

Trump's dip into the Nile waters dispute didn't settle the conflict – in fact, it may have caused more ripples

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Assessing the impact of US mediation

Analysts tend to agree that Trump's initial involvement in the Nile River dispute made a bad situation worse. His admiration for authoritarian leaders prompted him to accommodate Egypt's al-Sissi and put U.S. credibility on the line.

Meanwhile, Trump's contempt for the professionals in the U.S. State Department led him to sideline the diplomatic corps and entrust a complicated assignment to Mnuchin, a former financier and movie producer. And his lack of patience and blunt language disrupted the negotiations, alienating Egypt and Ethiopia alike.

Addis Ababa continues to insist that it "has no obligation to request permission from anyone to fill the Renaissance Dam." In September 2025, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed declared that work on the dam had finished and boasted of two other dams on the Blue Nile nearing completion.

Meanwhile, Egypt has opened a large naval base on the Red Sea coast and attached its most advanced warships to a newly created Red Sea squadron. In July 2025, Egypt Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty issued a veiled threat to use military means to settle the Nile dispute.

Despite rising tensions, and his first administration's failure to make progress on the issue, Trump continues to point to his 2019-2020 mediation as a success.

In July 2025, he told NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte that a resolution lay just around the corner. President al-Sissi once again applauded the president's involvement and voiced hope that it would produce a "just agreement."

Yet there is little indication that the current Trump administration is in any better position to solve the Nile River dispute than was the previous one. Since Trump's second inauguration, experienced State Department officials have been fired or resigned, leaving sensitive diplomatic

missions in the hands of private businesspeople with personal ties to the president, rather than diplomats skilled in the art of negotiating intractable disputes among sovereign states.

This development seems unlikely to budge Trump from the conviction that he has already solved the conflict over the Nile River waters – and can somehow do it again.

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