The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam: A Catalyst for Cooperation on the Nile?

S. Salman

November 22, 2016
About the GERD

- The largest dam in Africa, and 10th in world
- On Blue Nile, 20 km from Sudanese borders
- Height of 145 meters
- Reservoir capacity of 74 BCM
- Installed capacity 5,000 Megawatts
  - 16 turbines, 375 each
- Cost of $4.8 Billion
- Construction of dam by Salini; turbines by Alstom-Siemmens; power lines by Chinese
Status of the GERD

- Close to 60% Complete, on schedule
- Poised for completion on time – 2017
- Vehemently rejected by Egypt 2011-2014
- Initially rejected by Sudan, gradual acceptance, final by 2013
- Finally accepted by Egypt & Sudan in 2015
- Through two legal instruments
  - The DoP and Khartoum Document (KD)
- Is this beginning of era of cooperation in the Nile Basin?
The GERD January 2014
GERD May 2016
The GERD, Ethiopia and Sudan

GERD has proven as a catalyst and beginning of cooperation era between Ethiopia & Sudan

Benefits of GERD to Sudan

- Entrapment of sediments
- End of floods
- Regulation of flow throughout the year
  - Increase in crop rotations
  - Replenishment of groundwater throughout the year
  - Navigation throughout the year
- Sale of power to Sudan
- Possibility of water storage
The GERD, Ethiopia and Sudan

- Sudan wavered at the beginning 2011 – 2013
- Close Nile water ties and alliance with Egypt
- The 1959 Nile Water Agreement
  - Division of entire Nile flow between two countries
  - Establishment of the Permanent Joint Technical Committee (PJTC) for coordination
  - Requirement of having a unified position vis-à-vis other Nile riparians demands
  - PJTC spokesperson & negotiator of two countries
- Alliance translated to action at CFA negotiations
- Concerns about dam safety & period of filling addressed by DoP
The GERD, Ethiopia and Sudan

GERD resulted in a major crack in the Egyptian Sudanese alliance

- Sudan formally supported the GERD in 2013
- Through an announcement by the President himself
- Sudan started to buy Ethiopian electricity – 250 megawatts
- Even before the GERD is completed
- Purchase of more electricity is expected when GERD is completed to address Sudan increasing deficit
- Power connection lines between Ethiopia and Sudan already exist – financed under the Nile Basin Initiative
- Need strengthening to convey more power

- DoP and KD reconfirmed Sudan support

- Heralding beginning of era of cooperation
The GERD, Ethiopia and Egypt

- Egypt initially opposed GERD vehemently,

- However, Egypt had limited options
  - Timing of the GERD – March 2011 – Egyptian revolution
  - Unrest in Egypt 2011 – 2014
  - Time was on Ethiopia’s side
  - Ability of Ethiopia to finance GERD from its own resources, $4.8 billion, Egypt bet on Ethiopia not being able to do so
  - Egypt threat in 2013 of using force not coming through
  - Ability of Ethiopia to garner support for the GERD
  - Europe (Italy, France, Switzerland) and China support

- Sudan support of GERD weakened Egypt stance, created a cracked their Nile alliance.

- Gradual emergence of Ethiopia as regional power
Egyptian government and opposition discussing GERD June 2013
The GERD, Ethiopia and Egypt

- Egypt finally supported GERD through DoP
- Had limited options
  - GERD has become a reality in 2015
  - About 60% complete
  - Sudan has supported GERD
  - Other Nile countries support GERD; CFA alliance
  - Europe and China helping with the GERD
  - No support from Arab or African countries
- DoP dealt with cooperation in limited ways
  - No obligation for sale and purchase of GERD power between parties under DoP; only priority
  - Coordination on operation of GERD with downstream reservoirs
Signing the DoP, Khartoum March 23, 2015
Conclusion

- GERD has proven a major catalyst for cooperation between Ethiopia & Sudan
  - Realization of major benefits accruing to Sudan
  - Sale of power even before GERD is complete

- Between Ethiopia and Egypt
  - More of levelling of playing fields than cooperation
  - Suspicion and mistrust still hover over relations
  - DoP does not include specific areas for cooperation
  - Recent accusation of Ethiopia to Egypt of supporting unrest overshadowed prospects under DoP
  - Cooperation between Ethiopia & Egypt over Nile now possible more than ever before, but still a long way
Thank You

salmanmasalman@gmail.com

www.salmanmasalman.org