

BATTLE OF THE NILE



The Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is the source of an almost decade-long diplomatic standoff between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan.

Challenges

The first of thirteen turbines of the Great Renaissance Dam (GERD) in Ethiopia came into operation in February. The faster the filling of the reservoir (several years, all the same), the more the flow of the river downstream is likely to be reduced, which worries Egypt.

The story: Egypt relies on treaties dating back to colonial times which guaranteed it a right of veto against any dam construction upstream of its territory, as well as the minimum supply of 55.5 billion cubic meters of water per year.

Problem: These drafts were negotiated without Ethiopia.


Players

Ethiopia
Paid over \$4.2 billion to build this dam. And 60% of its population still does not have access to electricity. The big dam will solve this problem.

Sudan
Could benefit from the dam. The structure could reduce the risk of flooding during the rainy season and provide irrigation during the dry season. The country could also increase its electricity production. Sudan, however, sided with Egypt.


Egypt
Depends entirely on the waters of the Nile: the river covers more than 90% of its water needs, 80% of which are used for agriculture. The country already suffers from a water deficit. The government fears that Ethiopia will use the dam to exert political pressure on it. Cairo has already raised the threat of a military offensive.

Figures and facts



Name

Great Renaissance Dam




Construction period

2011-2022

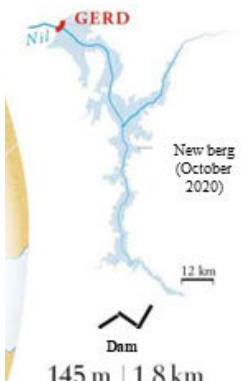
Fully operational by

2024



Location


On the Blue Nile, in Ethiopia, 20km from the border with Sudan



New berg

(October 2020)


12 km



Dam


145 m | 1,8 km

height | length



Capacity

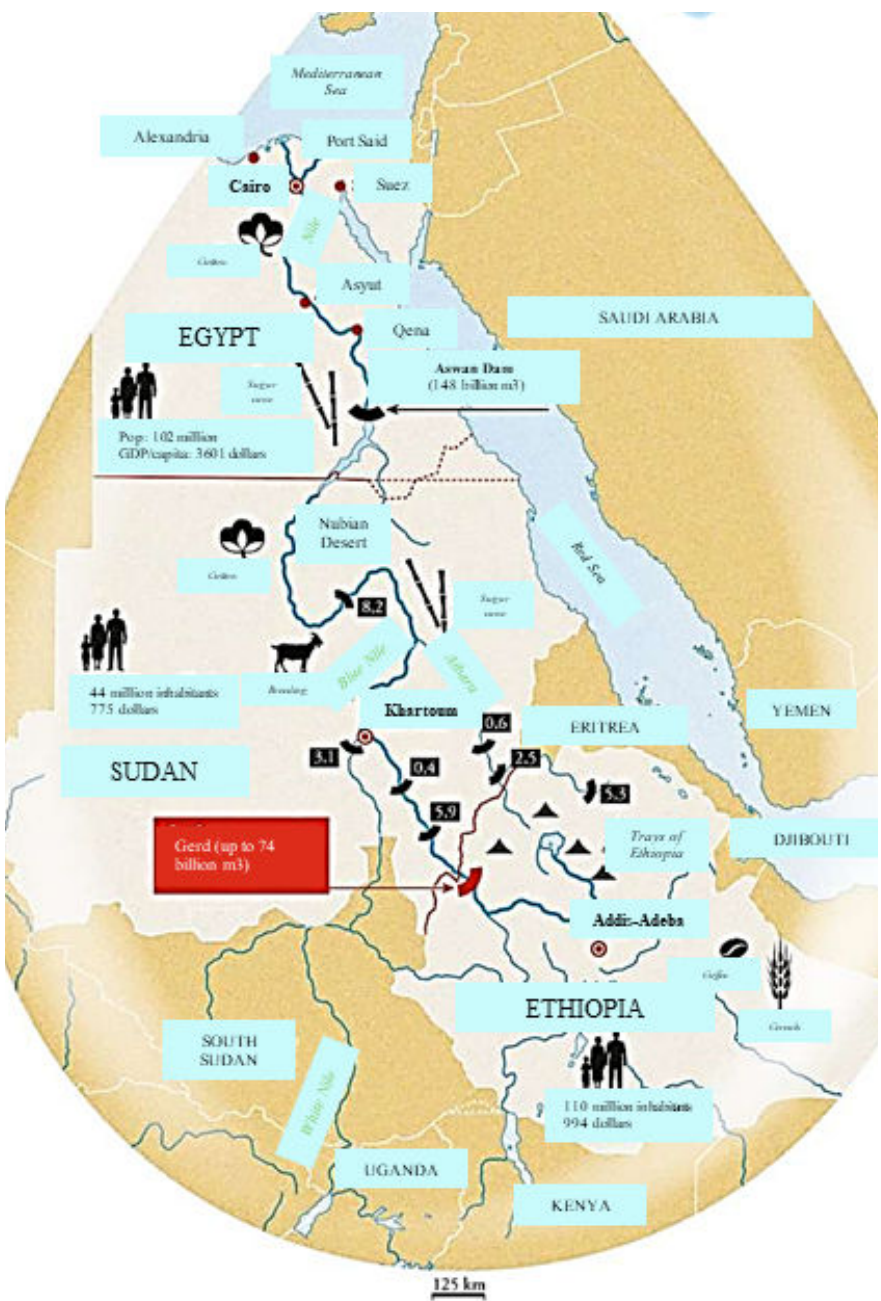
up to 74 billion cubic meters



Energy

5,200 megawatts per year

It is the largest hydroelectric power station in Africa



The two neighboring downstream countries of Egypt and Sudan have expressed worries that the dam could lead to reduced water flow in the Nile River, causing increased water scarcity — a major issue in a region that suffers acutely from droughts and negative effects of climate change.

It remains to be seen whether an agreement will be reached by the time the dam is completed in 2024 or 2025 — depending on the amount of rainfall during the rainy season.

With 90% of the Great Ethiopian Reservoir Dam completed, Sudan has now become a supporter. Even though Egypt is critical of the project, leading experts have ruled out war and point to potential benefits for the whole region.

