

## The Egyptian political rhetoric over the Nile and the reality

By Eyassu Epheraim: London: 07 June 2013

Recently the Egyptian politicians, the cabinet, have had an open and televised debate over the Nile issue. In this debate each politician showed their resentment and frustration towards Ethiopia and particularly the Ethiopian hydroelectric Nile project known as the Grand Renaissance Dam. From this meeting the message is loud and clear; almost all Egyptian politicians one way or another have declare war on Ethiopia. Are they kidding? Who they are kidding?

Apparently following the Egyptian rhetoric over the Nile issue, the Ethiopian government's Minister for Foreign Affairs summoned the Egyptian ambassador to his office to explain his government's stand on the Nile issue. Meanwhile the Ethiopian government was not shy to express their disappointment over the Egyptian tabloid-style political show. The Ethiopian Minister (MoFA) may be right to have summoned the Egyptian ambassador to express his government's concern and disappointment. I hope MoFA will offer the Egyptian Ambassador H.E Mohamed Idris good Ethiopian coffee and politely remind him to wake up and smell the coffee.

Whilst the Ethiopians and Ethiopia's government concern and disappointment remains in the back of my mind, as a citizen of Ethiopia I can see the Egyptian rhetoric under a different prospective. As history has taught us, no nation or national government has conducted such a highly volatile and sensitive political issue in the open under the scrutiny of the international community. As some have suggested, the meeting called by President Mohammed Morsi and televised for the Egyptians was by no means a secret meeting and was leaked by some kind of conspirator who was trying to embarrass Morsi's government. Quite the opposite, the meeting was a well calculated and well orchestrated political show targeted more to the Egyptian people than Ethiopia.

The Nile issue is a golden opportunity for Morsi's unpopular government. It is naive to think that no mischievous and clever politician would exploit the Nile issue for their own political agenda. Morsi's government knows better than anybody that Ethiopia cannot and will not stop the flow of the Nile. Stopping the natural flow of the Nile is by no means practical and the best option for Ethiopia. As Al Arabiya said "Egyptian officials estimate that Ethiopia's move is largely technical and will not alter the water flow that is vital for both Egypt and Sudan."<sup>1</sup> So why has Morsi's lead soap drama been broadcasted on TV. The Washington Institute might give us a clue why that is the case:<sup>2</sup>

*"Since the January 2011 revolution, Egypt has been gripped by deepening stagflation: economic growth in the last three months of 2012 was a mere 2.2 percent according to official data, while inflation rose in February 2013 to an annualized rate of 8.7 percent, its highest level since 2010. This combination has placed mounting pressure on ordinary Egyptians, who face rising prices for basic goods (e.g., food, medicine) and increasing unemployment, which rose to 13 percent in the last quarter of 2012, up from 9.8 percent during the same period of 2010 -- which translates to an additional 850,000 jobless people."*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/africa/2013/06/03/Egypt-warns-not-one-drop-of-Nile-lost-to-Ethiopia-dam-.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/egypts-economic-crisis-how-to-help-cairo-help-itself>: Egypt's Economic Crisis: How to Help Cairo Help Itself : March 25, 2013 by [Michael Singh](#)

Morsi's government has also got to deal with an alarming political crisis, as the following point from the European Council on Foreign Relations highlights:<sup>3</sup>

*According to the Council: "Egypt is in the grip of its worst political crisis since President Hosni Mubarak was deposed two years ago, and shifts in the three-way balance of power between Islamists, secularists and the military make the outcome more difficult to predict. The on-going crisis has dramatically increased the likelihood of protracted political and social instability. Violent street clashes between supporters and opponents of the six-month-old administration of President Muhammad Morsi have claimed eight lives and left hundreds wounded. The sacking of a number of offices of the Muslim Brotherhood, allegations of organized attacks against opposition protesters, as well as the uncompromising and increasingly belligerent rhetoric from both sides suggests the worst is yet to come. Absent a muscular effort by political leaders to contain the crisis, Egypt could be heading into a new season of political violence."*

Since Morsi's government came to power it has been dealing with a solid political and economic crisis. The best way to dilute the situation is by pointing his finger at Ethiopia: as Morsi said "We cannot let even one drop of Nile water be affected," and "It is necessary that we take steps to ensure Egyptian water security," and the most obvious "The current situation necessitates unity among our ranks to prevent any threat against Egypt."<sup>4</sup>

Now Morsi has asked the Egyptian people through their representatives to forget about their economic and political problems. He said now we have to fight for a drop of the Nile water. Further he cries "unite among our ranks ...threat against Egypt". We know Egyptians to be intelligent people; the people who build the Pyramids would not be fooled by his rhetoric. We Ethiopians are not Egypt's enemy, as it has been so, Egyptians can and will drink the Nile water like fish. Not only Morsi, any head of state who may come to power whether in Egypt or in the Middle East has to know that nothing will stop Ethiopia from using the Nile water. We Ethiopians are united behind this project. Outsiders or insiders cannot and will not change this, if they do we are here to defend and protect our natural right.

Here I conclude my point by quoting the wisdom of our great teacher and leader His Excellency the late PM Meles Zenawi on this issue; he said "I am not worried that the Egyptians will suddenly invade Ethiopia. Nobody who has tried that has lived to tell the story. I don't think the Egyptians will be any different and I think they know that"<sup>5</sup> Do you understand us Mr Morsi?

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<sup>3</sup> [http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary\\_navigating\\_egypts\\_political\\_crisis](http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_navigating_egypts_political_crisis) : Navigating Egypt's political crisis: By [Issandr El Amrani](#) - 11 Dec 12

<sup>4</sup> <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/africa/2013/06/03/Egypt-warns-not-one-drop-of-Nile-lost-to-Ethiopia-dam-.html>:

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2010/11/20101124152728280839.html>: Ethiopia PM warns of Nile war: Meles Zenawi said Egypt could not win a war over the Nile river, and accuses Cairo of supporting his country's rebels. 24 Nov 2010