Post 1906 Convention period (1906-1916)

After the signing of the Convention of 1906 between Mexico and the United States to allocate the water from El Paso/Ciudad Juarez Valley to Fort Quitman, several problems rose from this treaty. First, the construction of the Elephant Butte dam created depletion in the stream flow in the Rio Grande/Bravo River. As a result, during ten years, Mexican farmers were not able to grown almost any product. No intermediate plan between the construction of the Elephant Butte Dam and the operation of the irrigation system was done, and the consequences were tragic for the agriculture in that area. In addition, during this period, there was a medium drought that affected the agriculture production in both countries. Second, due to the imposition from the U.S. of the monthly allocation volumes specified in the 1906 Convention, there was a mismatch between the
periods of delivery of water according to this table, and the periods when the water was needed. Due to the lack of negotiation and elasticity between both countries, the Mexican farmers of the Irrigation District 009 Valle de Juarez suffered severe ravages in their agriculture production (Figure 1).

Other important aspect to highlight is the fast grown of diversions in Brownsville valley at the lower part of the Rio Grande/Bravo basin (Figure 2). In 1908, 1910 and 1911 were cultivated in this area 5 000, 15 000 and 24 000 hectares respectively. By that time, the US estimated that three quarters of the flow in that area came from Mexican tributaries or sources. At that point, the government of the United States, but mostly the farmers of Texas, realized the imminent fact to sign a new treaty that allocate and ensure the water for the development in this area. Meanwhile the signing of a new treaty, the irrigation area grew in this section of the basin. In 1922, 86 240 hectares were cultivated in this area, by 1935, there was estimated an irrigation area of 154 000 hectares. The increase in the irrigation area and the water needs, not only from US farmers but also from Mexican farmers, and the competition of water between both countries drove the situation to the imperious necessity to sign a treaty.

**External but related water factors**

Meanwhile in the east side of the border between the United States and Mexico (Rio Grande/Bravo basin) the problem was to try to convince Mexico to assign certain yield of water to the US, in the west side of the border, at the Colorado river basin, the situation was the opposite. In the Colorado basin Mexico argued the right of water and
the allocation of a certain yield of water. From 1906 to 1909, severe floods affected the course of the river at the outlet of the basin in the Gulf of California (Figure 3). Several ravages were suffered by the population and the Imperial Irrigation District in that area. United States’ budget was spent in Mexico to construct levees along the outlet. In 1922 the Colorado river Compact were signed by seven states, the states of the higher basin integrated by Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming; and the states of the lower basin integrated by Nevada, Arizona, and California. This compact became almost impossible the negation of the treaty of 1944, due to the complexity of agreement between the seven states and Mexico. Several non-water factors, as well as fights between the seven states drove the negotiation in the Colorado Basin.

![Figure 3. 1906 flood](image)

**External and non–water factors**

Several non-water factors affected the negotiation of the treaty of 1944. From 1910 to 1921, the Mexican Revolution against the Dictator Porfírio Diaz stop the negotiations in this area. From 1921 to 1928, although the problem rose in the Colorado and Rio Grande/Bravo basin, the political interest in this sector was not enough to consolidate a treaty. Although the policy of “good neighbor” enforced by Franklin D. Roosevelt (1932-1945), the internal affairs in Mexico after the Mexican Revolution provokes the nationalization of the oil and agriculture industry in 1937, taking the government the control over the US oil companies and US agriculture land inside Mexico (Figure 4). *These actions froze the relationships between both countries.* In addition, Mexico established commerce with the axis powers in order to pay the debts due to the
nationalizations. In 1939, the conciliation with the oil and agriculture ex-owners started and the political relationships between both countries started again. Finally, the incursion of the United States in the World War II (December 7th, 1941), the support and sympathy from Mexico to the United States in this area, and the necessity to show the world than in war times it is possible to made agreement between the nations, on February 3rd 1944, the treaty that set the utilization of waters of the Colorado, Tijuana and Bravo/Grande rivers between Mexico and the United states was signed.

Figure 4. Oil Industry Nationalization

Required Reading:


Can be found at  [http://www.ibwc.state.gov/Files/1944Treaty.pdf](http://www.ibwc.state.gov/Files/1944Treaty.pdf)

Supplemental Reading: