



# BCHighMUN 30



Ethiopian Dam Crisis

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## Letter from the Chair

Hello Delegates,

Welcome to the 30th Annual Model UN conference at Boston College High School! My name is Khush Patel, a junior, and this is my first year participating in Model UN. Along with Model UN, I run track and am a representative for the Student Council. I look forward to the opportunity to chair this committee and to hear the debates and arguments from all participants. All levels of experience are welcome as well as any grade level. This could be your first committee or your seventh.

I am very excited to dive into this complex topic and am interested to see how you approach it. The topic is more complex than just water. We are to begin in June 1914 and will move through the 20th century into the 21st century depending upon the pace of the discussion, working papers, and resolutions. For example, the Ethiopian Dam was to be completed in 2020 and, of course, faced more delays. Please make sure to send your position papers to my email below before the committee session starts. Also, the best position paper receives the Ben Maher '11 Award. This background guide contains crucial information regarding the committee, but also feel free to conduct further research on your own.

I look forward to seeing you all at the conference on March 5th, 2022, and hope to have an amazing day in the Ethiopian Dam Crisis committee full of great, thoughtful debates and discussions. If you have any other questions, or would want help on your position paper, do not hesitate to contact me. Until then, read the rest of the background guide and conduct other research to fully understand the topic and be better prepared. But remember, Model UN is supposed to be fun, so get ready to have an enjoyable and exciting day at the 30th Annual Model UN conference at Boston College High School.

Good Luck Delegates!

Khush Patel '23

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Chair, Ethiopian Dam Crisis



## Letter from the Chair

Hello,

My name is Tommy Atkinson. I have attended many local Model UN Conferences including St. John's High School, Catholic Memorial School, and Westwood High. This is the first time I have co-chaired a committee and I am very excited to be doing so. I look forward to working with you. This committee topic is complicated because there are so many reasons the Ethiopian dam has not been completed. You will find the issues to be interesting.

I am looking forward to seeing you in March!

Tommy Atkinson '23, Co-Chair

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## Introduction to Committee

This is a modern-day committee that will run similar to a General Assembly, with a notable exception that attendance is limited to delegates from Africa.

### Rules of Procedure

As with all General Assemblies, this one will also begin with a **Speaker's List** which is the point when delegates are given one minute to voice their current position on the matter at hand and possibly offer a general plan of attack. It is a running list of delegates that will be referred back to if the committee begins to stall. From there **Moderated Caucuses** will be held, which are regulated, time-limited debates about certain topics brought up. If the chair deems it appropriate, the committee may vote on an **Unmoderated Caucus** which allows delegates to meet with their own blocs to discuss strategy or ideas or to try and convince other members to change their position. After much discussion, delegates will draft **Working Papers**, which outline the solution to the committee problem. After generating the proper support, these working papers become **Resolutions** and are presented to the entire committee. For a resolution to pass, it must receive a  $\frac{2}{3}$  supermajority in order to pass. If delegates find issues with a working paper they may choose to offer **Amendments** which are essentially revisions or additions of clauses. To clarify in case of misunderstandings, this is NOT a Crisis Committee, so there will be no Directives or Personal Directives/Crisis Notes and no portfolio power (meaning no delegate in the committee will have special privileges or powers).



### Committee Spirit

This committee is an inclusive space. There will be no tolerance of sexism, racism, homophobia, classism, or any other form of bigotry. The chair will not hesitate to remove a delegate from the committee room if warranted. To this end, in the interest of promoting an inclusive space, the chair requests that you do not adopt an accent or come wearing anything other than Western Business Attire. The guiding principle of conduct in this committee can thus be described as “focused and energetic.” Displays of patriotism, genuine intellectual vigor, and vocal commitment to the popular, egalitarian cause are welcomed.



# Historical Background

## Overview

Following years of strong relations, Ethiopia and Egypt are now at an impasse over the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) as they each attempt to secure long-term economic growth opportunities for their countries. Ethiopia is invested in this project primarily in order to meet the energy needs of its citizens and, hopefully, to establish itself as a global player, while Egypt has already structured much of its output around the Nile waters and enjoys a comparatively stronger economy. Sudan has experienced far more strained relations with Ethiopia and, as a downstream country, will be similarly affected as Egypt by the potentially limiting effects of the dam. An understanding of the historical interactions between the countries can highlight the root causes of the present-day conflicts as the countries work towards a collective compromise.

## Ethiopia-Sudan Relations

The Ethiopian Civil War, which lasted from 1961 to 1991, ultimately ended when the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) overthrew the Derg — officially the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia — to establish a system of ethnic federalism. During the long period of conflict, EPRDF representatives often sought refuge across the border and, as a result, established close relationships with those in power in the Sudanese government. Once the EPRDF had gained power, it continued to maintain these close ties and reduced its support for the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA), an organization working to overthrow the existing Sudanese government. However, a later change in the Sudanese government ignited concerns that the positive relations between the countries would be strained.



The governments of both Ethiopia and Sudan faced much opposition from parties within their borders, and external support and financing from the other government varied depending on the group in power. Due to the overly reciprocal nature of government support for rebellious insurgents within the borders of the other country, the relations between Ethiopia and Sudan quickly turned far more hostile in the mid-90s as the EPRDF strengthened its power in Ethiopia and SPLA did the same in Sudan.<sup>26,27</sup> A series of small but escalating conflicts occurred between the two countries for the next few years as they each worked to regain political strongholds in their country while battling the insurgencies supported by the other. Only after Ethiopia engaged in a two-year conflict with Eritrea, formerly a close ally, did the Ethiopian government begin to mend its relationship with Sudan and shift its alliances within the Horn of Africa region. Although tensions appeared to have simmered down, they have recently flared up again as a result of multiple border skirmishes in recent months. The border was initially created following a series of treaties between Ethiopia and colonial European powers, but lacks clear demarcation between the two countries. Ethiopia and Sudan share about 993 miles (1000 km) of the border, but the lines appear to be fluid in certain areas. Sudan's al-Fashqa region, for example, offers much fertile land and has been a source of income to Ethiopian farmers for many years. However, the Sudanese transitional government currently in place has begun talks with the Ethiopian government to remove these farmers from this land. Increased militarization in this region, among others, has led to heightened tensions both along the border and in talks between government parties. Recently, the Sudanese government has also withdrawn its previous support for GERD, and although some argue that the recent border disputes are not a factor in this decision, resolving these tensions could support the GERD compromise regardless.





## Ethiopia-Egypt Relations

Although interactions between the two countries began long before, formalized talks in 1927 to ensure a consistent water supply to Egypt through Ethiopia marked one of the defining moments in the early periods of officially recognized relations between the countries. This relationship, built on the importance of the Nile to both economies, was further entrenched through the development of multiple collective organizations aiming to unite countries built on and around the Nile river. However, many of these initiatives failed because they did not include all of the Nile riparian countries and/or did not address the legal challenges faced by these countries. In 1999, the founding of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) unified all ten Nile riparian countries and expanded the scope of its work to a more holistic manner of evaluating initiatives within the Nile region. The governments of Ethiopia and Egypt have continued to foster close ties through additional economic and religious ties. In 1904, Ethiopia's first formal banking system, the Bank of Abyssinia, was supported in its initial development by the National Bank of Egypt (NBE). The NBE was granted a 50-year period in which they were allowed to operate a monopoly through the Bank of Abyssinia on government-related financing, among other concessions. Even more recently, close corporate ties and extensive investments in Ethiopian companies highlight the extent to which these two countries are economically linked. The former Ethiopian Prime Minister himself urged Egyptian businesses to continue their investments in Ethiopian businesses as the conditions were, according to him at least, ideal. In 2018, over 60% of the total investments made by Egyptian companies were in Sudan and Ethiopia, emphasizing the great interdependency of these countries. The establishment of the Egyptian-Ethiopian Business Council serves as another reminder of the long-standing economic ties between the two countries. The close relation between Egypt and Ethiopia can also be seen in their joint religious



history. Although there have been tensions due to both negative Muslim sentiment towards Ethiopia and Christian Ethiopians' distrust of Egyptian Muslims, a joint history in Christianity overrides some of these differences. Ethiopia's original Christian church (the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church) was initially dependent on the Coptic Egyptian church, as seen by the fact that the Ethiopian bishops, or abuns, were all Egyptian for countless years.<sup>37</sup> Political differences often overflowed into church interactions and affected the type of abuns that Ethiopia was granted. After much negotiation, political debate, and cultural tensions, in 1959 a formal separation of the Ethiopian and Egyptian church was granted. Upon finalization of the deal, much of the divisive rhetoric used previously had vanished, and instead, the countries focused on reviving their unique cultures and developing their individual identity.

### Treaties on the Nile

Over the years, there have been many different treaties and collective calls for unification in addressing how Nile resources are to be divided among the riparian countries. Beginning with the 1891 Anglo-Italian protocol that aimed to demarcate clear boundaries for Italian Eritrea and British Sudan, the question of where each country's influence lies has led to much debate. The 1902 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty was no different; it too served to outline the border between Sudan and Ethiopia. Although there have been quite a few additional agreements, the two main ones that are still considered to be legally binding (at least by Egypt and Sudan) are the 1929 Anglo-Egyptian treaty and the 1959 bilateral agreement between Egypt and Sudan. The 1929 Anglo-Egyptian treaty guaranteed an annual Nile water allocation of 48 billion cubic meters to Egypt and 4 billion cubic meters to Sudan, while also granting Egypt the right to veto any



construction projects that had the potential to interfere with the Nile water flows. The 1959 agreement expanded water allocations to 55.5 billion cubic meters for Egypt and 18.5 billion cubic meters for Sudan, while again ignoring the needs of other riparian countries including Ethiopia. Other countries consider these treaties to be outdated and irrelevant to modern-day discussions, but Egypt and Sudan maintain that their rights outlined in these agreements must be upheld. Given that initial agreements often prevented Ethiopia and other riparian countries from receiving a fair share of the resources offered by the Nile, the Nile Basin Initiative was established to overcome these historical differences. Although the countries are often united in ensuring the long-term health and stability of the Nile, individual countries have varying priorities to secure their own economic growth. There are calls to abolish the effects of older treaties that favor certain countries and regions to instead redesign a more equitable system. Countries such as Egypt — which already established claims for themselves — are strongly against doing so, while other countries such as Ethiopia — which were not as fortunate during earlier periods — argue heavily towards a new distribution. When evaluating the future of the water resources in the region, it is vital to consider the precedent established in the area, and the weight with which such potentially biased historical documents are evaluated.



## Current Situation

### Origins of Dam

In August 1957, as relations between Ethiopia and Egypt became increasingly strained, Ethiopia contracted with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to conduct a holistic analysis of the Blue Nile and the opportunities it could provide for the Ethiopian economy. In 1964, the final report presented multiple options for Ethiopia to more effectively harness the power of the Nile, while minimizing potential impact on downstream nations. Not only did this report provide the foundational information for the eventual construction of the GERD, but it also served as a major signaling tool. By partnering with the United States government in building this report, Ethiopia used the opportunity to demonstrate its powerful international connections in response to Egypt and its alliance with Russia. Although the report initially outlined multiple areas for potential dams, construction and further development of any hydraulic structure in the area was paused due to political instability within Ethiopia. Announced on March 12, 2011, with the official cornerstone being placed on April 2, the GERD (initially named Project X for secrecy, and then the Millennium Dam, before its present name) came as a surprise to other riparian countries. Despite being touted as having the sole purpose of generating hydroelectric power for Ethiopia to consume domestically and export to Sudan and Egypt, the dam's potential for disruption to the key economics in Sudan and Egypt has created much consternation. Given that the project was initially developed in much secrecy with no input from neighboring countries or affected citizens living on the dam site, construction did not go as smoothly as planned. Initially projected to have been completed by 2020, the \$4 billion dam has faced many delays. Political tensions continued to rise as Egypt and Sudan grew increasingly concerned about the rate at which the reservoir would be filled as the longer it takes to fill, the less impact it will have on downstream water



flows. Although Ethiopia has expressed interest in maintaining negotiations with Egypt and Sudan, continued disagreements have exacerbated many of the relevant issues.

Questions to Consider

1. Does Ethiopia have a right to build the dam for their own economic growth?
2. Do they have a responsibility to not harm their neighbors in Egypt and Sudan?
3. Is there a compromise all three nations can reach?



# Positions

## Members (25)

1. Ethiopia
2. Egypt
3. Sudan
4. South Sudan
5. Eritrea
6. Somalia
7. Djibouti
8. Kenya
9. Uganda
10. Tanzania
11. Chad
12. Libya
13. Central African Republic
14. Malawi
15. Democratic Republic of the Congo
16. Cameroon
17. Nigeria
18. Zambia
19. Angola
20. Ghana



21. Senegal
22. Mozambique
23. Zimbabwe
24. South Africa
25. Mali



## Bibliography