The Political Context for Cooperation in the Nile Basin

“A new state of flux”

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### Contribution to Nile flows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eastern Nile Basins (from Ethiopia)</th>
<th>Annual (average)</th>
<th>Flood period (average)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue Nile</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tekezze/Atbara</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baro-Akobo/Sobat</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Ethiopia</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equatorial Nile Basin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Nile</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The countries and the region

- 11 riparians
- 160 million people
- Past of conflicts and poverty
- Agriculture-based economies
- Economic development
- Food and energy insecurity
- Asymmetric power relations
- Geopolitical relevance
The Water availability/utilisation

84 bcm / average

How much water are Egypt and Sudan utilising?

Little utilisation

Little utilisation
The 1959 Agreement

Current water utilisation of the Nile waters
Hydropolitics pre-2011

Official ‘dyad’

Upstream Bloc

Middle East

US

Egypt

Sudan

Europe

Gulf

China

EAC

Ethiopia

India
2012/2013: Multiple changes in the Nile region

Political and Economic revolutions
Changes in the Balance of Power

PAST

PRESENT
**Status Quo and Changes**

20th century: pattern of water resource governance/regime

**1990s - 3 major changes**
- Economic development process upstream
- Increasing demands for water (agriculture/energy)
- Transboundary cooperation: examination of potential co-benefits

**Last 5 years:**
- Changes in the balance of power (economic and political)
- Institutionalisation of a new legal and institutional framework
New ’power landscape’

- Upstream consolidation
- Downstream fragmentation
- Acceleration of changes: with new global investors ’arriving’ in the Nile region

New ’power landscape’:
- **A challenge**: because of increasing complexity
- **An opportunity**: potential to unlock basin’s development potential
A new state of flux

4 main highlights:

1. Unilateral development likely to continue

2. New permanent Nile Basin Commission could be established soon

3. Need to move from water cooperation to development cooperation

4. New external actors, their role in the national economic development (and infrastructure development) in the Nile riparian states, and its nexus with global markets of food, energy and other commodities
Mapping changes

- **Between States**
  The relations between the Nile riparians and the changes in terms economic and political alliances

- **Within States**
  National politics and economics, and how it affects water and foreign policies (population growth, urbanisation, increasing demands, social uprising, etc)

- **External relations**
  Of the Nile States and region with the world (new actors, new markets, new trading blocs, new business models, etc)
National actors and interests

- Mosaic of different countries with different interests
- Relationships between Nile states often governed by non-Nile issues
Egypt, the downstream riparian

Interests in cooperation:
• Maintain status quo, historical agreements and water allocations
• Enhance overall flows and increase share

Resistance to ideas such:
• Comparative advantage in regional food production and markets
• Storage upstream and potential water savings associated with it

Political calculations > Technical calculations
Sudans, the midstream riparians

SUDAN

- Official unified position with Egypt
- ’Silent’ criticism if asymmetric water regime (1959 Agreement)

Interests:
- Increased development of dams and irrigation
- Reach the utilisation of 18.5bcm

Impacts:
- Water utilisation (e.g. water loan)
- Bilateral relations with downstream and upstream neighbours (1959 Agreement, GERD, ENTRO, NBI)
Sudans, the midstream riparians

SOUTH SUDAN

Interests:
• Development of water related infrastructures
• Be part of the NBI family and two subsidiary institutions
• NELSAP Regional Power Pool; ENTRO Baro-Akobo Sobat project

Position influenced by:
• Foreign policy alignments
• Positioning regarding 1959 Agreement and CFA
• Major goal: reduce economic and political dependence on Sudan
Ethiopia, the upstream riparian

Interests in cooperation:

• Increase financial and political support to infrastructure projects
• Studies + understanding of benefits + joint identification and planning + room for a new institutional and legal framework

2011: Back to ’unilateralism’ as the way to unlock key infrastructure development (e.g. GERD)
Eastern Nile: New regional dynamics

- 4 countries with great geopolitical importance
- Political/hydropolitical complexity (regional and global power games)
- Historical grievances and mistrust

OUTCOMES

- Inequitable and unreasonable utilisation of the Nile water resources
- Lack of integrated approach (water, droughts/floods, energy, agriculture, etc)
- Lack of comprehensive legal and institutional approach

- Untapped potential (e.g. Hydropower)
- Sub-optimal Utilisation of the resources
- Diverting potential socio-economic development of the four countries
- Significant collective action challenge
Eastern Nile cooperation process

ENTRO-NBI:

- Platform for cooperation/dialogue
- Identification of transboundary projects (↗benefits, ↘impacts, ↗funding)
- Softening political relations

- Final goal: study, plan and prepare investment projects to enhance optimal utilisation of the Nile waters

... but ENTRO was not operating in a political vacuum...
May 2010: Signature of the CFA; ‘freezing’ by downstream riparians

> 2010: Slowdown in the cooperation agenda of large-scale transboundary development (halt in projects, financial gap, no ED, etc)

April 2011: Announcement of GERD plans

> 2011: Trilateral collaboration outside of NBI/ENTRO spheres (Trilateral Committee, IPoE Study and Recommendations)

November 2012: ENCOM Consultations and Memo (endorsement and ‘de-freezing’ by Sudan)
Conclusions from new Eastern Nile dynamics

- Determined and politically/economically stronger Ethiopia
- Rapprochement between Ethiopia and Sudan
- Egypt involved in trilateral process (not without reluctance)
- New ‘type’ of cooperation – could be the beginning of a genuine trilateral cooperation
- Costs of no-cooperation are now more apparent than in the past
Sudans: potential to unlock change

• Key-players
• Midstream potential to unlock change
• Stronger powers of leverage
• Potential king-makers in the complex hydropolitical cooperation (multilateral, quadrilateral, trilateral and bilateral)
• Potential to bridge between upstream and downstream interests
• Diplomacy: finding ‘creative’ ways of ending impasses
Cooperative Framework Agreement (i)

1997-2007: Negotiations
2007-2010: Attempt to find a political solution to the impasse
2010: Signature by 6 upstream riparians
2013: Beginning of ratification processes

At the moment: 2 ratifications completed, 4 ongoing ratifications, 1 pending, 3 non-signatories
Cooperative Framework Agreement (ii)

• **Goal of CFA:** New legal and institutional framework to guide cooperation based on principles of international water law

• **Negotiated agreement:** no final consensus

• **Outcomes:** Slowdown of NBI/NBC process, diplomatic row, new potential scenarios

• **Challenges:** institutional, legal, diplomatic, political and financial
CFA/NBC: is it the only way to materialise effective and sustainable cooperation, and give continuity to the activities/projects initiated by the NBI?
Conclusions

• Shifting interests in cooperation
• Reconfiguration of riparian positions
• External and endogenous factors

3 Possible future scenarios:
1. Two-Pole Nile
2. Multi-Polar Nile
3. Single-Pole Nile
Thanks!