

Notes on State Dept. Meeting 6/24-25/92
re. May Vienna Multilateral
Negotiations

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Multilateral Talks on Middle East Water

- 1) Vienna Agenda: environment, refugees, economic development, water, arms control.
- 2) Basic concept of Am. position: simple trust-building steps in beginning.
- 3) Vienna agreements, which constitute the basic agenda for Sept.-Oct. talks in Washington, D.C.:
 - a) Enhancement of data availability; international cooperation.
 - b) Enhancement of water resources; application of technology and other sources of supply.
 - c) Water management practices, including conservation; each regional party was asked to prepare a case study for the fall talks.
 - d) Regional water management and cooperation; Jordan has proposed a "Water Charter" for the Jordan basin without making clear what is meant or intended; the parties are to submit ideas for topics.

Aaron Wolf (Historical Context of M.E. Water Schemes)

- 1) Jewish immigration has been tied to water resources by Zionist movement.
- 2) Fighting between Jews and Arabs from the 1920s to the 1940s was tied to land holdings which was in turn tied to water resources.
- 3) At the base of every border conflict in the Jordan Valley there has been a water conflict.
- 4) N.B. get hold of Senate Resolution 155, 1965.

Selig Taubenblatt (Bechtel Corporation)

- 1) What is important about the Yarmuk Triangle under the Johnston Plan is not the 25 Mcm allocation to Israel, but the cubic meters/second Israel is able to capture during the summer. Using a combination of flow and historical usage factors, the Johnston team calculated the 25 Mcm allotment on the basis of a summer flow of 2.3 cubic meters/second
- 2) For those formulating the Johnston Plan, principles were more important than precision of data. The data was used more for political than technical purposes.
- 3) Re the Maqarin Dam (which was originally a part of the Johnston Plan) the 25 Mcm Israeli withdrawal from the Yarmuk was an important issue, but even more key was water for the West Bank. The latter issue has proven to be intractable, particularly in the aftermath of the Rabat Conference which gave the PLO responsibility for the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Discussions on Maqarin ended with the Amman Conference where Syria and Jordan disagreed on construction. A final meeting was held in 1980, mediated by Philip Habib, but without a solution to the problem of water for the West Bank-- otherwise the dam was doable.
- 4) Four areas need consideration: data; supply/demand-need/quality; economic of water; technology.
- 5) Market mechanisms should be considered for the regulation of supply and allocations; the creation of an international water market should also be considered.

Shawki Barghouti (Chief, Agric. Div, India Dept., World Bank): Water Management and Supply in the M.E.

- 1) The dominant issue is how to share the region's limited water resources. Water distribution in the area makes fair and equitable sharing very difficult.
- 2) Questions: What are the options other than cooperation and fair and equitable sharing? How can cooperation be used to increase the size of the water pie to satisfy needs? Is there enough financial reward or resources to induce cooperation in terms of what is known about supply, the application of technology, and how water is managed? Getting data necessary to answer all these questions requires a sustained effort.

3) What would be the value of water if water increasingly becomes a commercial commodity? If water is used thus, it must be used profitably and the management of water becomes accordingly important. The most profitable unit of water would have to be determined; water banks for the storage of water for later use, as, e.g., the Columbia River basin in the U.S., would have to be created.

4) If water becomes predominantly a commercial product, investments in water related research and technology, interbasin transfers, etc. would have to be increased.

5) The basic question is whether water can be dealt with purely in economic and technical terms, minimizing politics, ideology, and cultural attitudes.

6) Often when one advance is made in the way water is used, it leads to other advances, as, e.g., the building of Israel's National Water Carrier allowed for the adoption of an advanced technology irrigation system. Jordan also had a similar positive experience: the East Ghor Main Canal was covered (it is no longer an open canal with a constant flow of water), a pressurized system has been put in place, the cropping system has changed, water is given only on request.

7) However, demand must be reduced and there should be coordination of cropping patterns among riparians in the same basin or region. If water is to be saved, it must come from the agricultural sector. Recycling alone is not the answer; recycling and sustainability must go together. Also, caution should be taken in short-term fixes--they could have long-term negative implications.

John Kolars (University of Michigan): Overview of Water Resources In the M.E.

1) Natural variations in flows and climate cause data problems, therefore only short-term predictions can be made with any degree of accuracy. The quality of data is as essential as its quantity.

2) The complexity of water data reflects the complexity of water issues and this complexity must be borne in mind. Data is generated from a wide variety of measurements and its accuracy depends on a wide spectrum of factors:

- qualifications and motives of those gathering data
- how data is gathered
- nature, places, and time of measurement
- technique of measurement
- purpose of measurement
- system and field efficiency
- how data is defined

- cultural context within which data is collected
 - ecological factors
- 3) The interconnections of water are reflected in the interconnections of water data. A full range of data is needed to reflect the multi-uses of water.
 - 4) Good baseline data is essential therefore the historical record is important, but such data can be conflicting
 - 5) Satellite technology offers important new applications for gathering water data, but needs ground corroboration. For best results should be combined with Geographic Informations Systems (GIS) which are very locale specific and sophisticated.
 - 6) The cost of collecting and moving data is relatively cheap compared to the human element; the cost of a satellite data collection station is about \$10,000/unit. It is possible to network data--computer, satellite, etc.--but then the data becomes common property. [N.B. Parties to the Vienna talks requested that data gaps be filled].
 - 7) Environmental data tends to be viewed as less threatening than water data per se.

John A. Hayward, Chief, Water Unit, World Bank: Regional Water Schemes

- 1) The World Bank is developing a program on regional water issues. One is underway in the Jordan basin.
- 2) Each riparian in the Jordan basin has been asked to undertake a Bank funded study by independent local experts who were asked to consider the following options:
 - the future if there are no more investments because of political risks
 - the future if current government plans are implemented
 - the future if there are no limitations--i.e. the sky is the limit
 - look at the totality of the basin and propose optimum solutions with unlimited investments
- 3) Interntional experts would evaluate the four plans and try to sort out consistencies and inconsistencies among them .
- 4) The Bank will not assume any adjudicating or political role. This project is intended to parallel the peace initiative.

5) The perceptions of each riparian regarding the West Bank clearly differ. There is serious mistrust among them and serious exaggerations in the supply, allocations, etc., data they use.

6) There is an absence of common units of measurement and data among the riparians--e.g. metrics, etc. Agreement on a common unit is needed, otherwise serious distortions of data would be allowed to continue.

7) Jordan is very concerned with the issue of what is its share of the available water, and with supply enhancement. Israel keeps accurate data but is very secretive and is more aware of the need for demand management. Lebanon is concerned with protecting its rights and wants a total country study, not just South Lebanon. The Lebanese won't discuss the loss of Litani water to the sea as a loss of commercial value and loss of opportunity costs. Syria constitutes a problem, not only as regards data but because there is a blockage between the government and the private sector which must be resolved.

8) All fear real-time data would reveal state secrets, and at the level of technical experts, all agree on the need to look at the whole basin.

Miscellany

1) There is a new hybrid desalination process that combines the multi-flash and reverse osmosis process.

2) Israeli studies show that, as regards water security only, Israel could withdraw to within 100 meters of the green line, where the water is only 60 meters below the ground [Aaron Wolf].

3) State Dept. has asked for a series of country case studies in order to identify in those studies trends for further studies.