18 The Geopolitics of Water in the Middle East: Turkey as a Regional Power

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INTRODUCTION

'Politics is about power and the distribution of goods – public, private, and psychic' (Waterbury 2002: vii). The possession and resort to power, and distribution of shared water resources, have indeed shaped the so-called Middle East water question. This chapter provides an overview of Turkey's relation to neighboring riparian states, Iraq and Syria, principally over water but also over Kurdish politics and territorial disputes. The purpose is to serve the ultimate goal of understanding the role of water and power in shaping regional dynamics, and more specifically the emergence of Turkey as a regional power. An upstream–downstream relation is characteristic of the interaction between the three co-riparians Turkey, Syria and Iraq on the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. The geographic asymmetry is emphasized by economic and military advantages that favor the upstream riparian, Turkey. Since the mid-2000s, the three actors have, however, evolved from being rivals to becoming partners over water and security issues. This has been a major development in the region and the present study analyzes the past legacy and new strategic orientations.

THE CONTEXT: WHEN GEOLOGY COMMANDED HISTORY[1]

The four main rivers of the region – Nile, Euphrates, Tigris and Jordan – have seen great civilizations flourish and major empires die because of lack of effective water management. The history of the Middle East has been marked by the flow of the Tigris and Euphrates waters. Behind the agricultural development and culture that characterizes human development, the link between man and water has remained strong and permanent. The abundant waters of the Euphrates and Tigris have particularly raised passions and lusts, from antiquity to contemporary times, while contributing greatly to the cultural, historical and economic

development of their populations. The two rivers originate in the mountains of Eastern Turkey. They flow into Syria and Iraq and join the sea at the head of the Arabic-Persian Gulf.

Indeed, water resources have been used by populations around the world in their offensive and defensive strategies, whether the Chinese (fifth century BC) who built dikes to flood the aggressor, or Europeans who entered America through the Amazon, Mississippi and the St Lawrence, Africa through the Nile and Asia through the Yanggzi Jiang. In the early fourth century BC, the city of Babylon protected its population by digging moats from the Tigris and Euphrates (Lacoste 1993: 11–12). These waters have seen the development of some of the most prestigious ancient civilizations. In the Mashrek region, traces of the first human exploitation of water for agricultural and private purposes have been witnessed through the domestication of crops. According to experts, the collection of grains, dating back to 10,800 BC, was detected in the region of the Shanidar Cave in Iraq. Similarly, the Mureybet inhabitants on the Syrian portion of the Euphrates used to roast barley some 10,000 years ago (Bakour and Kolars 1994: 125). As these plants did not grow naturally at such low levels, it has been concluded that they were imported from elsewhere to Mesopotamia, the region lying between the Tigris and Euphrates, and most probably from the plains of Jericho, where simple techniques for irrigation were already applied. The rise of city-states in the country of Sumer and Akkad is usually attributed – among other factors – to flood control and the intensive practice of irrigation, through water diversion from the Tigris and Euphrates in multiple channels.

The rise of Sumer started around 4000–3000 BC, a period when the Arabian-Persian Gulf reached to the seaport of Ur (Furon 1963: 71). It has also been argued that the development of sophisticated irrigation techniques and the art of controlling water were decisive factors in the rise and decline of local kingdoms. In this regard, Karl Wittfogel developed a theory that linked the development of large irrigation projects to the capacity of early agrarian societies to adapt to an arid environment (1957). His thesis argued that water development contributed to the formation of a particular political entity referred to as 'Oriental despotism' (Wittfogel 1957). But later discoveries by archaeologist Robert Adams showed the absence of major hydraulic works in this early period of the Sumerian civilization, which developed only much later into a 'hydraulic bureaucracy' (Curtin 1984: 63; Adams 1981). It was also through the gradual reduction of wheat crops in Sumer, identified by archaeologists Jacobsen and Adams in 1958, that a link was established between the reduction of these crops from 2400 BC and the total disappearance of irrigation in 1700 BC, at the time of take-over of Sumer by Babylon (Furon 1963: 70). In 3100 BC, the first conflict over water opposed the Sumerian cities of Umma and Lagash, both users of the Euphrates waters. The victorious city of Lagash, who signed what will be considered as the first treaty in history, decided

to prevent future conflicts by digging a canal diverting the waters of the Euphrates (McCaffrey 1997: 43). The mixing with saline aquifers and the ensuing salinization and waterlogging of soils made the land unfit for growing plants.

It is also in the Middle East that are found the oldest dams in the world, whether the Shalalar dam (seventh century BC; see Wolf 1994: 9), which was built on a tributary of the Tigris in Iraq, the three dams around Persepolis in Iran, dating back to the Achaemenid period (558–331 BC),[2] the Habarga dam in Syria, built by the Romans in AD 132, the Marib dam in Yemen, the Batina in Oman and the Taif dam in Saudi Arabia (Furon 1963: 80). Irrigation was resumed under the Achaemenid (fifth century BC) and Sassanid periods (third century AD), to find a sporadic but significant resurgence in the successive Arab administrations. The expansion of Islam in the Mediterranean region has been linked with the distribution of water to the inhabitants of the region and the restoration of irrigation systems, especially under the Abbasids (Hourani 2002: 103). The expansion of irrigation will eventually decrease progressively until the total destruction of irrigation canals that were already heavily damaged by the Mongol invaders in the second half of the thirteenth century. The Tigris and Euphrates were then left unexploited. Uncontrolled floods were taking place on a regular basis, until the French and British mandatory powers introduced modern technologies after World War One: the Hindiya (1911–14), Diyala (1927–28) and Kut (1934–43) dams were constructed and large development schemes followed in the 1950s. Another technique, dating back to Assyrian-Babylonians and the Persians, is characteristic of the region stretching from the Chinese Tsinkiang, through Afghanistan to the south of Morocco: the underground aqueducts that convey water from underground aquifers to the surface by gravity flow along the water table. They are named *Kiraz, karez gariz* in Afghanistan, or *Kiraz kanat* in Persia, *sabrig* in Yemen, *krig* in southern Tunisia, and *foggara khattar* in the Sahara and southern Morocco (Furon 1963: 82). The most sophisticated are found in Oman and Iran, where they are 40 km long and 300 m deep, and they carry an average flow of 30–100 l/s.

Geology has thus commissioned history. The historical context of riparian dynamics over water will show, in the following section, a complex reality made of distrust, reconciliation and rapprochement. Trust-building process was slow, each side struggling with mutual images across the Euphrates and Tigris.

THE STRUCTURE: PAST LEGACIES AND LASTING PERCEPTIONS

States' threat perceptions are crucial variables in determining their course of action and their regional and international politics. Mutual perceptions

are affected by power interactions (Lax and Sebenius 1986: 255); they are also shaped by history and geography.

The water and power nexus: territorial disputes and perceptions inherited from Ottoman times

Interactions between Syria, Iraq and Turkey have their roots in past colonial experiences, dating back to the Ottoman Empire. The Young Turk Revolution of 1908, and ensuing institutional reforms launched on the basis of Ottoman nationalism, quickly opened a gap between the ruling elite and Arab 'partners' (Owen 1992: 9; Picard 1993: 7).[3] This did not reach the stage of secession, but the seeds of separation were planted in the Fertile Crescent (Greater Syria and Iraq), as the Ottomans were perceived by local populations as brutal oppressors of Arab renaissance. The separation occurred in 1916, when Arabs revolted against Ottoman rule, under the leadership of Sheriff Hussein of Mecca, in collaboration with Great Britain, which was eager to weaken the Ottoman Empire. Despite their promises of Arab independence, the British and French divided the spoils of the Ottoman Empire amongst themselves.[4] The Arab 'rebellion from within' carried a long scent of treason for successive leaders of the newly founded Republic of Turkey, who suggested, in 1923, to exclude the Arab East (Chenal 1995: 65). Similarly, nationalist movements developed in Syria and Iraq to struggle against the system of Mandates established by Western powers in the Mashreq area, also to Turkey's attempts to interfere in their politics. Following their respective independence in 1932 and 1946, Iraq and Syria experienced a period of continued instability and systematic military coups (Owen 1992: 24). Besides the system of mandates imposed by France (on Syria) and Great Britain (on Iraq), slow economic development in this area was often attributed to the long Ottoman tutelage, followed by Western domination. Between the 'stab in the back by Arabs to the Turkish nation'[5] and Arabs' mistrust of Turkey's pro-Western regime and ideology of pan-Turanianism advocated by Mustafa Kemal, combined with the rejection of Islamic roots through the abolishment of the Islamic Caliphate in 1924 and the establishment of a secular state, relations between Turkey and the Arab world were characterized by exclusion and lack of identification. The anchoring of mutual stereotypes and perceptions has persisted on both sides and impacted considerably on collective mentalities (Haarmann 1988: 175–96; Copeaux 1991: 195–226; El-Sayyid 1993: 46–60; Vaner 1993: 61–77; Altunisik and Tür 2006: 231). Ultimately, mutual perceptions were shaped by each party's own definition of national identity and history, and the strategic choices made accordingly.

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire continued under the British and French mandates, and favored the rise of irredentist claims which continued to impact mutual relations between Turkey, Iraq and Syria. Territorial disputes were characterized as 'clashes between Arab and

Turkish nationalism' (Yerasimos 1993: 15). The disputed areas consisted of Mosul and the Sandjak of Alexandretta or Hatay Province – a mosaic of ethnic communities, languages and religions at the heart of water infrastructures.

The question of Mosul will not be detailed since it has not directly impacted on interactions over the Euphrates and Tigris. For the purpose of this study, the controversy is of interest, insofar as it has contributed to the distrust felt by Arabs who feared Turkey's latent irredentism over this oil-rich part of Iraq. The province was taken over and occupied by British forces in 1918. Keen on keeping control over the region of Kirkuk, Great Britain pressured Turkey's nationalist leaders to abandon their claims of sovereignty during the discussions leading up to the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923. The question of the 'Vilayet of Mosul' was persistently raised by a fringe of the Turkish press in the following years, and more specifically during the Gulf War against Iraq (1990–91), on the basis of a 'return' of the Turkmen population of Iraq to Turkey (Georgeon 1991; Chenal 1995: 71–3). In 2002, the loss of oil-rich provinces of Mosul and Kirkuk and the reiteration of Turkey's 'historical' interest in the large Turkmen community of Northern Iraq were also stressed by the Turkish Minister of Defense (Park 2003). Turkey also managed to get recognition by the United States of the Iraqi Turkmen Front, later included in the list of Iraqi opposition groups.

Between Turkey and Syria, irredentism rested on Syria's side. Perceptions on both sides weighed on mutual interactions. Syria has long considered the annexation by Turkey of its territory, the Sandjak of Iskenderun (Alexandretta), later called Hatay Province by Turkey, as arbitrary and illegitimate (Al Mansour 2000: 28). On Turkey's side, this was perceived as the result of 'unification with Turkey in 1939' (Altunisik and Tür 2006: 231). Others note that Article 4 of the San Remo Agreement, establishing a French mandate over Syria in 1920 and approved by the League of Nations in 1923, instituted a clear protection of Syria and Lebanon's territorial integrity (Mardam Bey 1994). This clause was, however, quickly ignored by the mandatory power in Syria, who proceeded to what was perceived in Syria as a gradual but continuous territorial disintegration to the benefit of Turkey (Mardam Bey 1994: 11). In addition to the allocation of Cilicia to Turkey (1920), France gave autonomy to the Northern region of Syria, later established as the Sandjak of Alexandretta, including the cities of Antioch and Alexandretta and the fertile plains of Amouk. Administrative and cultural facilities were granted to the large Turkish minority, while the Sandjak remained attached to Syria (Thobie 1979: 358). Some historians viewed this as an 'invention of the Mandate in the context of the balkanization of Syria which was intended to facilitate the administration of the territory' (Thobie 1979: 357). When signing the Franklin–Bouillon (1921) agreement with Turkey, France ceded to Turkish claims for a change of borders. With this, the Turkish minority increased from 29 per cent to 39 per cent in 1936, while the Arab population (Alawi,

Sunni and Christian) constituted a majority of 46 per cent (Picard 1983: 53). Annexation by Turkey took place in several stages, through a series of measures negotiated with France. In fear of a German occupation of Syria, the Sandjak was finally ceased in 1939, in exchange for the participation of Turkey to the coalition formed by the Allies (Mardam Bey 1994: 11–12). From the period 1937–38 onwards, France was faced with strong nationalist feelings on the part of Arab Alawis (Alevis) and Christians who wished to participate to the independence promised by France to Syria in 1936, and with repeated interferences on the part of Turkish nationalists who advocated 'annexation' to Turkey (Picard 1983: 49). The mandatory power decided to leave the responsibility of presiding over the future of the Sandjak to the Council of the League of Nations. The mission of enquiry suggested to separate the Sandjak into a distinct unit connected to Syria, except for matters relating to defense (League of Nations 1940–44: 167–89). Following the award of a majority of seats to the Turkish side in the newly established Assembly of the Sandjak, France and Turkey signed a treaty on 4 July 1938, closing all pending issues between them. Turkish troops occupied the northern part of the territory. In September 1938, the territory was re-named by the Assembly of the Sandjak as the State of Hatay. On 23 June 1939, France and Turkey signed, in Paris, a mutual Pact of Assistance. Successive protocols later endorsed this agreement, which significantly impacted on the hydraulic and strategic relations between Syria and Turkey. The Angora agreements were signed on the same day, proclaiming the 'final settlement' of the territorial issue in the Sandjak. In order to strengthen its security in Eastern Mediterranean, France unofficially ceded the Syrian province of Iskandaroun to Turkey.

From a Syrian point of view, these steps toward final settlement took place without the indigenous population being ever consulted, of which the Turkish population represented only a significant minority (Aïta 1949: 5; Mardam Bey 1994: 11, 32). From a Turkish perspective, the autonomous population of the Sandjak chose Turkey, thus allowing for a 'return' of the territory to Turkey (Chenal 1995: 73; Güner 1997: 108). According to Picard, the Sandjak was, in 1936, a Syrian territory 'for which Turkey had expressly waived claims of sovereignty' since the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 (Picard 1983: 49; 1993: 158). Other analysts estimate that the population of the Sandjak of the time 'aspired in its strong majority to be incorporated into the Arab Empire' (Longrigg in Thobie 1979: 358). Meanwhile, Turkey has undertaken a policy of cultural assimilation and economic development, thus transforming the province into an area of intensive agricultural production.

A first conclusion can be drawn. Since the 1930s, the territorial 'loss' for Syria has heavily weighed on bilateral relations (Sanjian 1956: 379–94). It is important to remember that, until very recently, official Syrian maps included the Sandjak as part of national territory. Territorial disputes have also influenced bargaining mechanisms within and outside the negotiation

process. Turkey acquired a riparian position on the Orontes, as a result of its annexation of the Sandjak of Alexandretta. By claiming a share of the Orontes in the negotiations on the Euphrates, Turkey's strategy was to provoke recognition by Syria of its sovereignty over the province of Hatay (Daoudy 2005, 2009). However, following the Syrian President's first historical visit to Turkey in 2004, and the trip made to the Sandjak or Hatay province, Syria appeared to have informally given up historical claims on the territory, though no official statement on this was officially issued. However, the conclusion of a mutual agreement on 7 January 2010, for the construction of a 'friendship' dam on the part of the Orontes River in Turkey, paved the way for mutual cooperation over flood prevention, irrigation and energy, while formally putting an end to past territorial issues (SANA 2010).

The previous part highlighted the weight of history and mutual perceptions, and the structure of interaction between Turkey and its neighbors on the Euphrates and Tigris. The following section will complete the analysis of structural variables, by looking into underlying parameters of power in the riparians' interactions over water.

Turkey and neighboring Arabs: new geo-strategic choices

Parameters of power can be found in demography, territory, resources, alliances and counter-alliances (Daoudy 2005, 2009). In this, the reality of Turkey is perceived by some as 'hybrid' and 'pluralist', beyond the country's 'Eastern Destiny' described by Braudel (Vergin 1996: 21). In the power game of resource mobilization, Turkey has long enjoyed a privileged position. Resources can be, among others, defined in terms of population, energy, grain production, roads, mineral resources, industrial production, importance of services, and overall Gross National Product per capita (Thobie 1996: 5). Added to this, Turkey's membership of NATO has strengthened its capacity to mobilize external alliances, while also enforcing regional security arrangements. Turkey has, therefore, rapidly come to represent a cornerstone of Western strategy in the Middle East since the 1930s (Marcou 1996: 398). By joining in 1951, Turkey became NATO's 'Northern Tier' (Owen 1992: 27), which aspired to join the 'free world' during the Cold War, to adopt the Truman Doctrine and to become a member of the Council of Europe (1949), and the first Muslim state to recognize Israel in 1948 (Marcou 1996: 69). It also initiated the Baghdad Pact with Iraq in 1955, later joined by Great Britain and Iran. This was perceived by Syria as interference by Turkey in inter-Arab conflicts, mainly in her conflict with Iraq. Mutual relations between Turkey and the Arabs have, therefore, been quite conflictual (Vaner 1993: 66). Up to the 1970s, Turkey's policy remained exclusively geared to the West, until it faced negative reactions to its invasion of Cyprus in 1974 (Marcou 1996: 397). From 1963 to 1990, a policy of rapprochement was developed towards

neighboring Syria and Iraq, and bilateral and trilateral negotiations over shared waters were also initiated then, as well as economic and trade relations. Developed as part of President Turgut Ozal's economic liberalism and the political reform launched in the aftermath of his military coup of 1980, Turkey's foreign trade greatly flourished in the 1980s and 1990s (Ilkin 1993: 78–89; Chenal 1995: 70–1).

The accession to the European Union has long represented the final step towards full integration in the Western block. Despite the state's favorable image as a secular country with a parliamentary multiparty system, Turkey's application was filed in 1987 and initially denied in 1989 (Marcou 1996: 382, 394). A customs union was concluded in 1996 and the nomination finally accepted in 2000, but acceptance was regularly conditioned on the improvement of the human rights situation in the country.

During the Gulf War (1990–91), Turkey's role as regional power was enhanced. It enjoyed a privileged position as an ally of the West and member of NATO, with military bases on its territory, used to launch attacks on Iraq. Syria and Iraq have long been wary of Turkey's military potential. Since the implosion of the USSR in 1991, Turkey has also geared its foreign policy towards the independent Republics in Central Asia (Marcou 1996: 383, 397). Turkish foreign policy acted on two fronts. On the one hand, it focussed on the development of privileged relations with five Turkish Republics of Central Asia (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), which joined Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan in the Organization of Economic Cooperation (Marcou 1996: 385). The project to deliver gas from Turkmenistan and Iran to Europe through Turkey has also offered significant economic opportunities (Kançal 1996: 70–1). On the other hand, Turkey initiated, in 1992, an agreement for economic cooperation in the Black Sea, in various economic, technological and banking sectors (Marcou 1996: 383).

The Turkish parliament's historical refusal, on 1 March 2003, to allow military strikes by US troops from Turkish territory into northern Iraq represented a milestone in the strategic ties that had united the two actors for decades. The rise to power of the moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi, or AKP), during the elections of 3 November 2002, provided a continuation of the policy started by the previous coalition government of Bulent Ecevit, aiming at avoiding conflict against Iraq. It also initiated a crucial shift in Turkey's foreign policy towards active rapprochement with regional partners.[6] The first unprecedented majority government since the 1990s symbolized a return to the country's Islamic roots and hopes for regional integration (Mitchell 2002: 4). The newly established government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was soon caught into a joint process of political pressures and financial and strategic bargaining with the United States, for the opening of a second front from Turkey (Park 2003). Local and regional concerns, such as the weight of public opinion, the relationship with Arab neighbors and

Iran, and the fear of Kurdish nationalism, prevailed over strategic ties with the USA. Official Turkish discourses stressed, as well, the fear of an influx of refugees into Turkey, like the one resulting from the Gulf War in 1991.[7] The occupation of Iraq and the redistribution of cards for the control of strategic resources and areas of influence, and the consecutive shift in power relations, constituted additional turning points. Faced with Turkey, Syria and Iraq were part of a different demographic, economic and political reality. On the one hand, Iraq's once promising economic potential was seriously eroded by the economic embargo imposed by the United Nations and the destruction of infrastructures during the Gulf War. Considerably weakened and isolated, the Iraqi government was unable to repair its failed economic and water infrastructures. On the other hand, following the breakup of the Soviet bloc, Syria aligned with Western powers against Iraq during the Gulf War of 1990. Despite this, both Syria and Iraq have harmonized their positions in the face of upstream projects, also in response to the rapprochement initiated between Turkey and Israel and later concretized by agreements on military cooperation and exchange for high military technology, which were signed on 23 February and 26 August 1996 (Billion 2005: 121; Daoudy 2009). Cooperation over oil took place in 1998, when both countries signed a memorandum to re-open the pipeline linking the oil fields of Kirkuk in Northern Iraq to the Syrian port of Banyas (14 July 1998). However, the participation of Syria and Turkey to the UN 'oil-for-food' program offered a prelude to the revival of regional economic cooperation, which was actively pursued until 2003. Syria and Turkey welcomed the prospect of renewed imports of Iraqi oil at a favorable price and the supply of gas from Syria and Iraq. In the summer of 2001, shipments carried out Iraqi oil to the Turkish terminal of Ceyhan, and shipments of Iraqi oil were also delivered to Syria at a rapid pace.

The shift in Syria and Turkey's mutual dynamics over water was greatly favored by the settlement of their pending 'Kurdish issue' (Daoudy 2009). In 1998, in the Adana Protocol, Syria committed to cease support to the Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan (PKK) – which had been provided since 1984 – and to expel its leader Abdullah Öcalan from its territory. The Kurdish leader was captured by the Turkish authorities in February 1999. Following this, the PKK no longer claimed an independent Kurdish state but called for recognition of Kurdish identity, and political and human rights (Morvaridi 2004: 725). Since then, the water issue has been somewhat unlinked from security issues and addressed as a technical issue, and the two riparians have deepened their strategic and economic relations. On 13 October 2009, the newly formed Syrian–Turkish High Level Strategic Cooperation Council – meeting for the first time, in the city of Aleppo – strengthened bilateral cooperation over defense, diplomatic relations, economic trade, oil, electricity, agriculture and health issues (Turkish Weekly 2009). A similar strategic cooperation agreement was signed between Turkey and Iraq, in August 2009.

Collaboration between Iraq and Turkey had, in contrast, been constantly effective over the Kurdish question. Both countries perceived Kurdish insurrection as a threat to their territorial integrity. Successive Turkish governments agreed with Saddam Hussein on the principle of the immutability of borders, as a guarantee of mutual sovereignty and control of their Kurdish populations (Chenal 1995: 98; Bozarslan 2003: 98). Following the Ankara Agreement (October 1984), Turkey enjoyed a right of incursion into the territory of northern Iraq, enabling it to pursue PKK militants (Williams 2001: 29). In 1995 and 1996, Turkish troops launched major incursions into Iraqi territory, against the Kurds of the PKK (Balencie and De La Grange 2001: 1,322). It remained part, with Syria and Iran, of the Commission against the Dismemberment of Iraq, which rejected the creation of an independent Kurdistan on the spoils of Iraq. The Gulf War in 1990 saw the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), bringing together the two rival Kurdish parties – the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan of Jalal Talabani and the Kurdish Democratic Party of Massoud Barzani – which have since ruled respectively the eastern and north-western parts of Iraq. Turkey was reassured, at the time of the Gulf War, by the fact that oil-rich Kirkuk and Mosul escaped the control of Iraqi Kurds. These fears appeared again when the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) issued, in late 2002, a draft constitution preserving the Kurdish autonomous zone, while allocating Kirkuk as its capital (Park 2003). Claims over Kirkuk have, since then, been regularly raised by Iraqi Kurds (International Crisis Group 2007).

The 'new' Iraqi entity has, therefore, shifted from an economic and strategic partner over oil and Kurdish separatism to an unpredictable neighbor, backed by a powerful American occupier. An interdependent network of family and tribal relationships links the (Kurdish) Iraqi Minister for Water Resources, Abdul Latîf Rashid, to his counterpart in the Regional Government of Kurdistan in Northern Iraq, through Jalal Talabani (Kurdish President of Iraq) and Massoud Barzani (President of Northern Iraq) – who both used to benefit from Syria's protection and citizenship during the Saddam Hussein era. Turkey and Syria have therefore been greatly concerned by the concretization of Kurdish claims in Iraq and the possible impact on their own population. In 2008, Turkey took a step further by launching military incursions in the Kurdish-controlled territory in northern Iraq, with the objective of capturing PKK militants and putting an end to their strikes. In doing so, Turkey revived past military incursions carried out in line with 'hot pursuit' agreements. Syria was also eager to contain the birth of irredentism in her north-eastern provinces, and keen on developing security arrangements with the central government of Nuri al-Maliki. However, since August 2009, relations between Syria and Iraq have deteriorated, as Iraq has accused Syria of impacting negatively on its security by favoring bomb attacks in its territory through Iraqi groups established in Syria. Despite recurring media rumors, and the resumption

of trilateral meetings of the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) on the Euphrates waters, no comprehensive water agreement has yet been signed by Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

In concluding this section, it can be stated that Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria lie at the cornerstone of its regional politics. The water question has influenced the evolution of trilateral and bilateral relationships, which, in turn, have impacted on the resolution of water disputes. In the next part, I will show how domestic constraints, within Turkey, have also impacted on its external power position and regional dynamics.

ELEMENTS OF POWER: TURKEY'S HYDROPOLITICS

Scope and objectives of the Great Anatolian Project

Turkey has undertaken the Herculean task of developing its agricultural potential and becoming the breadbasket of the Middle East. Since 1980, it has been building a mega-development project called the GAP (Great Anatolian Project or Güneydogu Anadolu Projesi), consisting of 22 dams and 19 HEPP (hydroelectric power plants) on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. The project covers nine provinces in the Euphrates and Tigris basins, which are now referred to as the 'GAP Region' or 'Urfa–Mardin–Diyarbakir triangle' (Republic of Turkey 2002). Thirteen major projects are involved: seven sub-projects on the Euphrates and six on the Tigris (Republic of Turkey 2008, 2009).

The purpose is, officially, to eradicate regional disparities between the western parts of the country and the under-developed regions in the south-east (Republic of Turkey 2008, 2009). 'Sustainable development' would be provided through irrigation, agricultural production, environment and societal development, with the objective to increase economic growth, social stability and export capacity (Unver 1994: 31–4). Turkey's ultimate ambition is no less than to 'bring civilization in Upper Mesopotamia' (Kliot 1994: 131).

In terms of irrigation, the goal is to irrigate about 1,800,000 ha in south-east Anatolia (9.7 per cent of Turkey's total surface) and produce 27 billion kWh annually, thus the equivalent of 20 per cent of the country's total irrigable area and 22 per cent of its total hydroelectric potential (Republic of Turkey 2006). The significant increase in irrigated area clearly shows the emphasis put on the development of a region where the irrigated area accounted for only 4 per cent of the total irrigated area of the country in 1986 (Kolars and Mitchell 1991: 23). Turkey also aims to compensate for the lack of oil resources while developing and stabilizing one of its most under-developed regions, south-east Anatolia. On the Euphrates, the Sanliurfa area concentrates about 51 per cent of irrigation plans, and 42 per cent of

energy plans.[8] Today, 45 per cent of the GAP elements have been achieved, an evaluation which corresponds to 22.9 per cent of all irrigation projects, 81.1 per cent of the energy schemes and 58 per cent of social projects (Burak 2009: 228; Republic of Turkey 2009: 60–1). The GAP was scheduled for completion in 2014, but the deadline was pushed to 2047 because of financial constraints. Since the mid-2000s, the GAP authorities have also seemed less eager to expand water and socioeconomic infrastructures in the south-eastern Anatolian region, at the heart of the revived Kurdish activism.

So far, a total of 272,972 ha (approximately 240,000 ha in the Euphrates basin and 32,000 ha in the Tigris basin) are under irrigation, and 111,500 ha are under preparation (Republic of Turkey 2009: 60–1). Five dams have been constructed for hydropower production on the Euphrates (Keban, Karakaya, Atatürk, Birecik, Karkamis), and three on the Tigris (Krakilzi, Dicle, Batman), and they contribute up to 43 per cent of total domestic production of hydroelectricity with 48 billion kWh (Oguz 2009: 82–3; Republic of Turkey 2009: 33). On the Tigris, the construction of the hydroelectric plant in Ilisu was started in 2007, and another one is planned in Cizre (Republic of Turkey 2009: 60).

Quantitative and qualitative impacts on downstream riparians

At the regional level, the impact on downstream countries will ultimately be quite significant. Although Turkey considers this project to be a 'domestic' enterprise, inspired by the founder of the Turkish Republic and one of the 'world's most ambitious projects' (Republic of Turkey 2005), the consequences are far-reaching and will continue to have impacts beyond its national borders.

Among the positive impacts of upstream projects, a few benefits are generally put forward. In harmony with the position usually taken by upstream countries, the regulatory function of upstream storage is perceived to limit the adverse effects of flooding (Scheumann 1998: 129–30; Oguz 2009: 82). The Ataturk dam is, therefore, seen as an important regulatory tool for the Tabqa dam in Syria, which possesses a relatively small reservoir. The Keban dam fulfills the same function for Iraq. Upstream storage can also be a solution during years of scarcity and diminished flows. In this, Turkish experts note that their upstream storage capacity has already benefited downstream residents during periods of drought, such as those of 1958–62 and 1970–75 (Bilen 1994: 101). Finally, upstream dams trap sediment which would otherwise get discharged into the bed of rivers, and contribute to the improvement of water quality for downstream residents (Republic of Turkey 2009: 84). However, this last 'advantage' has been specifically criticized by environmentalists, who point to the disastrous consequences for downstream countries. Consequently, the flora and fauna of ecosystems are radically affected (McCully 1996:

29–46). The stream also tends to recuperate its erosive capacity about 10–100 km below the dam, therefore creating a 'hungry water' effect.[9] By retaining the sediments usually flowing to the Volta Estuary, the Akosombo dam in Ghana has, for example, greatly affected Togo and Benin, the coasts of which were eroded at a rate of 10–15 m per year (McCully 1996: 36).

According to international experts, a full implementation of the GAP will ultimately withdraw a maximum of 70 per cent of the Euphrates natural flow, about 40–50 per cent of its observed flow, and 50 per cent of the Tigris River (Kolars and Mitchell 1991; Ozis 1993; Kliot 1994). A combination of upstream projects in Turkey *and* Syria places the lowest downstream riparian (Iraq) in a vulnerable position. Syrian projects on the Euphrates also have the potential, if completed, to ultimately withdraw 35 per cent of the common waters (Daoudy 2005: 210–11). Turkish plans on the Tigris River will, moreover, remove between 20–25 per cent of the water reaching Iraq. But Iraq would be ultimately better off because of the large volume of Tigris waters on its territory, and the presence of substantial aquifer still barely exploited.

The future consequences for mid-stream Syria are potentially highly problematic in light of the country's dependence on external water sources (80 per cent) and the centrality of the Euphrates Basin for the overall water supply (65 per cent of resources). Upstream projects on the Euphrates and Tigris have had a significant impact, even before the construction of the GAP as the Kweik and Afrin rivers were completely dried in Syria in the 1940s and 1970s (Hirsch 1956: 89; Kolars and Mitchell 1991: 110). Consequently, the city of Aleppo has, since then, reverted to the waters of the Euphrates for its consumption. The opening of Sanliurfa tunnels from the Atatürk dam, at the end of 1994, launched the irrigation of the Sanliurfa–Harran plains. It has also led to a radical decrease of waters reaching Syria. Return flows from upstream reservoirs are, usually, evaluated at a rate of 25–35 per cent (Kolars and Mitchell 1991: 129, 200). A volume of 25 per cent of the dammed water is, therefore, lost forever for downstream countries, and an addition of 40 per cent is lost in evaporation. It is also estimated that the Atatürk Dam reservoir can lose up to 1.4 billion m^3 per year for this reason (Kolars and Mitchell 1991: 215, 220). A recent study has also found that insufficient efforts were made by Turkey since the 1990s to limit the negative impacts of a project such as the Atatürk dam on the ecology of the river downstream. Measures have been taken mainly to improve the productivity of irrigation projects and to extend the life of the reservoir (Brismar 2002: 111).

Considering the actual level of completion of the GAP, the current issue carries less a quantitative than a qualitative potential. The first GAP Master Plan of 1989 did not include the drainage of return flows from irrigation, which induces risks of water flood and waterlogging for downstream riparians. It is estimated that 40 per cent of waters reaching Syria from Turkey would ultimately carry 40 per cent of waters polluted with return flows carrying herbicides and pesticides, and 25 per cent of the Tigris

waters reaching Iraq from Turkey (Kliot 1994: 149). By the same token, return flows from Syria to Iraq would pollute 50 per cent of the Euphrates waters reaching Iraq (Kliot 1994). Turkish experts evaluate, so far, the level of pollution at 700 parts per million (ppm) (Bilen quoted in Kolars 2000: 255). This level remains reasonable as long as the upstream riparian carefully attends to any additional and uncontrolled influx of polluted waters (Kolars 2000). Regional authorities claim that drains have not been discharging in the Euphrates, while pointing to the good quality of return flows being used for irrigation in Turkey when water is otherwise lacking.[10] Second-track meetings – which served to reinitiate official encounters between Syria and Turkey in the early 2000s – started over the pollution of the Balikh waters in Syria (Kolars 2000: 259), the Balikh and Khabour rivers being the main recipients of upstream pollution (Kolars 2000). Therefore, the issue remains potentially problematic, unless retention and monitoring of return flows is carefully carried out upstream to prevent excessive levels from reaching downstream.

The previous section showed the depth of past and potential impacts for downstream users. It is also worth noting the various impacts witnessed upstream, as shown in the following parts.

UPSTREAM DILEMMAS AND CONSTRAINTS

Socio-economic impacts: water and Kurdish politics in south-east Anatolia

The GAP was also flagged in security terms. Turkey's answer to the regional outreach of the Kurdish issue – besides military suppression to combat 'terrorism' – was to launch unarmed measures and develop infrastructures aimed at the heart of Kurdish activism, principally in south-east Anatolia. For the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, security and the fight against 'terrorism' in the Sanliurfa region would be strengthened through the economic prosperity provided by the GAP (Republic of Turkey 2002). According to the project's critics, the GAP is intended to scatter rebellious movements in the south-east, by addressing the Kurdish population's economic aspirations while undermining its cohesiveness through massive displacements (Michel 1999: 1).

Indeed, the region of south-east Anatolia concentrates the heart of Kurdish rebellion in the country, and the provinces of Gaziantep, Urfa, Adiyaman, Malatya, Elazig, Tunceli, Diyarbakir, Mardin, Siirt, Batman and Sirnak are considered the Kurdish provinces of Turkey (Michel 1999). With the objective to promote *societal security* (Buzan et al. 1998: 169) through socioeconomic development, these policies paradoxically provoked local and international reactions when 382 villages and 88 sub-villages were flooded, and an estimated population of 197,732 villagers, the majority

being Kurdish, was displaced (Biegala 2001; United Kingdom Export Credit Agency 2000: 14). Official sources have recently admitted to a total of 54,762 affected villagers in five (Batman, Diyarbakir, Mardin, Siirt and Sirnak) out of nine provinces (the others being Adiyaman, Kilis, Gaziantep and Sanliurfa) concerned by the GAP (Republic of Turkey 2006b: 5). Border security appears to be another inherent objective, since it would result in separating Kurds in Turkey from their compatriots in northern Iraq and Syria.

Social impacts have been significant. Displacement resulting from large water projects is generally perceived as a source of great socioeconomic impoverishment, while constituting a human rights issue for the individuals and collectivities involved (Morvaridi 2004: 719). The Turkish government has relocated these people without employment opportunities in shelters that resemble, according to human rights advocates, prison camps rather than actual villages. This policy has encouraged the exodus to slums in large cities such as Istanbul (Bosshard 1998). The consequences of rural migration are dramatic for families which are driven out of their land and often left with no compensation, without daring to challenge the situation, for fear of being targeted as sympathizers of the PKK. In parallel, social structures based on rural traditions are disappearing in favor of a complete state centralization and the emergence of new classes with interests different from the concerns of villagers in the region (Biegala 2001: 3). The paradox is an increase in regional wealth, accompanied by socioeconomic inequalities, to which are added environmental and cultural consequences.

Environmental, cultural, and archeological impacts

In addition to the aspects outlined earlier, environmentalists highlight the risk of pollution for the Tigris, the capacity for self-purification being undermined by the dumping of untreated sewage from large cities such as Diyarbakir (Biegala 2001: 3). There is also an increased risk of malaria spreading. The socioeconomic, environmental and archaeological impacts of the GAP on the Tigris river have been criticized worldwide, because of the flooding of villages, the displacement of the population, and the destruction of cultural sites in a region that was part of ancient Mesopotamia, such as the town of Hasankeyf (Biegala 2001). Indeed, the opening, in 2000, of the Bireçik dam on the Euphrates led to the disappearance of the city of Zeugma, flooded along with its impressive Greco-Roman mosaics (Council of Europe 2001: 1). Organizations also mention the flooding of the Kurdish city of Halfeti, dating back to 1000 BC, without local populations ever being consulted (International Friends of Kurdistan 2000). Similarly, the Ilisu dam, the largest hydroelectrical power plant on the Tigris, officially due for completion in 2014 but which will take considerably more time, is scheduled to flood the town of Hasankeyf, dating back to the seventh century BC.[10] In response to worldwide

protests, the government decided to change the location site of the Ilisu dam. It has, however, recently admitted that no relocation of archeological and historical relics would happen because of budgetary constraints; these would be flooded, together with neighboring villages (Radikal 2009). While recent official estimates evaluate the number of villagers displaced by the construction of the Ilisu Dam at 20,100 villagers (Republic of Turkey 2006b), other sources mention that the structures of 80 towns, villages and hamlets would be destroyed, resulting in the forced displacement of 50,000 to 78,000 villagers (Morvaridi 2004: 723; World Economy, Ecology and Development 2007; *The Guardian* 2009). Observers have, therefore, concluded that the Ilisu dam does not abide by international human rights standards, because of the 'inadequacy in the population assessment, risk assessment and income restoration planning', and the 'lack of effective and fair grievances procedures' (Amnesty International 2006). Other projections foresee a 50 per cent cut in the flow of the Tigris, as a consequence of the filling of the dam's reservoir, which carries a maximum capacity of 10.4 billion m^3 (Bosshard 1998: 3). The construction of the dam started in 2007, and civil organizations have pointed to the fact that expropriation has started in villages surrounding the new site, including the villages of Ilisu and Karabayir (Berne Declaration 2007). After a six-month funding suspension in December 2008, works on the dam were resumed in July 2009. The funding question has, therefore, been a crucial issue. It will be analyzed in the following section.

Financial impacts

Total costs amount to about US$36 billion, of which 21 billion have already been invested (Republic of Turkey 2009: 60). Financial difficulties have resulted from the enormous pressure the GAP has put on Turkey's national budget. Internal critics castigate water development projects that have taken a disproportionate share of budget and triggered inflation peaks. Indeed, the overall investment amounts to 24 per cent of the overall financing of the GAP, of which 76 per cent have been obtained from Turkish domestic sources (Republic of Turkey 2002). The share of GAP has represented 6.5 per cent of total national investments, an additional burden for a state budget already under pressure. These include diminishing international investments, resulting from worldwide campaigns led by non-governmental coalitions in the fields of the environment and human rights. Such examples are the Ilisu Dam Campaign or the Export Credit Campaign. Led by environmental activists and advocates of Kurdish human rights, these international campaigns have already borne fruit. They represented additional pressures on the ability of Turkey to find external funding. Turkey has been counting on the involvement of major European industrial consortia, which themselves were hoping for government funding for export. But a coalition of NGOs has constituted the Ilisu Dam Campaign and

the Export Credit Campaign, including the Berne Declaration (Switzerland), Friends of the Earth (France), the Kurdish Human Rights Project (UK), The Corner House (UK), and World Economy, Ecology and Development (Germany). Since the 1990s, they have actively mobilized public opinions against the construction of Turkey's upstream dams on the Euphrates and Tigris, with detrimental impacts on local Kurdish communities and downstream countries. In July 2001, the British government withdrew its support of £200 million needed to build the Ilisu dam, on the basis of a report it had initiated which highlighted the negative implications of the dam in terms of the environment and the protection of human rights (Ahmad 2001; Morvaridi 2004: 736). Balfour Beatty, a leading British construction group, and its international partner Impregilo of Italy, decided to withdraw their investments in November 2001 (International Rivers Networks 2001). The inclusion of social and environmental consequences of the dam has also led to the withdrawal of the Union des Banques Suisses, because 'no final decision has been taken on the nature of accompanying measures that would aim to minimize the social and environmental impact of the project' (International Rivers Networks 2001). In March 2007, the governments of Austria, Germany and Switzerland approved export credit guarantees for their companies' investments in the Ilisu project, for about €500 million (World Economy, Ecology and Development 2007).[11] In December 2008, the same governments announced their intention to withhold their finance, as the dam did not meet World Bank standards on environment, preservation of cultural heritage and relocation (*The Guardian* 2009). In December 2009, Turkey secured funding from domestic banks, for an amount of €300–350 million (Elci 2009).

Launched in parallel to the GAP, another project will also carry significant weight on regional dynamics over the Euphrates and Tigris: the Eastern Anatolian Project (EAP or DAP: Düneydogu Anadolu Projesi).

The Eastern Anatolia Project

Approved in 1993, this project aims at restoring sustainable livelihoods for rural communities in degraded watersheds, and backs the GAP's progress in irrigation through land consolidation projects (Republic of Turkey 2000a; Today's Zaman 2009). Initially planned in three provinces (Elazig, Malataya, Adyaman), the project was later broadened to 11 provinces in eastern and southern Turkey. Participatory approaches with local communities have been used to plan and implement sustainable range, forest and farming activities in 79 micro-catchments (MCs), with a total area of about 600,000 hectares, 300 villages and a population of 200,000 people (Durutan 2000: 113). Irrigation has also been under way, from the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, in addition to the Aras and Çoruh (Republic of Turkey 2000a: 1; 2000b: 8–9). Governmental support to the EAP was recently increased, with the addition of two projects from the GAP to the DAP, with an aim to

complete regional development projects in 2010 (Today's Zaman 2009). Impacts on downstream countries remain difficult to assess at this stage, but one can estimate that these would significantly add to the effects of the GAP Project.

CONCLUSIONS

The chapter has shown the centrality of interactions with Iraq and Syria for Turkey's rise as a regional power. Geology has thus influenced history, which in turn has shaped mutual perceptions. The historical context of riparian dynamics over water has revealed a complex reality made of distrust, reconciliation and rapprochement. Trust-building was slow, each side struggling with mutual images across the Euphrates and Tigris. Mutual interactions have their roots in past colonial experiences, dating back to the Ottoman Empire. From 1980 until the early 2000s, the unfolding of GAP represented a threat to Syria and Iraq's assurances of supply and economic development. They have pushed for a comprehensive agreement with Turkey for the allocation of Euphrates and Tigris waters, and used Kurdish politics, among others, to pressure Turkey. Turkey has, in turn, enjoyed a relatively higher structural power, in terms of its geographical position, the mobilization of economic and military resources, and external alliances. But the upstream riparian was, also, confronted with domestic and international constraints, and the difficulty of receiving external funding in relation to some of the GAP's socioeconomic, archeological and cultural impacts. Cooperation between Turkey and neighboring Arab states has been favored by the change in the regional strategic environment, after the Iraq War of 2003. It was also enhanced by the recent shift in Turkey's foreign policy, favored by the rise to power of the AKP in 2002. The quest for alliances in the West was replaced by a declared ambition to become a power within in its own region, with enhanced political and economic relations with neighboring Arab states, the Balkans and Central Asia. Though not fully settled, the Euphrates and Tigris water question was transformed into a technical issue, superseded by higher political considerations. It remains to be seen whether future changes in the region's strategic environment, and in Turkey's domestic politics, would not jeopardize the fine balance reached by Turkey, as regional political and economic power, possible mediator in the Arab–Israeli conflict and upstream user on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.

NOTES

1 An expression taken from H. et G. Termier, quoted by Furon 1963: 70.
2 Which were discovered by the German archaeologist Bergner, in 1936.
3 A few Arabs took part in the Young Turks Revolution.

4 This secret agreement will be known as the Sykes–Picot agreement (May 1916). Refer to the publication of archives in Hokayyem and Bittar 1981: 198.
5 An expression used by a former Turkish president, referring to the great Arab revolt of 1916. He is quoted in Slim 1993: 143.
6 As an academic and author of a famous book (*Strategic Depth*, published in Turkish in 2001), the former chief foreign policy advisor to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Professor Ahmet Davutoglu, has been perceived as the architect of Turkey's new foreign policy, since the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, came to power in 2002. The main thesis of Davutoglu's book is that a nation's value in world politics depends on its geo-strategic location and historical depth. Davutoglu emphasizes Turkey's connections to the Balkans, the Middle East and Central Asia, and argues that Turkey has the potential to become a Muslim regional power. His book advocates the need to counterbalance Turkey's dependencies on the West by establishing multiple alliances and closer Turkish–Arab relations, in order to maintain a regional balance of power (Altunisik and Tür, 2006: 245). This was also conceptualized as the policy of 'zero problems with neighbors'. Ahmet Davutoglu was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in May 2009.
7 Refer to the opening statement of the Turkish Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at the United Nations General Assembly, New York, on 26 March 2003.
8 Update provided to author by Dr Mustafa Altundal, Regional Director, State Hydraulic Works (DSI)'s Regional Directorate, Sanliurfa, Harran Province, 17 September 2007.
9 Term used by Dr Nadeem Farajallah, from the American University of Beirut, in personal communication.
10 The city of Hasankeyf was the ancient capital of the Artukids, and has traces from the Romans, the Artuklu, the Ayyoubis, the Safavis and the Ottomans. The whole town, including 500 historical caves carved in the rocks, will be flooded, once the Ilisu dam is completed. Morvaridi 2004: 723.
11 For the following national companies: Euler Hermes Kreditversicherung of Germany, Austria's Oesterreichische Kontrollbank and Swiss Schweizerische Exportrisikoversicherung.

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