

Abstract

In the 21st century, transboundary water disputes have significantly increased. The growing demand and consumption of water resources have exacerbated scarcity and tensions. The Nile, shared by eleven basin states, is the most important water source in Africa's northeastern region. Historically, the Nile River has been both a source of survival for its lower riparians (Egypt and Sudan) and a source of dispute between the Basin's states. For years, tensions over water distribution between lower and upper riparian states persisted. As a result, in 1999, the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) was formed to conclude a cooperative framework agreement (CFA) that would serve as a permanent legal document in the Basin. However, disagreements between the states persisted, leading to Egypt and Sudan's refusal to ratify the CFA. This paper provides an overview of the Nile River Basin dispute and analyzes the NBI and its effectiveness. The paper argues that the expected population growth in the Nile Basin and challenges, such as climate change and water scarcity, will force Egypt and Sudan to ratify the CFA.

Research Objectives

This case study presents an important issue in the Nile River Basin, which may threaten water availability and increase the possibility of a conflict. The case will:

- ❖ increase awareness of water issues in the Nile basin and around the world
- ❖ increase understanding of the various factors that lead to water conflict
- ❖ provide readers with a new perspective on natural resources disputes

Methodology

Qualitative Approach

- ❖ Literature review: Scholarly journal articles
- ❖ Data from Government Organization (Nile Basin Initiative) and scholarly journals

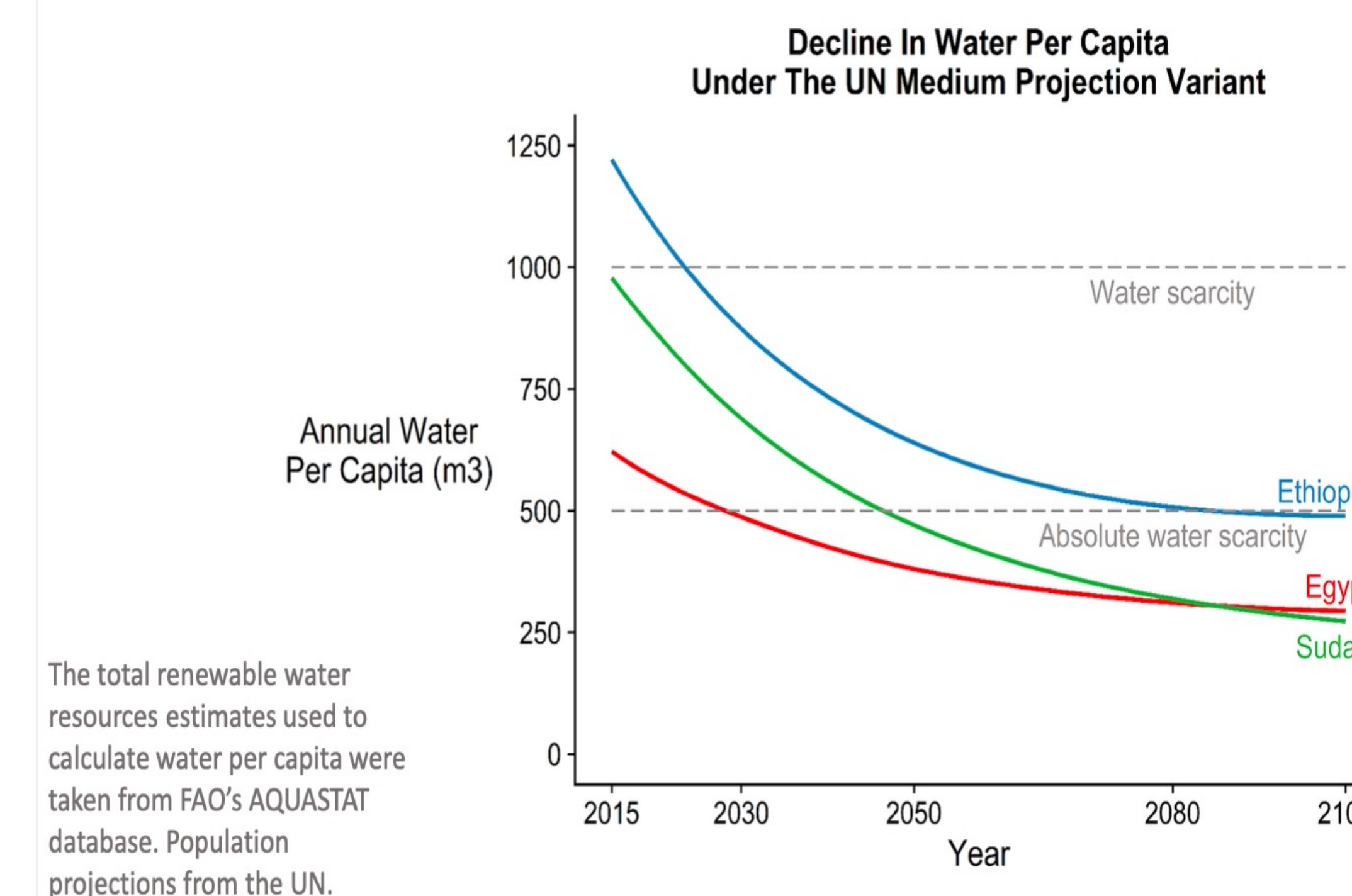
Background



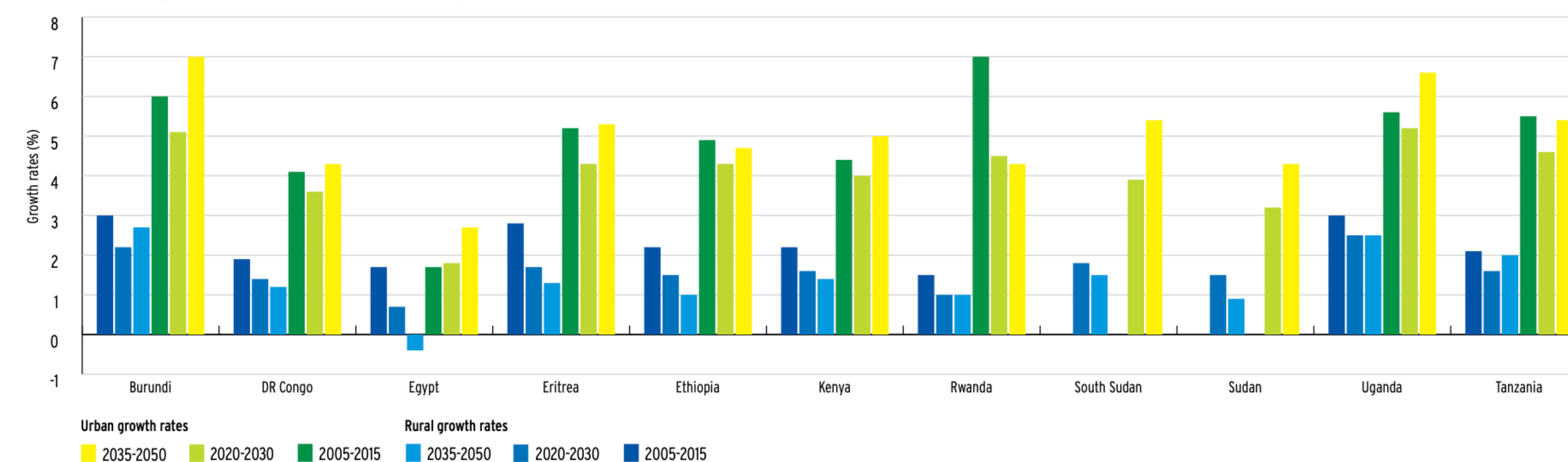
Historical claims by major actors:

- ❖ 1902 Treaty between Great Britain and Ethiopia stated that Ethiopia, would not allow any construction work across the Blue Nile, Lake Tana, or the Sobat
- ❖ 1929 Nile Agreement between Egypt and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan gave Egypt complete control over the Nile during the dry season and the right to monitor the availability of the Nile of the upstream countries.
- ❖ 1959 Nile Agreement between Sudan and Egypt was for full control over the utilization of the Nile water in terms of equal allotment of the annual flow of the Nile, hydroelectric or irrigation construction projects,

Expected increasing water stress



Current and projected rural and urban population growth rates



Discussion

The Nile Basin is passing through critical and uncertain times. The previous order imposed by Egypt is systemically being challenged by new realities and demands from assertive riparian's states. The old alliance of Egypt and Sudan, established under the 1959 Nile water agreement has engendered a new alliance of the upstream states. It remains to be seen how the assertiveness of the upper riparian of their right to an equitable and reasonable share of the Nile water will unfold and whether the NBI will indeed enter into force and effect. It also remains to be seen what effects this development would have on the task of the international panel of experts on the GERD. Regardless of the outcome, these developments have adequately indicated that Egypt and Sudan's water monopoly on the Nile basin is certainly coming to an end. The political turmoil that has enveloped Egypt in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution has undoubtedly created an opportunity for the Nile upper riparian to assert their rights to Nile water. The new alliance of the upstream and their unfolding has engendered more balanced power relations. The NBI has inevitably resulted in solidification of the major differences between the downstream and the upstream. Yet, the newly emerging power equilibrium within the Nile Basin could generate an opportunity for the two parties to compromise, and to realize that there is no alternative to cooperation. Such cooperation is needed desperately to pull 300 million people who live in or depend on the Nile Basin.

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