



Ortadoğu Arařtırmaları Merkezi
مرکز دراسات الشرق الأوسط
Center for Middle Eastern Studies

ANALYSIS 327
A P R I L 2 0 2 5



THE INTERSECTION OF MIDDLE EASTERN AND NILE GEOPOLITICS: U.S. GAZA POLICY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GERD

KAAN DEVECİOĞLU | HASNA JEBEL ABAGERO



Copyright

Ankara - TURKEY ORSAM © 2025

ISBN:978-625-6175-89-9



9 786258 175899

Content of this publication is copyrighted to ORSAM. Except reasonable and partial quotation and use under the Act No. 5846, Law on Intellectual and Artistic Works, via proper citation, the content may not be used or re-published without prior permission by ORSAM. The views expressed in this publication reflect only the opinions of its authors and do not represent the institutional opinion of ORSAM.

Publication Date: April 2025

Center for Middle Eastern Studies

Address : Mustafa Kemal Mah. 2128 Sk. No: 3 Çankaya, ANKARA
Phone : +90 850 888 15 20
Email : info@orsam.org.tr
Photos : Anadolu Ajansı (AA)

According to the second paragraph of Article 5 of the Regulation on Banderole Application Procedures and Principles, the use of banderole for this publication is not compulsory.

THE INTERSECTION OF MIDDLE EASTERN AND NILE GEOPOLITICS: U.S. GAZA POLICY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GERD

About the Authors

■ Dr. Kaan Devecioğlu

He completed his PhD at Istanbul Medeniyet University, Department of International Relations, with his thesis on "U.S. – China Competition in the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait from the Perspective of Power Transition Theory (2011 – 2021)". He conducted field research on sustainable development in North Africa and in Red Sea at Sudan, Tunisia, and Algeria. His research interests include politics, economy, security, and terrorism developments in Africa, with a special focus on Africa in Turkish foreign policy, the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, Sudan, and the Sahel. His articles and book chapters have been published in peer-reviewed journals, and his analyses and opinions have appeared in the media and in many international publications. Devecioğlu is proficient in Turkish and English and learning Arabic and French.

■ Hasna Jebel Abagero

Hasna is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Political Science and International Relations at Ibn Haldun University, where she also completed her undergraduate studies. She served as a teaching fellow for two years in the Humanities and Societies course at the same university. Additionally, she has worked as a research assistant on various academic projects. Her areas of interest include conflict analysis and resolution, geopolitics, and security. Hasna has published opinion articles in international publications on current political affairs. She is fluent in Amharic, English, Turkish, and Arabic.

CONTENTS



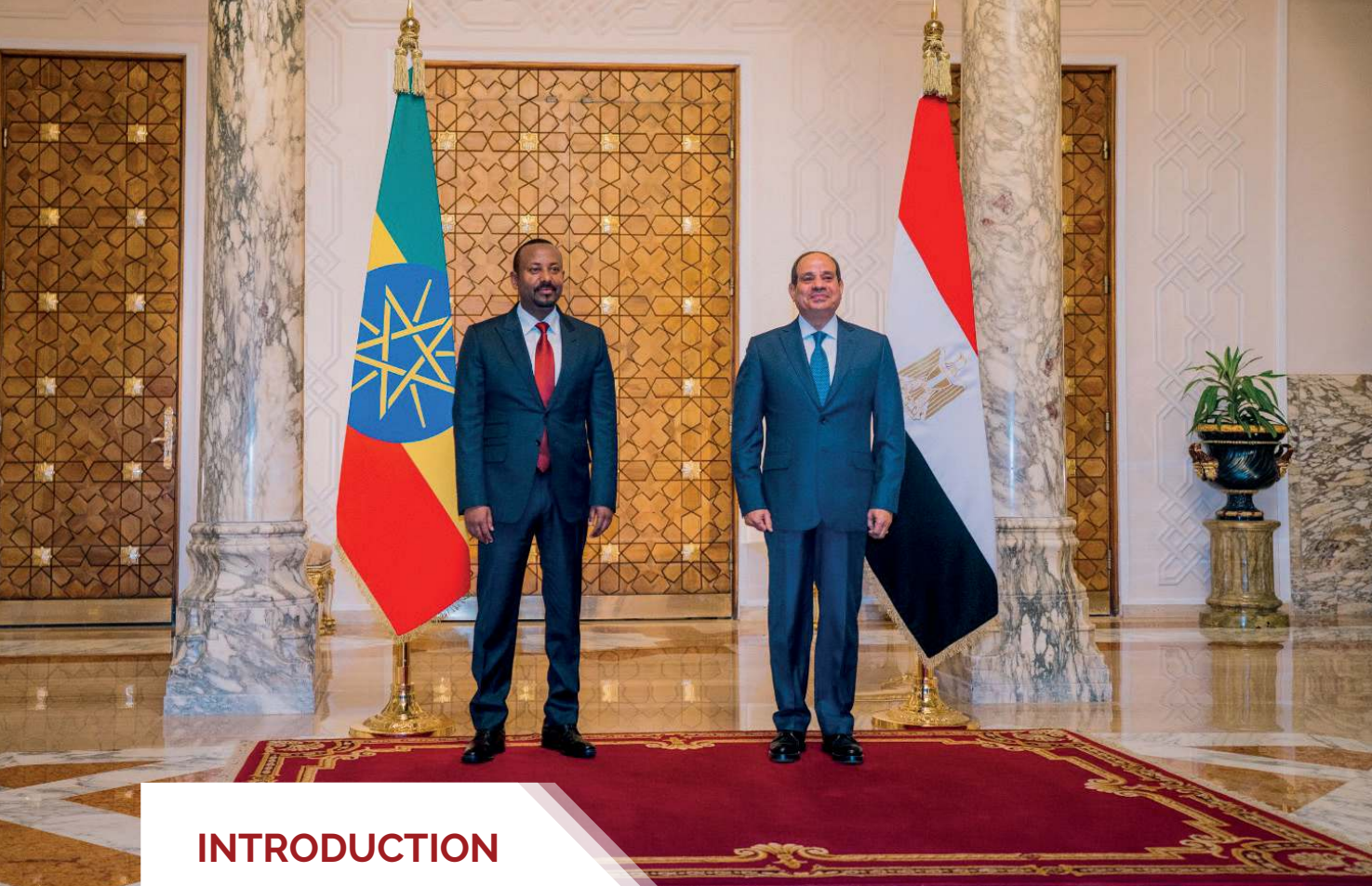
3 INTRODUCTION

7 CURRENT DYNAMICS AMONG ACTORS AND HYPOTHESES

8 HYPOTHESIS 1: AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN SISI AND TRUMP ON GAZA COULD NEGATIVELY AFFECT EGYPT-ETHIOPIA RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF GERD

11 HYPOTHESIS 2: A LACK OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN SISI AND TRUMP ON GAZA STRENGTHENS ETHIOPIA'S POSITION AGAINST EGYPT REGARDING THE GERD

17 CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION



INTRODUCTION

Geopolitical balances in the Middle East and East Africa are shaped by the conflicting interests of major powers and the strategic moves of regional actors. Recent developments have further complicated power relations in the region. In particular, while the relationships between the U.S., Egypt, Ethiopia, and Israel had long progressed in a state of equilibrium, the Trump administration's new policy toward Gaza triggered dynamics that would reshape these balances. Donald Trump's plan to evacuate Palestinians from Gaza not only affected the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also influenced Egypt's regional role and its relations with the U.S. The reverberations of this policy even extended to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) crisis with Ethiopia.

Although Egypt has historically been one of the U.S.'s most important regional allies, its relations with Washington have occasionally been strained due to Egypt's human rights vi-

olations and its regional policies. On the other hand, U.S.-Ethiopia relations have remained stable within the framework of counterterrorism efforts and development projects, but have lacked the strategic depth found in the Cairo-Washington axis. While U.S.-Israel relations have always progressed in strategic harmony, Egypt-Israel relations have settled into a functional balance based on security and intelligence cooperation. Relations between Ethiopia and Israel have developed through cooperation in water management and security. However, the region's diplomatic sensitivities entered a new phase with the Trump administration's Gaza plan.

In this context, at the intersection of Middle Eastern politics and Nile geopolitics, a new axis of tension has emerged, particularly due to Trump's controversial proposal to relocate Palestinians from Gaza. This plan had significant implications for water security, demographic balances, and Egypt's stra-

Trump's plan to resettle Palestinians in neighboring countries heightened diplomatic tensions between Egypt and the U.S., subsequently turning the GERD crisis into an integral part of Middle Eastern politics.

tegic position in the region. The proposal, which envisages the transformation of Gaza into the "Riviera of the Middle East"¹ and the resettlement of displaced Palestinians in Egypt and Jordan, was met with strong backlash, particularly from Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. In protest, Sisi canceled a planned visit to Washington. Additionally, reports suggested that Trump, as part of this escalating tension, used the GERD issue in Ethiopia as a bargaining tool to pressure Cairo.² In light of this, a U.S. envoy implied that Egypt's cooperation in resettling the Gaza population in Egypt and Jordan could influence America's involvement in resolving the GERD dispute.³

The potential linkage between these two crises brings together three issues that may seem unrelated but are strategically interconnected:

- The Gaza-related tension between the U.S. and Egypt,
- The long-standing GERD dispute between Egypt and Ethiopia,
- The role of Israel, a key U.S. ally with direct inter-

ests in both the Gaza and GERD issues.

Against this backdrop, it was suggested that King Abdullah II of Jordan convinced Trump to support Egypt's reconstruction plan, while Trump reportedly continued to back the population relocation proposal but stated he would "step back and offer advice" for the time being.⁴ The U.S.' lack of a firm stance indicates that the trajectory of U.S.-Egypt relations will directly shape the course of the GERD dispute. A U.S.-Egyptian alignment on Gaza could make Cairo more assertive in the GERD negotiations, while prolonged tensions could force Egypt to reconsider its alliances and alter the regional balance of power.

Trump's plan to resettle Palestinians in neighboring countries heightened diplomatic tensions between Egypt and the U.S., subsequently turning the GERD crisis into an integral part of Middle Eastern politics. If U.S.-Egypt alignment weakens, Ethiopia may have the opportunity to strengthen its ties with regional and global powers. Conversely, if Cairo aligns with Washington, it could potentially

- 1 "Riviera of the Middle East" is a phrase used by U.S. President Donald Trump, suggesting that Gaza could be transformed into a luxurious post-war vacation destination.
- 2 Abraham Tekle, "Trump leverages GERD dispute to pressure Egypt on Gaza resettlement plans," *The Reporter Ethiopia*, 8 February 2025.
- 3 Martin Plaut, "Did Trump officials attempt to use Ethiopia's Nile dam to pressurise Egypt over Gaza?", *Martin Plaut*, 6 February 2025.
- 4 "Trump likes his plan but will sit back as Arab states draft Gaza proposal", *Middle East Eye*, 6 February 2025.

gain diplomatic leverage in GERD negotiations.

Accordingly, the study is based on two main hypotheses: First, that Cairo may increase pressure on the GERD if the U.S. and Egypt reach an agreement on Gaza; and second, that Ethiopia may gain a more advantageous position on the dam if tension in U.S.-Egypt relations persist.

This study aims to analyze the impact of the Trump administration's Gaza plan on U.S.-Egypt relations and, consequently, on Ethiopia's GERD policy. Within the framework of regional dynamics, diplomatic maneuvering by key actors, and international power balances, the paper examines the connections between U.S. policy on Gaza and the issue of water security in the Nile Basin, evaluating potential scenarios and their broader implications.

CURRENT DYNAMICS AMONG ACTORS AND HYPOTHESES



Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (C - R) meets with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali (C - L) in Cairo, Egypt, July 13, 2023. (Ethiopian Prime Ministry Office via AA)

Before Trump announced his Gaza evacuation plan, the diplomatic balance among the U.S., Egypt, Ethiopia, and Israel had remained relatively stable, albeit marked by underlying tensions. U.S.-Egypt relations generally progressed in a stable manner, with Egypt serving as a key U.S. ally in the Middle East and one of the largest recipients of U.S. military aid. In 2024, the U.S. allocated \$1.45 billion in aid to Egypt, of which \$1.3 billion was designated as Foreign Military Financing (FMF). However, \$320 million of this aid was conditioned on democracy and human rights benchmarks and was subject to specific Congressional restrictions. That said, there exists a waiver authority allowing these conditions to be lifted in line with national security interests.⁵ Periodic disagreements concerning human rights violations and regional policy decisions have occasionally strained the relationship.⁶ However, the overarching priority placed on maintaining strategic stability has often led to such con-

cerns being overlooked, enabling U.S.-Egypt relations to remain broadly consistent over time.

U.S.-Ethiopia relations have also remained stable, with continued cooperation in counterterrorism and development efforts. However, unlike the depth of the Washington-Cairo axis, these relations have lacked strategic profundity. In contrast, Egypt-Ethiopia relations have become increasingly strained due to the ongoing GERD dispute. Egypt views the dam as a direct threat to its water security and has continued to exert international pressure in response.

U.S.-Israel relations have been strategically strong and consistent, with Israel remaining Washington's closest ally in the region. Egypt-Israel relations, on the other hand, have developed within a complex yet functional framework of cooperation, with security

5 Jeremy M. Sharp, "Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations," *Congressional Research Service Report*, 12 September 2024, s. 1.

6 U.S. Department of State, "2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Egypt," *U.S. Department of State*, 2024.



U.S. President Donald Trump meets Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (L) at the White House in Washington, D.C., U.S., April 3, 2017. (Presidency of Egypt via AA)

and intelligence sharing —especially in the context of Gaza—being key elements of this collaboration.⁷ However, historical conflicts and divergent regional priorities have occasionally caused tensions. Ethiopia-Israel relations, meanwhile, have followed a positive trajectory, with Israel providing technological and security cooperation, especially in water management and intelligence.⁸

While these dynamics have involved a certain degree of complexity, they remained largely predictable. However, Trump's Gaza plan intensified diplomatic tensions between Egypt and the U.S., altering regional balances and entangling the GERD crisis with Middle Eastern politics. Trump's initiative to take control of Gaza and relocate Palestinians to

neighboring countries has trapped regional actors such as Ethiopia, Egypt, and Israel into a complicated diplomatic equation. How these dynamics unfold will depend on whether the U.S. and Egypt can reach an understanding or continue their tensions.

HYPOTHESIS 1: AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN SISI AND TRUMP ON GAZA COULD NEGATIVELY AFFECT EGYPT-ETHIOPIA RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF GERD

If Trump were to ultimately abandon his plan to relocate Palestinians and instead support Egypt's reconstruction plan in Gaza, he would strengthen ties with Cairo. In this scenario, Egypt could regain U.S. support and

7 "The Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, 40 Years On: Providing Mutual Peace and Security, *Heralding Broad*," AIPAC.

8 Refael Levi, "Israel and Ethiopia agree to cooperate on energy, water," *Israel National News*, 4 Şubat 2025; "Ethiopia, Israel Agreed to Cooperate in Field of Intelligence, Security," *ENA English*, 6 November 2020.

gain leverage in GERD negotiations. With a renewed U.S.-Egypt alignment, Cairo might use Washington's backing to pressure Ethiopia, potentially reviving past negotiations and mediation efforts to compel Ethiopia into making concessions.

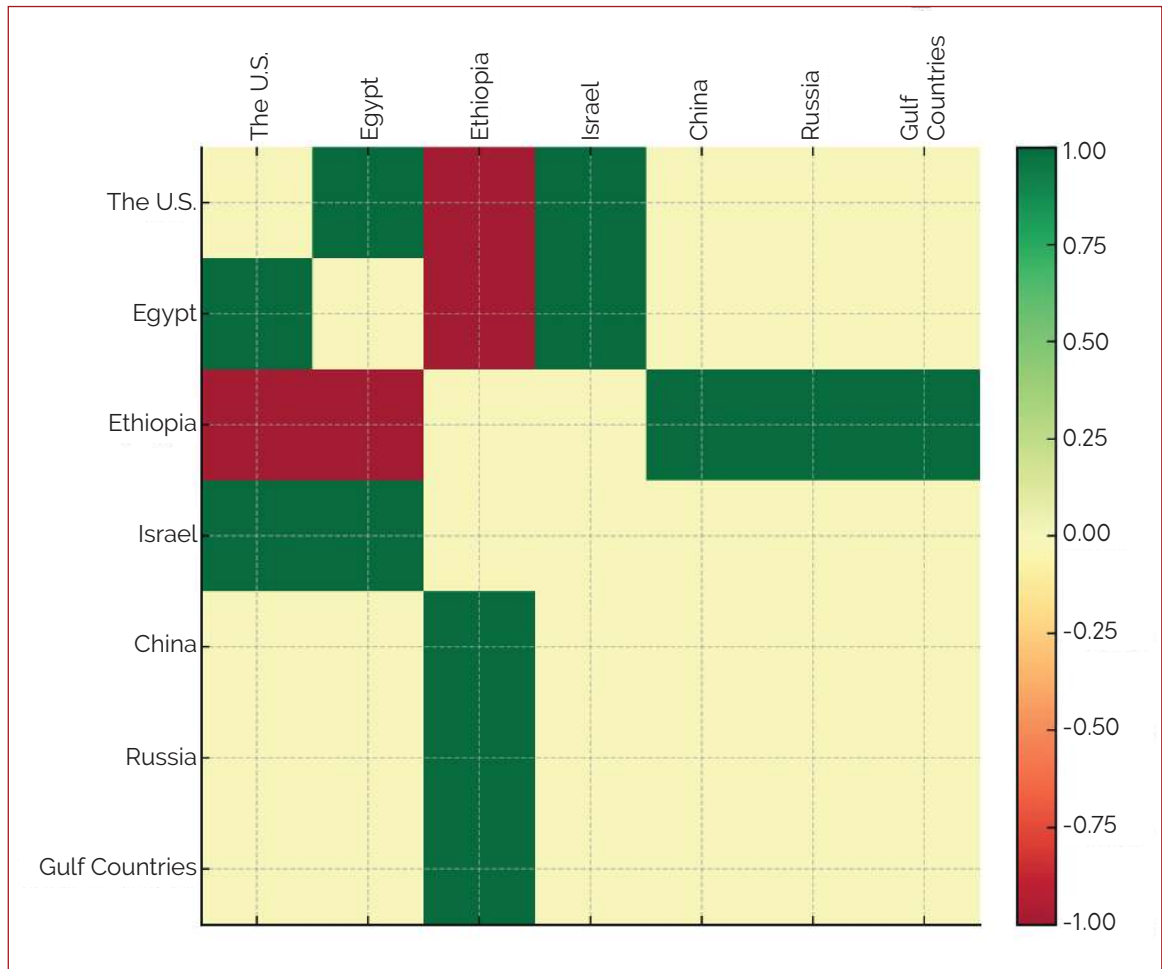
Initially supportive of Trump's Gaza plan, Israel could, under U.S. guidance, align itself with Egypt, thereby further strengthening Cairo's position. In this scenario, Egypt could re-establish diplomatic balance against Ethiopia by restoring its relations with the U.S. Conversely, Ethiopia may face diplomatic isolation and seek closer ties with global powers such as China and Russia to counterbalance U.S.-Egypt pressure. Alternatively, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed may attempt to revive diplomatic relations with the U.S. to safeguard his country's interests in the GERD negotiations. However, the GERD is more than just an infrastructure project for Ethiopia; it symbolizes national pride, sovereignty, and resilience. Just as Egypt sees the Nile as part of its national identity, Ethiopia views the dam as a historic achievement and a representation of development. Therefore, despite international pressure, Ethiopia is unlikely to abandon the project. Even if the U.S. fully aligns with Egypt on Gaza and decides to support Cairo in the GERD mat-

ter, Ethiopia will likely seek alternative diplomatic and economic partners to ensure the dam's completion and operation.

If Sisi and Trump reach an agreement — albeit under external pressure — Ethiopia will still emerge as a significant actor in the GERD dispute through its regional and global alliances. The final outcome will depend not only on how Egypt and the U.S. coordinate their next steps but also on how effectively Ethiopia mobilizes alternative partnerships to balance that pressure. Should Arab states form a unified counter-plan regarding Gaza, Egypt's position in negotiations could be strengthened. However, if that unity weakens, Ethiopia may further expand its diplomatic maneuverability. As the Gaza crisis and GERD dispute become increasingly intertwined, unresolved tensions in U.S.-Egypt relations will likely enable Ethiopia to maintain its advantageous position. However, Egypt's ability to regain U.S. support remains a decisive factor. If Cairo succeeds in re-establishing its rapport with Washington, it could intensify pressure on Ethiopia and secure further diplomatic gains on the GERD issue. The evolution of the balance of power will determine whether the GERD becomes a bargaining chip in U.S. diplomacy or a point of tension in shaping broader regional alliances.

Just as Egypt sees the Nile as part of its national identity, Ethiopia views the dam as a historic achievement and a representation of development. Therefore, despite international pressure, Ethiopia is unlikely to abandon the project.

Table 1: Ethiopia's Possible Position in Case Sisi and Trump Agree on Gaza





HYPOTHESIS 2: A LACK OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN SISI AND TRUMP ON GAZA STRENGTHENS ETHIOPIA'S POSITION AGAINST EGYPT REGARDING THE GERD

If tensions between Egypt and the U.S. persist, Ethiopia stands to benefit the most. A continued dispute between Cairo and Washington could ease pressure on Ethiopia and weaken Egypt's influence in GERD negotiations. Given Trump's ambiguous and unpredictable stance on the Gaza plan, Ethiopia could capitalize on this uncertainty if the U.S. remains neutral or begins to view Ethiopia as a more valuable regional partner.

If Israel perceives Egypt as weakened at the negotiation table, it may choose to further strengthen its relations with Ethiopia as a more stable regional partner. In such a scenario, Ethiopia would likely continue operating the dam as planned, consolidating its control over the Nile without external interference. However, Trump's statements about "stepping back

and observing" add further uncertainty. The lack of a clear U.S. position on both the relocation of the population and reconstruction plans creates an environment prone to unexpected developments. This uncertainty limits Egypt's diplomatic maneuvering space and complicates its efforts to increase pressure on the GERD without strong U.S. backing.

The U.S. pressure on Ethiopia peaked after Trump's failed mediation attempt in 2020, which resulted in the suspension of American aid to Ethiopia. However, following Trump's departure from office, the Biden administration deprioritized the GERD issue and significantly reduced pressure on Ethiopia. This shift enabled Ethiopia to continue filling the dam without external interference, thereby strengthening its position despite Egypt's diplomatic efforts. If tensions between the U.S. and Egypt persist, it suggests that Washington's influence over Ethiopia could wane further, complicating Cairo's ability to exert diplomatic pressure on the dam issue.

While Egypt has traditionally relied on Western diplomatic channels, Ethiopia has turned to African-led negotiations to legitimize the GERD, utilizing initiatives like the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI).

In the event of a potential rupture in U.S.-Egypt relations, Ethiopia would not only benefit from reduced pressure but would also actively seek to strengthen its strategic alliances to ensure the GERD's long-term stability. If U.S. support for Egypt results in increased diplomatic pressure on Ethiopia, Addis Ababa would likely deepen its relations with China, Russia, and Gulf countries. Should Ethiopia complete its alternative port access plans, these countries' interest in the region would intensify. A direct route to the Red Sea would enhance Ethiopia's strategic value, making it a more attractive partner. As a result, these global actors could provide stronger diplomatic backing against Western pressure on the GERD. At the same time, Gulf countries such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia, which already have strong economic ties with Ethiopia, may be willing to increase investments and support the dam's operations without financial or diplomatic constraints.

Beyond global alliances, Ethiopia has long sought to build a regional coalition in support of the GERD by actively engaging with Nile Basin countries. Nations such as Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan, and Burundi largely support Ethiopia's position, viewing the GERD as both a challenge to Egypt's historical dominance over the Nile

and an opportunity to establish a more equitable water-sharing system. While Egypt has traditionally relied on Western diplomatic channels, Ethiopia has turned to African-led negotiations to legitimize the GERD, utilizing initiatives like the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI). This approach provides Ethiopia with additional diplomatic protection, as not all Nile Basin countries align with U.S. foreign policy. This means that even if Washington increases pressure on Ethiopia, regional support could still shield the GERD from external interference.

This demonstrates that Ethiopia is not merely reacting to U.S.-Egypt tensions but is actively shaping its own diplomatic future. Even if U.S. pressure intensifies, Ethiopia's alternative alliances, regional legitimacy, and control over the dam position it strongly against external pressure. The U.S. and Egypt may attempt to press for new negotiations, but Ethiopia's extensive diplomatic network and its consensus-driven strategy in the Nile basin make it increasingly difficult for Cairo and Washington to compel Ethiopia to make concessions.

In this power dynamic, Egypt's deepening security concerns and economic fragility emerge as key factors that further reinforce Ethiopia's position. One of the main reasons behind Egypt's outright rejection of Trump's Gaza evacuation plan has been

Cairo's heightened security concerns. For the Sisi regime, accepting a large number of Gazan refugees is not just seen as a humanitarian or logistical burden, but also as a potential source of instability due to their perceived links to the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan), the most significant domestic opposition force in Egypt.

Hamas, with its ideological and organizational roots in the Muslim Brotherhood,⁹ represents the Islamist principles¹⁰ that the Sisi government has long sought to suppress. Cairo is concerned that the relocation of Hamas-influenced or directly affiliated groups from Gaza to Egypt could reactivate dormant Islamist networks within the country, revive sympathies for the Brotherhood, and further embolden existing opposition elements. With popular dissatisfaction already on the rise, such a population influx risks triggering a more organized or armed resistance to the Sisi government. As such, the fear of ideological infiltration and the potential for domestic unrest have been central to Egypt's rejection of this plan.

Complicating the picture further was Trump's proposal to relocate Gazans to East Afri-

ca as part of his strategy. While this scenario offered temporary domestic relief for Egypt, it also introduced the possibility that Trump could use this option as leverage to pressure Cairo. If the East Africa alternative were taken off the table and Egypt were forced to absorb the population from Gaza, the regime would face a serious internal risk. The entry of such ideologically charged groups could fundamentally alter Egypt's opposition dynamics, weaken Sisi's hold on power, and potentially trigger an internally destabilizing process.

Parallel to Egypt's security concerns, another important factor shaping the country's calculations has been the domestic public discourse fed by the Egyptian media, political elites, and President Sisi himself. This discourse, actively propagated by the regime, portrays the Egyptian military as one of the strongest in the region, and emphasizes its near invincibility in conventional warfare. However, the same discourse also emphasizes that Egypt's weakest link is its economy, acknowledging that this is where the country's real vulnerability lies. The official rhetoric claims that Egypt's enemies are aware of this vul-

If the East Africa alternative were taken off the table and Egypt were forced to absorb the population from Gaza, the regime would face a serious internal risk. The entry of such ideologically charged groups could fundamentally alter Egypt's opposition dynamics, weaken Sisi's hold on power, and potentially trigger an internally destabilizing process.

⁹ Although Hamas has its ideological roots in the Muslim Brotherhood, it now operates as an independent actor rather than as a direct offshoot of the organization. Nevertheless, the influence of the Brotherhood as an ideological reference point has not entirely disappeared.

For further reading, see: Milton-Edwards, Beverley, and Stephen Farrell. *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*. Polity, 2010.

¹⁰ Kali Robinson, "What Is Hamas?" *Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)*, 17 October 2024.

nerability and seek to destroy the country not through military means but by targeting its fragile economy and social fabric. This narrative is not limited to media channels; Sisi has personally articulated it in public speeches. In one address, he stressed that "their goal is to sever the bond between Egyptians, including between Muslims and Christians," and highlighted the magnitude of the danger by stating that "if Egypt falls, chaos will spread across the world." By asserting that hostile actors now aim to "strike Egypt's economy and shatter its societal cohesion," he frames economic instability as part of a deliberate external conspiracy.¹¹

This narrative serves multiple functions: it rallies nationalist sentiment to consolidate public support around Sisi while presenting internal criticism and economic hardship as part of a broader external plot. The regime positions itself as the sole guarantor of national unity, continuously reiterating the trinity of "nation, people, and army" as a sacred bond. In doing so, it legitimizes its repressive policies as necessary to protect sovereignty and security, portraying the sacrifices imposed on society as unavoidable.

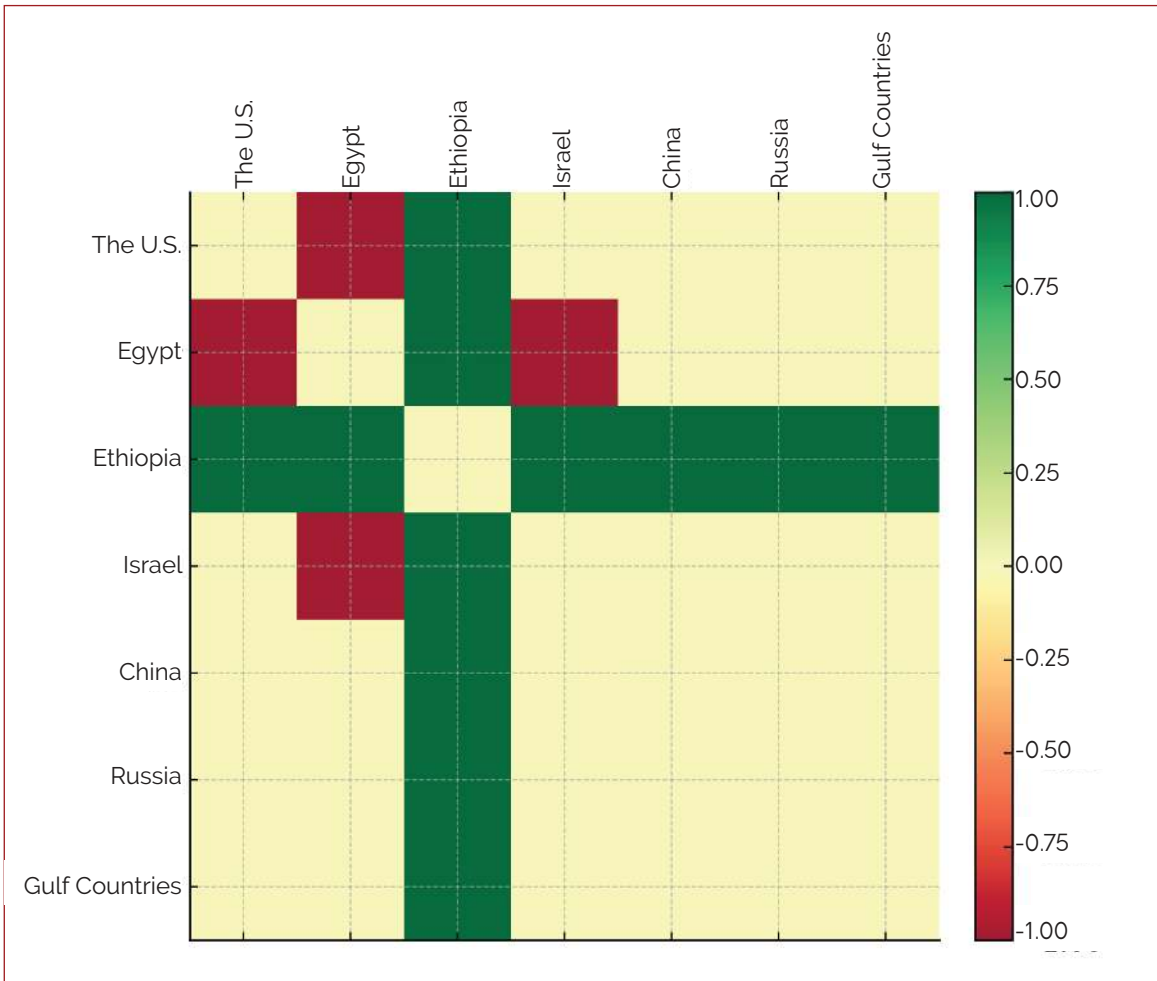
From a broader perspective, this rhetoric echoes Ibn Khaldun's centuries-old theory of the state: the survival of a state depends on its army, and the army relies on econom-

ic strength. Prolonged economic weakness erodes the army, undermines state authority, and leads a country toward internal collapse. In this sense, Egypt's economic fragility could become its greatest strategic vulnerability, posing a far more serious risk than an external military threat. The balance that Sisi often emphasizes essentially reflects the reality that a collapse in the economy would weaken the army, and eventually endanger the integrity of the state.

In the context of the GERD crisis and broader regional tensions, this nationalist rhetoric can be further instrumentalized. The population transfer plan from Gaza, in particular, is portrayed by the regime as a Western-backed threat aimed at undermining Egypt's security and sovereignty.

In conclusion, both the fear of ideological infiltration from Gaza and Egypt's economic fragility were decisive factors in its rejection of Trump's proposal. Ironically, however, it is precisely these two elements — security concerns and nationalist rhetoric — that could back Egypt into a corner while simultaneously offering Ethiopia an opportunity to strengthen its regional and diplomatic position. Especially if U.S.-Egypt tensions persist, this picture could set the stage for a shift in the balance in favor of Ethiopia.

11 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4P7GZcVW_Nw

Table 2: Ethiopia's Possible Position in Case Sisi and Trump Fail to Agree on Gaza

CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION



U.S. policy on Gaza and the resulting tension in its relations with Egypt have influenced not only the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also reshaped regional power dynamics, particularly by intertwining the GERD crisis more deeply with Middle Eastern geopolitics. Trump's plan for the evacuation of Palestinians from Gaza heightened Egypt's national security concerns, opening a new front of tension with Washington and potentially undermining Cairo's efforts to protect its interests regarding the Nile. The U.S. balance with its regional allies, especially Egypt and Ethiopia, is being redefined through the lens of these two simultaneous crises.

The intersection of the Gaza crisis and the GERD dispute reveals the complexity of regional geopolitical maneuvering. In this context, water security, geopolitical dynamics, and regional conflicts are becoming increasingly interlinked. Should tensions in

U.S.-Egypt relations remain unresolved, Ethiopia stands to benefit most by consolidating its control over the GERD, strengthening regional alliances, and expanding its diplomatic maneuverability. However, if Egypt manages to align with Washington on the Gaza issue and regains U.S. support, it could reclaim diplomatic leverage, pressuring Ethiopia into resuming negotiations under increased external pressure. Nonetheless, Trump's strategic unpredictability continues to create room for unexpected shifts, and it remains unclear whether U.S. policy will fully align with Egypt or maintain flexibility to accommodate Ethiopia. Moreover, while Ethiopia can count on alternative global allies, it has also deepened relations with Nile basin countries that see GERD as a step towards a more equitable water distribution and may resist Egyptian efforts to diplomatically isolate Ethiopia. Israel's role remains unclear; its interests regarding Gaza and GERD are not fully aligned with either

In the event of continued tensions in U.S. relations with Egypt, Ethiopia can be expected to increase its leverage on the dam and act more independently on water management in the Nile basin. However, if the U.S. and Egypt find common ground on Gaza, Egypt, with Washington's support, is likely to pursue a more aggressive policy in the GERD negotiations.

Egypt or the U.S., and this may allow for further diplomatic realignment.

As the balance of power continues to evolve, the coming months will determine whether Ethiopia can successfully manage its regional and global partnerships by consolidating its strategic autonomy or whether it will be forced to compromise due to external pressures—diplomatic, economic or strategic. Whether the GERD remains a point of tension, a diplomatic bargaining chip, or a symbol of Ethiopia's growing influence will depend not only on the U.S.-Egypt negotiations, but also on how Ethiopia mobilizes its alternative alliances and regional partnerships to offset external pressure.

Thus, based on the two hypotheses considered in this paper, the first scenario — where by Trump and Sisi reach a compromise on Gaza—is likely to increase U.S. support for Egypt and provide Cairo a diplomatic advantage in the GERD negotiations. In this case, Egypt could use Washington's support to put more pressure on Ethiopia and strengthen its hand in the negotiations. Moreover, Israel's greater alignment with Egypt under U.S. guidance could strengthen Cairo's strategic position in the region. However, in this scenario, Ethiopia can be expected to seek closer ties with China, Russia, and the Gulf states against

the risk of being ostracized. This process would make diplomatic maneuvering on the African continent even more critical and could lead to global actors taking more active roles in regional affairs.

The second scenario, in which the U.S. and Egypt fail to find common ground on Gaza, would position Ethiopia as the primary beneficiary of reduced diplomatic pressure over the GERD. The ongoing tension between Washington and Cairo would limit Egypt's ability to pressure Ethiopia without U.S. support while allowing Addis Ababa to deepen its ties with regional and global partners. In this scenario, Ethiopia may form a stronger diplomatic coalition not only with major powers like China and Russia but also with its Nile Basin neighbors, undermining Egypt's traditional diplomatic channels.

Both scenarios suggest that the balance of power in the region could change rapidly. The Trump administration's Gaza plan has had a direct impact not only on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also on water and security policies in North Africa and East Africa. The U.S. position on Gaza will shape Egypt's strategic calculations as well as Ethiopia's diplomatic room for maneuver on the GERD.

The main conclusion here is that the Gaza crisis and the

GERD issue are not independent of each other, but rather are directly linked to the efforts of regional actors to protect their national interests. In the event of continued tensions in U.S. relations with Egypt, Ethiopia can be expected to increase its leverage on the dam and act more independently on water management in the Nile basin. However, if the U.S. and Egypt find common ground on Gaza, Egypt, with Washington's support, is likely to pursue a more aggressive policy in the GERD negotiations.

In conclusion, this study provides a framework for understanding the decision-mak-

ing processes of regional and global actors by analyzing the complex interplay between U.S. Gaza policy, Egypt's national security priorities, and Ethiopia's GERD strategy. Future developments will depend on how the U.S. will shape its strategy towards the region, what direction Egypt will take in its relations with the U.S., and what kind of international support mechanism Ethiopia will build on the dam issue. In this context, the geopolitical intersection between the Middle East and Africa is increasingly becoming a decisive factor, and the implications of these new dynamics for regional stability are inevitable.

NOTES

[illegible]



www.orsam.org.tr



[orsamorgtr](https://www.facebook.com/orsamorgtr)