

THE JORDAN RIVER BASIN Part 1 : WATER CONFLICT AND NEGOTIATED RESOLUTION

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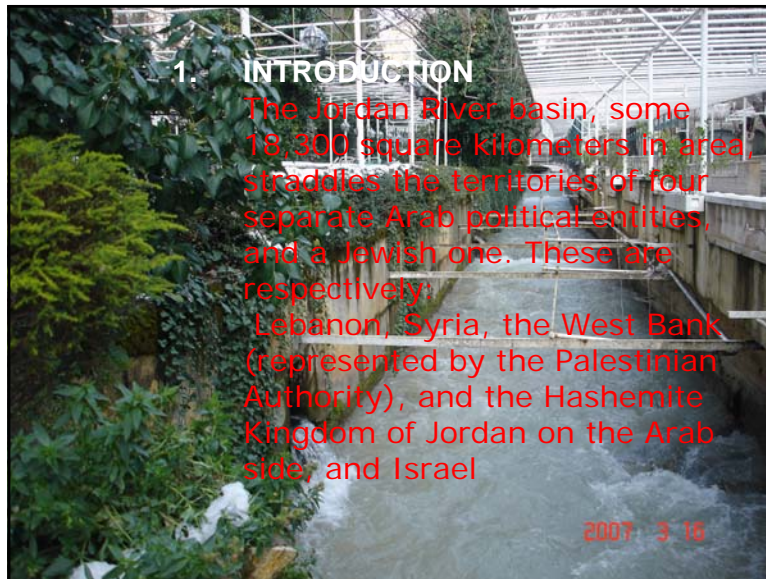
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(Presented by :Dr. Ahmad Bulad)

- The conflict over the waters of the Jordan basin dates back to the late 1800s when the Zionist Organization chose Palestine to establish a national home for the Jews.

The Zionist Organization had water plans prepared as early as 1899 , Jordan came up with competing plans starting in 1939 and had a Master Plan prepared for the development of the Jordan Valley

Israel had been rejected by the states of the region and the Jordan River waters become an additional reason for escalating the conflict.



CONFLICTING WATER PLANS

Several water plans were prepared under the mandate to utilize the waters of the Jordan basin (Naff and Watson, 1984). Two plans by Mavromatis and by Henriques of in 1922 and 1928. in 1921 the Jewish engineer Pinhas Rutenberg the utilization of the Jordan and its major tributary the Yarmouk for power generation, and to drain the Huleh marshes. The power concession was sanctioned by the Transjordan Cabinet on January 8 1928 and a power station was put into operation in 1932. In 1935, the Palestine Land Development Company, prepared a plan for the transfer of water from the Jordan to the Upper Galilee.

THE UNIFIED JORDAN VALLEY PLAN

The UNRWA plan would depend on the use of the Yarmouk waters and called for the construction of a high dam on the river at Maqarin, also known as the Bunger Dam. Responding to Israeli protests as a riparian party on the river over not including her as a party in the plan, the United States withdrew its support to the Bunger Dam project in 1953 and UNRWA froze its involvement.

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- United States President Eisenhower appointed Eric Johnston as his personal envoy to the Middle East on October 7, 1953. His mission was to work out a unified plan for the development of the Jordan Valley among rivals

Johnston was provided with the Main/TVA Plan on his first visit to the Middle East. In terms of water sharing, the plan gave annual allocations to Israel (394 MCM) from the Jordan and from groundwater to irrigate 416,000 dunums, Jordan (774 MCM) from the Yarmouk, the Jordan and the side wadis, to irrigate 490,000 dunums, and Syria (45 MCM) from the Yarmouk to irrigate 30,000 dunums, and did not allocate any quota for Lebanon.⁴ Lake Tiberias was to be used as a common reservoir for water, thus enhancing the possibility of cooperation among the riparian parties. A canal would run from the lake to irrigate the West Jordan Valley,

Arab Reaction to Johnston's Proposals

Johnston arrived to Jordan on October 1953 and concluded that it: "utterly refuses consideration of any joint project to utilize the waters of this river (the Jordan) with Israel."

The Foreign Minister of Jordan, concluded that the Unified Project that Johnston carried with him was not meant to benefit Jordan or the Arab refugees, but was intended to pressure and influence the Arab countries to share economic benefits with Israel, and eventually urge them to negotiate for peace.

Reaction of Israel

The public position of the government of Israel, was announced by the Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett in a broadcast on November 1953 in which he expressed Israel's willingness to sit with her neighbors to agree on a regional water plan. "In absence of such plan," the Minister added, "Israel would be free to use the water of the rivers which flow in its territories as its own property."

Arab Plan (1954) allotted water shares to all the riparian states, including Israel

The Arab Plan emphasized the irrigation of lands inside the River basin, and opposed the transfer of water outside it. Compared to the TVA/Main Plan, which accounted for 1,213 MCM of surface and spring water, the Arab Plan accounted for 1,348 MCM from such sources.

. Agreement was reached between Johnston and Arab Technical Committee on four crucial points:

- Storage of the Yarmouk floods would be made in Arab lands for purpose of irrigation and power generation.
- quantities of water allocated to Syria and Lebanon would be the same as indicated in the Arab Plan without affecting the share allocated to Jordan
- After agreement with the American side on the general framework of the project, the concerned Arab States would take the necessary measures at the United Nations to form the International Committee stipulated in the Unified Plan and to define its scope of work.
- The American side suggested postponing a decision on the power plant on the Hasbani at Al Ghajar until a detailed study of that proposal was completed.

Points of disagreement remained as follows:

- the American side wanted to have the figures of the Unified Plan adopted while the figures of the Arab Plan were about 15 percent higher.
- the American side insisted that Israel be allocated approximately the overall share as stipulated in the Unified Plan.
- the American side insisted that the use of water by Israel not be limited while the Arab side insisted that Israel use the water inside the basin.
- the American side insisted that the additional cost that the Yarmouk storage will bring about must not exceed \$10 million over what was estimated in the Unified Plan that specified 95 meters for the height of the Yarmouk dam.
- the American side insisted to have the Adassiya diversion built promptly while the Arab side insisted that no implementation would be made in the Yarmouk basin before the whole basin project is decided.

After visiting Cairo ,Amman,Damascus Johnston meet with the Arab ministers and they agree on:
The waters of the Jordan and Yarmouk Rivers are to be stored and regulated primarily through reservoir facilities to be constructed on the Yarmouk River and through the operation of Lake Tiberias as a reservoir.Yarmouk flood waters, which [are] exceeding the storage capacity of a 300MCM reservoir and irrigation needs, [are] to be spilled into Lake Tiberias for release to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Regarding water sharing, Jordan [will] be allotted 537 MCM from the Jordan and Yarmouk Rivers (in addition to internal resources of wells, springs and wadis within the Kingdom of Jordan); Syria [will] be allowed to withdraw 132 MCM (20 MCM from the Banyas, 22 MCM from the Jordan and 90 MCM from the Yarmouk); and Lebanon [will] be allowed to withdraw 35 MCMannually from the Hasbani River. Israel will be allotted 25 MCM per year from the Yarmouk and the remainder of the Jordan after subtracting the above shares for Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

The Israelis agreed to the Syrian and Lebanese shares, but demanded that the Israeli share be increased and that the Jordanian share from Lake Tiberias (160 MCM as stipulated in the Baker–Harza Interim report)be reduced. Johnston was unable to reconcile the Israeli demands with the Draft Memorandum, and no agreement could be reached.

On July 1955, Israel gave Johnston her own Memorandum of Understanding. It differed from the Arab Memorandum in that the share allotted to Israel from the Yarmouk was set at about 60 percent more than the 25 MCM stipulated in the Beirut memorandum. The share allotted to Jordan from Lake Tiberiaswas 37.5 percent less than the 160 MCM included in the Beirut Memorandum, and included 30 MCM of water from saline springs. The Israelis agreed to provide storage facilities for Yarmouk floods in Lake Tiberias and agreed to the formation of a neutral engineering board for supervision.

Final version, the Unified (Johnston) Plan :

In its final version, the Unified (Johnston) Plan made the following allocations:

- From the Jordan River:
 - Lebanon, 35 MCM from the Hasbani tributary;
 - Syria, 42 MCM (20 from the Banyas tributary and 22 from the main course of the river);
 - Jordan, 100 MCM (including a ceiling of 15 MCM of saline water, the balance to be drawn from Lake Tiberias); 29 Israel, the remainder of the flow.

- The Yarmouk: The total usable flow, including drainage water that returns to the river after irrigation, was estimated at 506 MCM (467 + 39):
 - Syria, 90 MCM (with the assumption that 39 MCM would return to the river after Syrian use for use downstream – the Syrian net depletion is 51 MCM per year);
 - Israel, 25 MCM for use in the Yarmouk Triangle, and 14 MCM would be lost to evaporation, mainly from the reservoir of the dam that would be built on the river;
 - Jordan, the remainder of the flow (estimated at 377 MCM including 39 MCM of return flow from Syria).

It is interesting to note how the share of the Hashemite Kingdom that was given priority in allocation at the outset of Johnston's mission was eroded with the passage of time in Johnston's subsequent three rounds

Time Profile of Jordan's Water Share

TVA/Main Arab Counterproposal		Johnston	
1953	1954	3rd Round 1955	Final Round 1955
Jordan 774	975	760	705+15
Syria 45	132	132	132
Lebanon None	35	35	35

Regarding the refusal of both the Israelis and the Arabs to use Lake Tiberias as a main storage reservoir, Johnston got the two sides to agree to the use of the lake as a storage facility for less Yarmouk floods (about 70 MCM) than originally envisaged.

Jordan and Israel agreed on the following Articles on water related matters:

Water from the Yarmouk River

A. Summer period - 15th May to 15th October of each year. Israel pumps (12) MCM and Jordan gets the rest of the flow.

B. Winter period - 16th October to 14th May of each year. Israel pumps (13) MCM and Jordan is entitled to the rest of the flow : Jordan concedes to Israel pumping an additional (20) MCM from the Yarmouk in winter in return for Israel conceding to transferring to Jordan during the summer period

Water from the Jordan River

A. Summer period - 15th May to 15th October.

In return for the additional water that Jordan concedes to Israel in winter, Israel concedes to transfer to Jordan in the summer period (20) MCM from the Jordan River directly upstream from Deganya gates on the river. Jordan shall pay the operation and maintenance cost of such transfer through existing systems (not including capital cost)

- **B. Winter period** –

16th October to 14th May .

Jordan is entitled to store for its use a minimum average of (20) MCM of the floods in the Jordan River south of its confluence with the Yarmouk Excess floods that are not usable and that will otherwise be wasted can be utilized for the benefit of the two Parties including pumped storage off the course of the river.