

HMUN 2020

Haarlem Model United Nations

Student Officer:
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Issue:
Managing the division of the Nile water

Forum:
African Union Peace and Security
Council (AUPSC)





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Name:	Floor Runge
Position:	Deputy President

Introduction

The Nile River is the longest river on earth and is known for its long history in trade, war and peace. The newest conflict that it faces affects the millions of mouths it has to fill with water annually. Its headwater nations, home to the Nile's two tributaries, the White Nile and Blue Nile have been left without rights to the river since colonial times. Because of global British dominance at the time, its colonies Egypt and Sudan were granted full rights to the water by a treaty in 1929, leaving out Italian colony Ethiopia and Belgian Rwanda. The situation was stuck in this hold since the signing of the treaty of 1929 until the signing of a deal between the headwater nations and Egypt to attempt to end hostilities and move toward a reasonable agreement.

Definition of Key Terms

Sudd

The Sudd is a very diverse piece of wetland situated in South Sudan that spreads across over 40,000 square miles. It is fed by the Nile's second main tributary, the White Nile. It travels incredibly slow, most of the water that travels through this wetland takes over a year to cover all of its surface. This ensures for the perfect environment for many species to develop, however, this slow pace also allows for a very high rate of evaporation. Hydraulic specialists estimate that around half of the river's water is lost due to evaporation before it can even reach the High Aswan Dam.

Jonglei Canal

The Jonglei Canal was a solution developed and sponsored by Egypt in 1978 in order to allow the White Nile to bypass the Sudd and therefore also prevent the mass evaporation of Nile water. Egypt estimated that this would save a total of 5 billion cubic metres of water that it would agree to share with Sudan if the plan succeeded. The plan did not succeed; however, much progress had been made. A total of 260 of the 360 kilometres of the canal had been dug by 1984, however, there was an attack on the canal camp by Sudanese People Liberation Army. Hostages were taken and since then war only intensified so the plan was never continued. The Bucketwheel was a machine brought from Pakistan in order to

complete the task of dredging the Jonglei Canal. The machine was so massive and heavy that after the project ended, the machine was never removed and still lies somewhere in the middle of the desert.

High Aswan:

The High Aswan is a dam on the border between Egypt and Sudan that allows for Egypt to control the flow of the Nile water after that point. Behind the dam is Lake Nassar where all the water is stored before it travels through Egypt. The lake and dam are so inefficient that a large portion of water is lost to evaporation as it waits to travel through the dam. A solution to this issue would be, as many hydraulic experts have stated in the past, to break down the dam and place it in a more hydraulically efficient place as the water that evaporates is highly necessary in Egypt. The current amounts of water are barely enough. This is evident as much of the water that leaves the dam at Nassar never even reaches the ocean.

General Overview

The first recorded written text attempting to find a solution to the issue is the Anglo-Italian Agreement of 1891. In this agreement, Italy agrees not to make any modifications to the Nile as it flows through one of its colonies, Ethiopia. More than 100 years later, Ethiopia is one of the headwater nations of the Nile attempting to end the, in their eyes, unjust division of Nile River waters in the past. Modern day, 55.5 billion cubic metres of water annually is promised to Egypt and around 18.5 billion cubic metres to her neighbour Sudan. This division of the waters stems back to the 1929 treaty between Sudan and Egypt orchestrated by the British; it allows for no water to be granted to headwater nations or for any projects to be undertaken that could affect the flow of water to the downstream nations.

In May of 2010 headwater nations decide to stand up against this treaty decisively for the first time in 80 years and sign an agreement amongst Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania. This is ratified by the Egyptian government in 2013 but at the same time, still rebutted by the Egyptian government. The Egyptian government is so opposed to the idea that they state they do not wish to start a war but will not, under any circumstances allow Ethiopia to undertake any such projects. Two years later, regardless of these hostilities, Egypt agreed to sign a deal with these nations together with Sudan to start the end of the hostilities that have been plaguing the Nile River for decades.

Major Parties Involved

Headwater Nations

The countries of Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda, control the majority of the land bordering the Nile's to a majority of the Nile's upstream waters before they enter Sudan and Egypt. Historically, this has given them a certain control and power over the division of the waters. This natural control came to an end in 1959 through a treaty drawn up by the British granting all the Nile waters to Sudan and Egypt and leaving none to the headwater nations. This treaty lasted for a long time, but as of May 2010, they have drawn up a treaty in which they declare their rights to divide a portion of the river's flow amongst themselves. This has been a very daring move as Egypt had very clearly stated that any attempts to make changes to the existing situation would be a declaration of war in their eyes. Since the signing of that treaty there have been talks in order to come to a consensus and make the treaty in effect, binding, however, no such consensus has been reached.

Downstream Nations:

Egypt

Egypt's claims to the river are backed by the needs of its population. Of its population of 80 million citizens, roughly 75 million live in the Nile's narrow river delta and depend directly on its waters. Egypt controls its portion of the Nile's water flow through the High Aswan dam. This ensures that the 55.5 billion cubic metres of water promised to Egypt by the British treaty reaches its farmers and citizens. However, the power and control that Egypt is able to exert through this dam depends directly on the upstream nation's compliance with the treaty. These nations realised that the apparent control Egypt exerts over the river has no credibility and that they hold the power to change this fate if they so wish; through this realisation they decided to call Egypt out on their bluff and draft a treaty undermining this power.

Sudan

Sudan is the only other country apart from Egypt that legally has any control over the river's water flow. They are granted 18.5 billion cubic metres by the British treaty although they are situated upstream of the High Aswan dam. This is most likely due to the position of the Sudd within its borders. As the Sudd and the possibility of the Jonglei Canal play such a vital role in the future of the canal, they hold significant political power over the canal and have been able to negotiate this position in the treaty.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of Event
April 15, 1891	Anglo-Italian protocol, Italy agrees not to modify the flow of the Nile River.
May 15, 1902	Agreement with Belgium on behalf of the Republic of Congo to make no changes to native rivers that would affect the flow of water to the Nile River.
December 13, 1906	Tripartite Treaty, (France-Italy-Britain). Agreement to protect Egypt's interests in the area.
May 7, 1929	Agreement between Egypt and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan orchestrated by the British.
March 23, 1959	Agreement that allows Egypt and Sudan to build a dam in the Nile.
May 2010	Treaty between the upstream Nile nations of: Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania
March 2013	Ethiopian government ratifies treaty that overrules colonial-era legislation on the Nile, Egypt disagrees
5 March, 2015	Upstream nations sign deal with Egyptian head of state that allows projects to be undertaken in the Blue Nile.

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

1929 Nile Water Agreement

This was the last of five treaties between the United Kingdom and Egypt between 1891 and 1925. It states, after careful consideration and communication between

the two states, that no country along the banks of the Nile, including Sudan may undertake any actions that may lessen or tardy the water belonging to Egypt, and that Egypt may undertake construction on the Nile in Sudan as long as this is done in cooperation with the local authorities. This treaty still has an impact on the decisions and treaties pertaining to this issue today. A more modern agreement drafted in May of 2010 works to rebut this certain veto-power that Egypt holds in order to allow upstream states to undertake hydraulics projects and such.

1959 Treaty

This treaty was in cooperation with Sudan and Egypt with the help of Britain. The plan was to build a dam that would allow the water to be divided according to the treaty. After the waters were divided, with considerable favor to Egypt, decisions were to be made as to the construction of a dam. Egypt believed that the best option was to create a high dam at the border with Sudan as it would cost the least amount of time and would create a solution most favourable to them. Sudan, with the advice from many hydraulic experts drafted the plan to set up a series of smaller dams along the Nile river valley. This would be favourable as the risk of flooding is considerably lower and would have a lower impact on all parties financially as the project could take place over a larger stretch of time. One negative, in the eyes of the Egyptians was that it required cooperation from all of the nations along the banks of the Nile river; this was not beneficial towards Egypt as they would have to give up a small portion of their share of water to each of the headwater states. As a result, the High Aswan dam was built.

Nile-Basin Cooperative Framework

This agreement works in rebuttal to that by the United Kingdom in 1929. The colonial-era treaty granted very much power over the river which brought with it a great deal of political power in the region as many countries depend directly on the Nile's water source especially as rains are becoming scarcer. This treaty would, take away the power to veto any such projects from Egypt established in the 1929 treaty with Britain in order to leave open discussions. This agreement was opposed by the two upstream states as they feared that they would lose a large sum of water to projects such as hydraulic energy and agriculture, water that these leaders claimed vital to their citizen's survival. Egypt in fact feared this agreement to such an extent that they threatened with war if the necessity would arise.

2015 Agreement

Ethiopia, with strong backing from Nile base nations, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Burundi, has managed to sign an agreement with Egypt and Sudan that

allows them to create a dam in the Nile tributary, the White Nile. This was previously rebutted by the 1929 treaty with Britain granting Egypt almost complete control and this has been the first change since. This shift in the political climate of this issue most certainly allows for further talks about this issue.

Possible Solutions

High Aswan

The High Aswan dam by the border between Sudan and Egypt is the final stop of the Nile water before it is distributed into Egypt. Its source, Lake Nassar has a very large surface area, allowing for a large amount of water to evaporate and be lost. This is a very large issue as the Nile water is already a scarce and very much wanted thing amongst states. Many hydraulic experts have pointed out this flaw over the years and have suggested the dismantling of the dam. In its place will come smaller dams that are distributed along the Nile River Valley. This will greatly decrease the rate of evaporation as the surface area of the water is reduced and will also greatly reduce the risk of flooding. This was a solution suggested before the High Aswan was built as the issues that we face with it today had been foreseen by many experts, however, this was regarded as a faster solution to the issue. What the nations need now is a 'long term' solution as opposed to a short-term solution.

Jonglei Canal

Another place where a large sum of water is lost due to evaporation is the Sudd. Water travels very slowly along large stretches of land in this wetland which causes the evaporation of at least half of its water overtime. This issue can be solved by the already proposed Jonglei canal. This canal would allow the White Nile to bypass the Sudd, reducing the time and therefore reducing the water lost to evaporation.

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