However the online media hasn't been engaged in aggressively writing in favor of or against the filling of the dam. Research findings revealed that the news outlet has been reporting about the issue of the impoundment of GERD in a relatively neutral tone and balanced manner as compared to that of *Ahram online* and *The Ethiopian Herald*. The volume of publication during the whole period of June 1<sup>st</sup> to July 31<sup>st</sup> and the minimal coverage of the specific issue of the GERD filling indicate that the online has not given paramount importance to the issue.

To sum up *The Ethiopian Herald*, *Ahram online* and *Sudan Tribune* has been observed to be similar in framing their news stories in the interest of their respective governments. The research findings has pinpointed that there was some indication of agreement between *Sudan Tribune* and *Ahram online*. Both the news outlets have insisted and called for a legal agreement to be reached before the GERD reservoir's impoundment, which reflects and supports the interest of their respective governments. The degree and intensity of the support, however, differs with *Sudan Tribune's* exposition of the issue in a relatively neutral tone.

The difference in reporting about the issue observed during the analysis across the three Medias is the perspective in defining of the problem, looking into the cause of the problem/causal interpretation, moral judgments as to how the causal effects are evaluated and suggestion of treatment of the problems, as indicated in the previous subtopic. Noticeable differences in tones are another important distinction observed across the three Medias. All the media outlets studied has been similar in reporting about the issue with clarity.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1. CHAPTER REVIEW

This chapter deals with the conclusion of the findings of the thesis to be followed by recommendations that would be crucial for farther researches within the scope of the same issue.

#### 5.2. Conclusion

This study is conducted to investigate examine and analyze the news framing tendencies of the three riparian countries, Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt during the first phase impoundment of the GERD reservoir. The three media's framing of the issue in such a manner can be attributed to the ownership agenda setting and editorial policy of the media outlets. The time frame selected for the analysis of the news stories was June 1st. to July 31st. A total of 167 news stories were published during the study period. *The Ethiopian Herald* published 89 news stories during the study period and *Sudan Tribune* posted 26 news stories to be excelled highly by Ahram Online with 92 news stories.

The research findings have given ample analysis in answering the research questions projected in the first chapter of the study. Research questions one two and three have been examined, studied and answered with careful treatment of scientific research method as projected in the methodology of the study. The researcher has closely studied the news stories written on the three media outlets in the fourth chapter to come up with in-depth analysis and sound argument. In addition, to analyzing the news stories, responses obtained from the in-depth interviews conducted with various scholars have been utilized to give substance to the findings of the study. Research findings revealed the three media has framed the issue of the first round filling of the GERD in a distinctive manner that goes with the interest of their respective countries and the editorial policy of the media outlets in focus. For instance the Ethiopian Herald has utilized various frames in reporting about the issue of the first phase filling of the GERD. According to the research findings three prominent frames were utilized during the sample time in the Ethiopian Herald. The dominant frames exposed during the first round filling of the GERD by *The Ethiopian Herald* were, Natural Rights frame, Exclusion frame and Mutual benefit frame. Sufficient example and analysis has been given to explain how and why the news outlet framed

the news stories during the study period in such a manner. Similarities and differences between the three medias in the study has also been provided with detailed analysis and reasoning.

In a similar vein Ahram online and *Sudan Tribune* has been examined closely through the dimensions of the research questions. Research findings revealed that Ahram online has dominantly utilized historic rights and conflict frame to emphasize on Egypt's interest on the issue of the GERD during the impoundment of the reservoir. The researcher has closely observed and analyzed the news stories written on Ahram online giving proper attention to frame indicative elements as projected by scholars in the field.

*Sudan Tribune* has also been examined within the scope of the research questions. The online media has been observed to dominantly utilize two frames in the news stories during the study period. The frames identified to be prominent on *Sudan Tribune* in June/July 2020 were economic consequence frame and conflict frame. *Sudan Tribune* like that of Ahram online has dominantly used the conflict frame in the news stories but the intensity, tone, persistence and aggressiveness was nothing similar to Ahram Online. *Sudan Tribune* has been relatively neutral in reporting the issue providing the views, opinions and perspectives of the three countries in a balanced manner tone and clarity. The three media's framing of the issue in such a manner can be attributed to the ownership of the media organizations as well as agenda setting and editorial policy of the media outlets as projected in the data presentation and analysis portion of the study.

The research method dictates to include researches conducted by other researchers and in-depth interviews to provide the thesis and analysis more depth. Accordingly the researcher has explicitly and implicitly used views of the informants conducted during the research. The study also incorporated scholars and government official views and opinions from the three countries to give a balanced view regarding the issue. For instance, as indicated and quoted in the thematic analysis portion of the study Ethiopian scholars views that states the non-harmful nature of the GERD along with the Egyptian's famous Scientist and Geologist view exposing Egypt's rich water sources, which would be enough for a hundred of years has been quoted in coordination with Sudanese high government official's view regarding his stance of Egypt's unnecessary resort to the Security council. These three quoted informants are listed in the appendix part of the study as they are considered significant contributors for triangulation of the study. Thus the views and opinions of the scholars and government officials from the three countries along with the actual interviewees have been balanced in the study.

Examining the overall picture of the three Medias as revealed through the research findings, the study concludes the first round filling of the GERD has been reported and framed in favor of the media outlets respective countries national interests. For instance, *The Ethiopian Herald* hasn't been reporting about the environmental and ecological issues in relation to the GERD the same way the two lower riparian countries disregarded Ethiopia's need for development and the many positive outcome of the GERD that could bring regional economic social and political cooperation as well as integration. Hence, the news stories of *The Ethiopian Herald*, *Sudan Tribune* and *Ahram Online*, which could have been calibrated towards all-encompassing and balanced account of the issue, have otherwise observed to be impartial.

### 5.3. Recommendations

The following recommendations are forwarded based on the findings of the study and the relevance of the issue for further and deeper research.

- It would be interesting and important if further research has been conducted on the three riparian countries pro government and independent media outlets framing tendency regarding the second impoundment of the GERD reservoir with a mixed method to provide altered perspective in methodology.
- It would be relevant if a comparative narrative analysis of themes in news stories in the major Medias in Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan has been conducted after the finalization of filling the GERD.
- It would be professional if the three Medias studied could be more sensitive to the ethics of journalism in presenting a well-balanced view of an issue instead of deliberately emphasizing only on their respective states' interests.
- It is recommended that researchers conduct a study solely based on the public opinion of the three riparian countries regarding the GERD to compare and contrast the popular pro government views of the news outlets versus the reality based views of the public.
- It would be very ideal if the mainstream Medias in the three countries coordinate and establish a regional news outlet that can entertain the interest of the three states encompassing the concern and fear of the lower riparian states in conjunction with the development need of Ethiopia.

- It is recommended that all the basin countries' news outlets views and opinions regarding the GERD could be studied with a purpose of bringing a coordinated frame of understanding regarding the importance of construction dams for hydroelectric powers without causing significant harm to lower riparian countries.

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## Appendix A

### SATELLITE IMAGE OF GERD



Uploaded Photo <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/africa/ethiopian-tv-apologizes-for-error-in-nile-dam-reporting>

## APPENDIX B

### SCREEN SHOT OF THE ETHIOPIAN HERALD NEWS STORY

THE ETHIOPIAN HERALD THURSDAY 23 JULY 2020

PAGE 2

## News

### History in the making

#### Ethiopians rise to new height achieving self-financed GERD first filling

• A rare confluence of fast-paced Dam construction, unprecedented rainfall

BY STAFF REPORTER

**ADDIS ABABA** – Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed congratulated Ethiopians yesterday on the completion of first phase water impoundment at the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) describing the achievement as the embalm of present generation in accomplishing grand projects.

Ethiopia has demonstrated the soundness of its argument that the GERD does not

pose harm to downstream countries as the impoundment goes without reducing the water flowing to Sudan and Egypt, said the premier.

In this regard, he expressed hope that the people of the world would understand Ethiopian's resolve to climb to the next height.

"We have no intention of harming both Sudan and Egypt in the process of the construction and operation." See page 6



### Prominent scholars' views...

Professor Yaqob Arsano said: I'm excited and feeling national pride. The next generation will learn a lot from each

country will give a chance to Sudan and Egypt to understand Ethiopia's stance which is sharing the benefits of

closure to strike a binding deal so far, the CFA uncovered Egypt's greed and Ethiopia's genuine position

**Authority signs 19.9 bln. Birr road construction contract agreements**

## APPENDIX C

Screen shot of congratulatory message by Prime minster Dr. Abiy Ahmad July 23 2020 The Ethiopian Herald

failed to decipher the cause behind our perseverance on the construction of the GERD, they may consider that we have intentionally built the Dam to pose threats to downstream countries. This is far from truth.

The dam is the insignia of the current generation in proving that it can accomplish grand projects. It is a spark that sheds lights on the years of remorse for our questions are getting answered. It is an audible voice to all those that attempted to break our will in that we are steadfast to get rid of the poverty they long imposed upon us.

I guess that the world would now better understand the fact that our Dam is a turning point

**I guess that the world would now better understand the fact that our Dam is a turning point in our effort of taking the next height and can stand upright. Now, we behold, achieved the filling of the Dam per our schedule without soliciting finance from nobody and without harming any party.**

**We are just two-and-half months away from the end of the major rainy season; the precipitation is still increasing than ever. And here, God helped us that the water overtops the Dam well ahead of the schedule**

the project, individuals that worked round the clock at the dam site and Ethiopia's committed sons and daughters that participated in various negotiations. We may end up in days if we attempt to list our citizens that contributed to the Dam from their meager income, and people who supported us through continuous efforts of successive generations; and that no good thing can be achieved without paying a price.

In the governance and democratic building process, it is clear that victory can only be registered through cooperation, passing the baton from one generation to the next and continuous struggle without losing hope. Our Renaissance Dam is a living testimony to the fact that disintegrated efforts and robe pulling will only lead to destruction. But if we do not give a chance for those who separate us, if we don't open our doors for those who make us to fight with and kill each other, we will be able to register new victories in the future. We can think, plan and realize our prosperity. We will start to be proud of our fingerprints rather than always telling and narrating the great deeds of our forefathers. For this, we have to be able to demonstrate our commitment. Even if the Dam is one of the major issues

## APPENDIX D

SCREEN SHOT OF THE ETHIOPIAN HERALD NEWS STORY

### Egyptian geologist slams claims of GERDs technical shortcomings

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

**ADDIS ABABA** - Since GERD was started with adequate scientific research and being built by world-renowned company, the safety and quality of the dam should not be questioned, Egyptian Geologist Farouk Al Baz said.

The Egyptian famous scientist and geologist Farouk told the MBC Arabic You Tube channel that the rhetoric that GERD filling will lead for water shortage is a reflection of politicians and media propaganda, not reality.

Al-Baz said that both claims of "safety and water shortage threats" for downstream countries are baseless and unfounded, adding that these are media and politicians agendas, not public concerns of Egyptians.



According to Al-Baz GERD will never affect the virtual water flow of the river and the claims of water shortage due to the dam by downstream countries are just a political propaganda. In addition, he added, if we

see fairly, Egypt owns a huge potential of groundwater for a hundreds of years.

Al-Baz stated that there is untouched underground water in Jabal Al-Uweinat Mountain and surrounding in Egypt which is a huge potential to feed Egypt for a hundred of years. Hence, Al-Baz said that GERD never become a threat for water shortage or security to Egypt and the concerns by Egypt are not real threats.

Finally the scholar stressed that Egypt's politicians claims and oppositions over the Ethiopia's dam, GERD, is political, not scientific.

### Council working on addressing domestic rows

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## APPENDIX E

### SCREEN SHOT OF AHRAM ONLINE NEWS STORY

**ahramonline**

Please enter keyword

Home **Egypt** Business Opinion World Arts & Culture Sports Life & Style Heritage Books Analysis Folk Multimedia

Politics

## Ethiopia 'would think twice' about filling GERD without prior agreement if met by strong stance from Egypt, Sudan: Sudanese FM

Ahram Online , Sunday 7 Jun 2020



The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (photo: Reuters)

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- 10:30 Tuchel earns second crack at Champions League glory with immediate impact on.....
- 10:25 Solskjaer's Man Utd rebuild mission laid bare by Europa League agony
- 10:22 Mali president, PM released: Military official
- 09:59 Biden urges ceasefire in Ethiopia's Tigray, says rights abuses 'must end'
- 09:49 Thousands evacuate Congo's Goma after more volcanic activity
- 09:35 Israeli police suspend officer in east Jerusalem shooting

### Readers Picks

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5. Blinken says Egypt real, effective partner in dealing with latest 'Israeli-Palestinian violence': Reuters
6. Egypt's drugmaker EVA Pharma to manufacture

<https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/371622/Egypt/Politics-/Ethiopia-would-think-twice-about-filling-GERD-with.aspx>

### SCREEN SHOT OF SUDAN TRIBUNE NEWS STORY



June 25, 2020 (KHARTOUM) - Sudan again declined an Ethiopian offer to sign a bilateral agreement on the filling of the Renaissance Dam and reiterated calls for a tripartite deal.



**The planned Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project (AP)**  
Following a recent dispute over the legal binding character of an agreement between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan over the first filling of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), Egypt in a letter to the Security Council blamed Ethiopia of posing a threat to international peace and security.

## Appendix F

Headlines and excerpts analyzed in the research paper from *The Ethiopian Herald*

NO	News paper	HEAD LINE /Excerpt	Date of publication	Web link	Date of access
1	T H	No one stops Ethiopia from filling the dam	June 9 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="https://www.press.et">https://www.press.et</a>	A P R I L  7/ 2020  T O M A Y  7/ 2020
2	E E	Historical right or historical injustice? GERD turns a page on years of unfair monopoly: Experts	June 12		
3	T H I	Ethiopia's Nile water natural right cannot by any means be compromised and set aside.	June 16		
4	O P	Cooperation with Ethiopia on the Nile is the sole option of Egypt	June 19		
5	I A	Egyptian Geologist slams claims of GERD technical shortcomings	June 20		
6	N	GERD is not security but development issue: UNSC* Tripartite talks resume	July 5		
7	H E	Egypt's stance threat to the regional peace and security: Scholar	July 9		
8	R A L D	Egyptian gov't long disseminates misinformation, Engages in proxy use: Expert, Egyptian Media Frequently release fake news	July 17		
9		No international law obliges Ethiopia to sign a deal before dam filling	July 25		

Headlines and excerpts analyzed in the research paper from *Sudan Tribune*

N O	News paper	HEAD LINE /Excerpt	Date of publicati on	Web link	Date of access
1	S U D A N T R I B U N E	Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt on Wednesday discussed via teleconference filing of the GERD	June 10	<a href="https://www.sudantribune.com">https://www.sudantribune.com</a>	J U N E 10/2019 TO J U L Y 30/2019
2		Ethiopia retracted from what had been agreed in Washington process to settle the disagreement over the filling of the GERD said the Egyptian government last Friday.	June 12		
3		Ethiopia accused Egypt of seeking to obstruct the ongoing talks for an agreement over the filling of the reservoir of the GERD in a bid to refer the dispute to the Security Council	June 16		
4		The irrigation ministers of Sudan, Egypt, and Ethiopia referred their legal dispute over the filling and operation of the Renaissance Dam to the prime ministers of the three countries after failing to agree on it.	June 17		
5		The Sudanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Asma Abdallah, renewed on Saturday, Sudan's "categorical rejection" of any unilateral move that would harm the country from a unilateral filling of (GERD).	June 20		

6		Egypt has urged for an international intervention to prevent the unilateral filling of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) recalling that UN member states are entitled to protect their vital interests and ensure their survival.	June 21		
7		Sudan on Tuesday sent to the African Union presidency its final report on the filling and operation the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and joined a draft agreement to resolve the dispute after the failure of the negotiations between Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia.	July 14		
8		Sudan had refused to sign a bilateral agreement with Ethiopia over its demand for technical cooperation and close coordination between the GERD and Sudanese dams on the Blue Nile	July 21		
9		Ethiopia initially wanted to release 400 mm <sup>3</sup> per day of water while Sudan demanded 200mm <sup>3</sup> per day pointing that the reservoir of the Roseires is very small compared to the GERD (1 to 10).	July 14		



Headlines and excerpts analyzed in the research paper from *Ahram Online*

NO	News paper	HEAD LINE/Excerpt	Date of publication	Web link	Date of access
1	A H R A M  O N L I N E	GERD could threaten lives and safety of millions of Sudanese, Khartoum tells UNSC	June 2	<a href="https://english.ahram.org.eg">https://english.ahram.org.eg</a>	A P R I L  12/2020  T O M A Y  7/2020
2		Ethiopia 'would think twice' about filling GERD without prior agreement if met by strong stance from Egypt, Sudan: Sudanese FM	June 7		
3		Egypt calls on Ethiopia to commit to 'no unilateral action' on GERD before end of negotiations	June 10		
4		Egypt will seek other options if Ethiopia remains intransigent: Foreign minister	June 15		
5		Egypt, which is almost entirely dependent on the River Nile for its freshwater, fears the dam will diminish its water supply, which is already	June 15		

		below scarcity level. Some 85 percent of the Nile water that reaches Egypt flows from Ethiopian highlands			
6		Egypt says dam talks deadlocked as Ethiopia rejects a binding deal	June 18		
7		Ethiopia to fill disputed dam, deal or no deal	July 19		
8		Ethiopia hopes the massive \$4.8 billion dam will allow it to become Africa's largest power exporter. On the other hand, Egypt, which relies on the Blue Nile for 95 percent of its freshwater, fears the dam will diminish its water supply, which is already below scarcity level	July 2		
9		Egypt rejects unilateralism compromising right to Nile water, Sisi tells South African counterpart	July 26		

## APPENDIX G

### List of Informants

Name of Informant	Position	Country
Fakahmad Negash Nuru	Water Resources Management Expert: Eastern Nile Technical Regional Office [ENTRO]	Ethiopia
Seid Adem Siraj	Egypt Radio and Television Journalist. Broadcaster.	Egypt
Webalem Fekade, PhD.	Social development and communication head. Eastern Nile Technical regional Office [ENTRO]	Ethiopia
Teshager Shiferaw PhD.	Lecturer at Addis Ababa University, Media and Communications scholar.	Ethiopia
Rehab Abdalmohsen	1. Journalist/Science Writer working for Scidev.net	Egypt
Hailu Abraham	Directorate Director of Public Relations at Office of National Council for Coordination of public participation for GERD	Ethiopia
Mohamad Ibrahim	Business man	Sudan

## APPENDIX H

List of informal representative informants from the three riparian countries used in the research for analytic as well as triangulation purpose.

Name of Informant	Position	Country
Professor Yakob Arsano, PhD.	Political Science and International Relations Lecturer at Addis Ababa University.	Ethiopia
Farouk Al-Baz	Scientist, Geologist	Egypt
Omer Gamal Eldin	Minister of Sudan's Foreign Affair	Sudan

## Appendix I

### In depth interview guides

- How do you assess the news stories written on The Ethiopian Herald newspaper in particular and Ethiopian medias in general regarding the filling of the dam? What were the prominent messages in the news stories? Why do you think those prominent messages were relayed? What are the most frequently used terms, words and phrases-expressions that best describe these frames? Can you give me some typical examples?
- How do you assess the news stories written on *Ahram online* in particular and Egyptian medias in general regarding the filling of the dam? What messages were emphasized on the news stories? Why do you think those messages were given emphasis?
- How do you assess the news stories written on *Sudan Tribune* in particular and Sudanese medias in general regarding the filling of the dam? What messages were emphasized on the news stories? Why do you think those messages were given emphasis?
- How is the framing in the three countries news outlets influencing public perception of GERD? Do you know of any survey or research findings in this regard?
- Ethiopia is claiming the GERD and the water reservoir would benefit all the downstream countries. What is your opinion on this claim?
- Why do you think no agreement was reached about the filling of the dam last June/July 2020?
- Do you think delaying the filling of GERD would bring a positive result in the negotiation table?
- What do you think is the negative and positive side of delaying/prolonging filling of GERD?
- Do you think filling GERD would have a negative consequence to Sudan and Egypt? If yes why and how. If no why and how?

## APPENDIX J

### BRIEF RESPONSES /EXCERPTS OF KEY INFOMANTS

1. Mr. FAKEAHMAD Ethiopian

“The current negotiation is very much confused with water allocation rather than the filling of the Dam. Egypt wants to secure recognition of their water use from Ethiopia in the name of filling and long-term operation... Sudan will benefit from reduced flooding, minimized sediment transport, energy uplift, regulated flow, fisheries navigation, etc. Egypt will get security from flooding during extreme high flow, additional water due to saving from evaporation from High Aswan Dam...Delaying the filling of the Dam is in the best interest of Egypt. By delaying the filling Ethiopia and Sudan will lose Hundreds of Millions of Dollars. A sustainable agreement is that benefits all the parties to the negotiation. If delaying of the filling can affect Ethiopia and Sudan either agreement will not be reached and if reached will not be sustained...”

2. Dr. Wibalem Fekade

“ Definitely the three counties media outlets frame the issue of the GERD in different perspective. Ethiopia frames the GERD as an existential requirement to lift the people out of poverty and speed up development... Ethiopia has the right to use its natural resources and while trying to achieve these two main objectives, Ethiopia is behaving responsibly by factoring the downstream countries interests or in the parlance called causing significant harm...the corollary and the core approach is the right to equitable utilization... Ethiopia considers the filing of the GERD as part of the construction process to which the two downstream countries have agreed... the dam is built by financial mobilization of resources from its population, self financed... an exemplary innovative financing mechanism have been established ... unique selling point for the GERD... it has made every one stock holder and stake holder of the dam ”

3. Ms. Rehab Abdalmohsen

“All reports during the first filling of the dam were coming from press releases given from the (Egyptian) government.”

4. Mr. Seid Mohamad

“ There were fear among the government and the people in Egypt during the first round filling of the GERD but noticing no significant harm was caused, some sort of relief has been observed... Reports regarding the first filling of the dam were coming from the editors; our role was only translating what has been given to us in Arabic language...”

5. Mr. Mohammad Ibrahim,

“ Sudan and Ethiopia has come a long way but the Egyptians are playing their card right here. The officials in Sudan are interested only on prolonging their power nothing matters for them as long as they are in power.”

6. Dr. Teshager

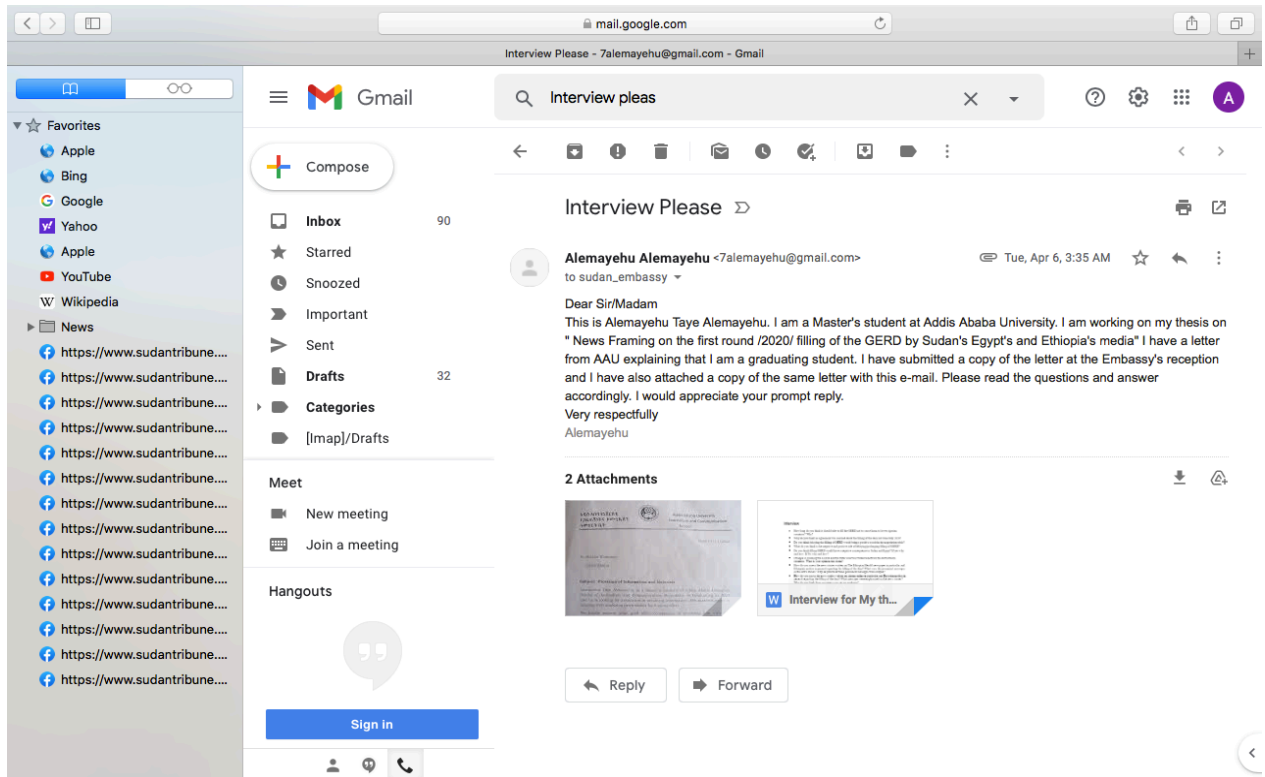
“ One aspect that they talk (Egypt’s Media) about is the volume of water flowing downstream wouldn’t be the same as it was years ago. But from the negotiations, we have learned that there wouldn’t be significant harm to Sudan and Egypt... That’s the repeated discourse from media outlets in Ethiopia and some times Sudan. The negotiations assert that there would be only minimal negative consequence to the downstream countries. “

7. Mr. Hailu Abraham

“ The dam gives annual regulated water, and protect Sudan from flood and silt for which Sudan spends 20 up to 50 thousand dollars per year in the rainy season... Sudan will produce more crops because of the regulated flow of water ... Egypt will benefit from the GERD as the amount of the water flows to Aswan dam will increase and the silt will decreases”

# APPENDIX K

## EMAILS SENT TO EMBASSIES AND EDITOR IN CHIEFS OF AHRAM ONLINE AND SUDAN TRIBUNE



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INTERVIEW PLEASE - 7alemayehu@gmail.com - Gmail

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New meeting

Join a meeting

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INTERVIEW PLEASE

Alemayehu Alemayehu <7alemayehu@gmail.com> Wed, Mar 17, 9:02 AM

Dear Madam/Sir

This is Alemayehu Taye Alemayehu, a Master's student at Addis Ababa University. I think Salah, your co-worker, has mentioned my name a few months ago. Like he may have told you already, I am currently working on my thesis with the title "News Framing Analysis of First Round of Filling GERD: Comparative Study on Ahram Online, Sudan Tribune and Ethiopian Herald Newspaper". The Answer will only be used for the purpose of the thesis. I am now in the US, Los Angeles for a few weeks visit. You can call me at 213 326 7208.

Very Respectfully

Alemayehu

Very Respectfully

Alemayehu

Interview

- How long do you think it should take to fill the GERD not to cause harm to lower riparian countries? Why?
- Why do you think no agreement was reached about the filling of the dam last June/July 2020?
- Do you think delaying the filling of GERD would bring a positive result in the negotiation table?
- What do you think is the negative and positive side of delaying/prolonging filling of GERD?
- Do you think filling GERD would have a negative consequence to Sudan and Egypt? If yes why and how. If No why and how?
- Ethiopia is claiming the GERD and the water reservoir would benefit all the downstream countries. What is your opinion on this claim?

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Interview

Alemayehu Alemayehu <7alemayehu@gmail.com> Wed, Mar 17, 8:00 AM

Dear Izzat Ibrahim

This is Alemayehu Taye Alemayehu, a Master's student at Addis Ababa University. I think Salah, your co-worker, has mentioned my name a few months ago. Like he may have told you already, I am currently working on my thesis with the title "News Framing Analysis of First Round of Filling GERD: Comparative Study on Ahram Online, Sudan Tribune and Ethiopian Herald Newspaper". The Answer will only be used for the purpose of the thesis. I am sending this email for the second time. Please respond as soon as possible so that your media's opinion could very well be included in the thesis

Very Respectfully

Alemayehu

Interview

- How long do you think it should take to fill the GERD not to cause harm to lower riparian countries? Why?
- Why do you think no agreement was reached about the filling of the dam last June/July 2020?
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**Alemayehu Alemayehu** <7alemayehu@gmail.com>  
to egyptembassyaddis

Fri, Feb 26, 4:48 PM

Dear Madam/Sir  
**I am sending this email as a reminder for my previous request.**  
 This is Alemayehu Taye Alemayehu, a Master's student at Addis Ababa University. I am currently working on my thesis with the title  
 "News Framing Analysis of First Round of Filling GERD: Comparative Study on Ahram Online, Sudan Tribune and Ethiopian Herald Newspaper"  
 I have submitted a letter of support from AAU that states my responsibility in conducting the research. I am cordially requesting an answer from one of your team for the following attached questions.

Very Respectfully  
 Alemayehu

**Interview**

- How long do you think it should take to fill the GERD not to cause harm to lower riparian countries? Why?
- Why do you think no agreement was reached about the filling of the dam last June/July 2020?
- Do you think delaying the filling of GERD would bring a positive result in the negotiation table?
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