

Water and Security Policy: The Case of Turkey

INTRODUCTION

And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared¹
Revelations xvi.12

The next war in the Middle East will be over water, not politics.
Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 1991

Much rhetoric surrounds the issue of water and security. The Malthusian discourse argues that as populations grow, so water scarcity increases, leading to inevitable “water wars” in the twenty-first century. Is this exaggerated? There are certainly books and newspaper articles with sensationalist titles,² but no war has been fought over water in the post-Cold War world.

Yet water is the source of life. In the Middle East, the most arid populated region, free unlimited access to freshwater has been fundamental to the development of societies on earth. As Anthony Turton³ points out, water can be either a direct cause of war, or a target of war (in seventh century BC Ashurbanipal of Assyria seized wells belonging to his Arab enemies⁴), or a focal point of war (where waterways form part of a contested international boundary). The level of conflict depends on whether a river or its associated hydraulic installations are the goals or a tool. One area that has received much attention is the Tigris-Euphrates river basin. Here conflict over water, short of war, has occurred and has the potential to involve Turkey’s North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies under Article 5 support.

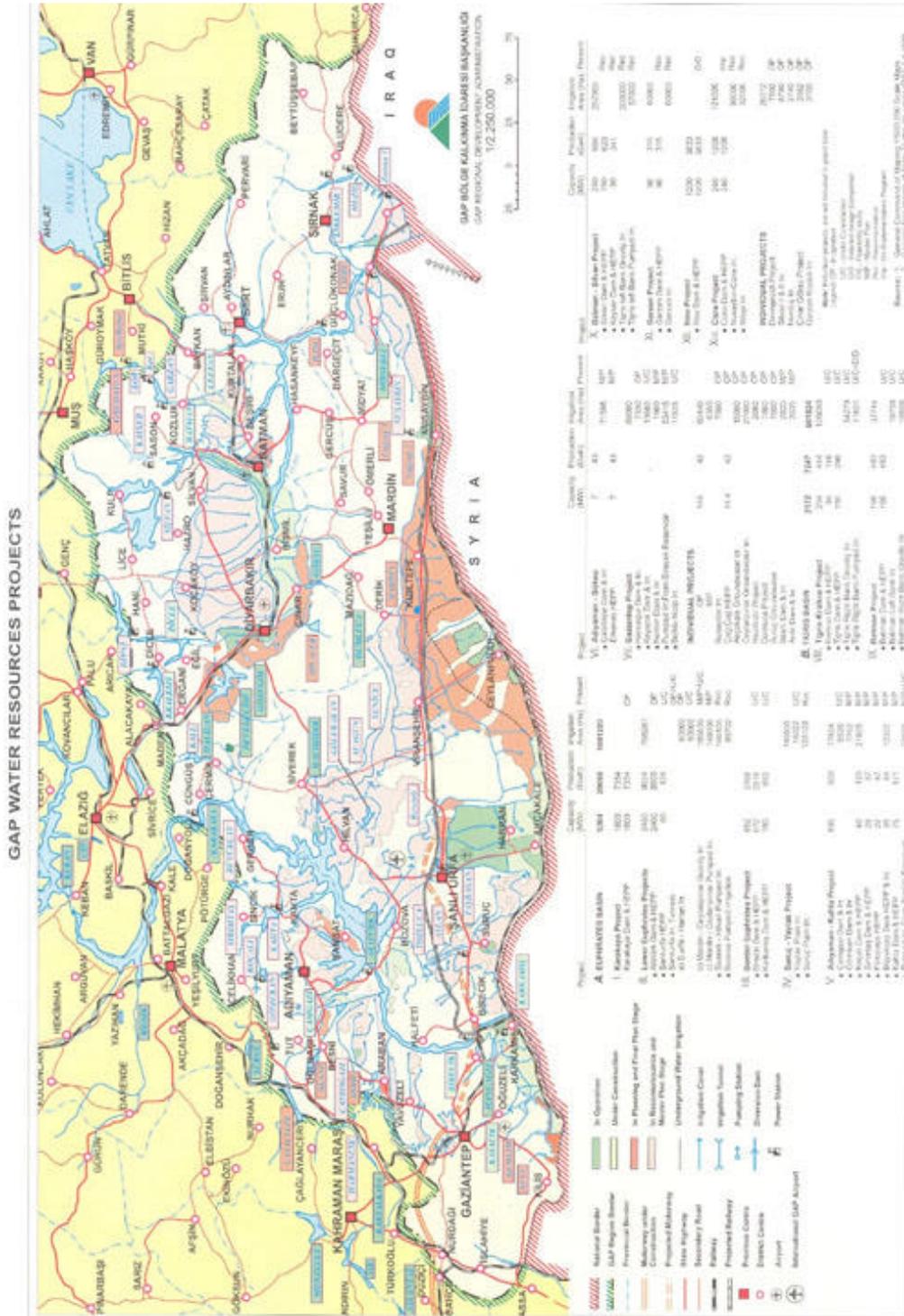
It is important to note that Turkey’s Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP⁵) was only the latest in a long history of around 7,500 years of human attempts to harness the waters of the Tigris-Euphrates river basin for irrigation purposes. After the final destruction of the Sumerian civilization legacy by the Mongol invasion in



Map of the Tigris-Euphrates river basin⁶ (courtesy Turkish Government Dept.)

AD 1258, it was, however, only in the nineteenth century that an effective return to large-scale irrigation run by central governments took place. The Tigris and Euphrates did not officially become international rivers until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. The idea of GAP can be dated back to Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, referring to “developing the Euphrates as a lake of humanity.”⁷ The initial aim was to harness water as a source of electrical power and multifarious surveys were carried out between the 1930s and 1970s, which also identified the potential for irrigation. In 1977, all projects were merged under the title “GAP.”

The GAP area covers nine provinces of Turkey, corresponding approximately to 10 percent of that country’s total area (75, 000 square kilometers) and population (6.1 million). Upon completion of the project, 28 percent of Turkey’s total water potential will be brought under control, 1.7 million hectares of land will be under irrigation and 27 billion kilowatt hours of electrical energy will be generated



Map of GAP water resources projects (courtesy Turkish Government Dept.)

annually through the building of 22 dams, 19 power plants, and 25 irrigation systems⁸. The project was intended to transform the semi-arid southeast Anatolia into a “bread basket” for Turkey and link the socially and economically weak population (50 percent Kurd) to the more developed west of the country. The generation of massive hydroelectric energy would allow the region to be industrialized with production of cotton, oils, meat and leather envisaged.

It is clear that Turkey has achieved far more proportionately in its energy production projects than in the area of irrigation. As of September 1999, over 61 percent of the former were “in operation” and 12 percent “under construction.” The figures for irrigation facilities in the region were 12 percent and 9 percent respectively.⁹ Despite spending approximately \$1.5 million (U.S.) per day since 1977, the project did not follow Turkish government timelines. The date for completion slipped from 2001 to 2010 in 1999.¹⁰ “Unplanned developments” that caused this slippage were financial. Turkish public investment in GAP requires \$32 billion (U.S.) for the total completion of all projects. By June 1999 \$13.8 billion (U.S.) had been spent—a cash realization of 43.3 percent¹¹. The World Bank did contribute during the Cold War to the funding of the Keban and Karkaya dams and recently made funds available for specific village development and urban sanitation projects. However significant resources were not made available in the post-Cold War period due to Turkey’s refusal to consult with downstream users—a condition of World Bank funding. Turkey did receive limited financial assistance from individual Western and Israeli governments.

The importance that Turkey attached to GAP was primarily due to two personalities. Turgut Ozal (Prime Minister 1983–1989 and President 1989–1993) was an engineer and economic technocrat who had served on the Turkish State Planning Organization and with the World Bank. His dynamism and vision for GAP as a statement for modern Turkey was central to the maintenance of the project’s momentum. The other key political figure was Suleyman Demirel who was in and out of government for over 40 years. He started as a water technician and was Director of State Hydraulic Works, becoming known as “king of dams”. His name

became inseparable from Turkey's claim that GAP would make possible "the rebirth of the *Fertile Crescent* . . . after thousands of years along the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris."¹²

The scheme has had an effect, through Turkish control of the headwaters, on downstream use by Iraq and Syria. It has been estimated that the project could cause Syria to lose up to 40 percent of its water from the Euphrates and Iraq as much as 90 percent from both rivers by 2010. The scheme could also reduce the quality of water flowing into both states.

Attempts at international mediation over the allocation of water have been unsuccessful. The issue is further complicated by Kurdish nationalism in the relatively backward region of southeast Turkey. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that external pressure from Iraq or Syria, or internal pressure from the Marxist Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) caused the project to slip. One recent analysis of GAP progress (by an Israeli geographer) assesses that no hydrological crisis has occurred to date and only "in 2010 a shortage of water in the Euphrates may be expected," and "between 2020 and 2030 a situation may arise in which there will be a shortage of water in the Euphrates and Tigris."¹³

Many commentators argue that the conflict over relative distribution is being exacerbated both by global warming and population increase. Turkey's population was 61.9 million in 1995 (31 percent rural) with an annual demographic growth of 2 percent.¹⁴ This large increase in consumption placed additional demands on Turkish water for household use, hydroelectricity, and irrigation. The atmospheric concentration of several gases, so-called greenhouse, affected global temperatures so much that nine of the hottest years since records began have occurred since 1988.¹⁵ Any rise in temperature also increases the likelihood of drought in semi-arid Syria and Iraq.

This paper will focus primarily on GAP and Turkey's security policy toward Syria, Iraq, and the Kurds since the end of the Cold War. Iran is a minor player in the system, sharing with Iraq only the southern half of the Shatt al Arab, where the Tigris-Euphrates flows into the Persian Gulf after a course of 190 kilometers.

Furthermore, as an Iranian academic pointed out, “Water is not really appearing on the radar screens, other security priorities exist. But there are starting to be articles written on the subject by academics inside Iran.”¹⁶ Turkey’s export of water to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is outside the scope of this work because the scheme utilizes water from rivers outside GAP.

Much has been written on GAP as it has evolved, primarily from the separate angles of hydrology, environmental impact, and international legal arguments. In traditional security surveys, water is discussed alongside multifarious interstate areas of friction. There is a lack of detailed analysis as to how it has influenced security policy in the region. This exploratory analysis will attempt to answer the question - how important is water to security policy, through an examination of post-Cold War Turkish policy. It will argue that Turkey faced threats to its security from many fronts after the end of the Cold War. Turkey was able to act more independently in its relations with Arab states and Iran once the overriding threat of the USSR disappeared. Water in the shape of GAP became a more important dynamic in Turkey’s relations with its southern neighbors, particularly Syria and Iraq. The dynamic threatened those states in that order of priority as GAP affected, and appeared to exacerbate into the future, the relative water distribution first of the Euphrates, then of the Tigris.

Turkey itself remained in a position of strength as it controlled the resource. Indeed as an upstream state and from a position of relative military strength, Turkey sought to downplay the issue and keep it solely in the realm of technical (hydrological) cooperation. Water became only one of the factors in a complex interstate relationship that followed traditional power politics but can be analyzed as a linking dynamic. These politics involved mainly posturing and rhetoric and only once broke into armed conflict during the Gulf War. Over the period there has been a widening of the water “agenda” to include first, at the regional level, the linkage with the Arab-Israeli conflict through the Syrian-Israeli positions on water from the Golan Heights. Secondly, in 1999 the linkage of external funding for GAP with the ethical issue of the destruction of key elements of the Kurdish “civilization” threatened to

internationalize the issue from Turkey's perspective as foreign firms and governments were targeted by a well-orchestrated environmental and Kurdish-rights campaign.

Nevertheless the relative unimportance of water as a source for conflict in its own right will be demonstrated first by disaggregating Turkish security policy and the GAP role therein before analyzing some key events. It will show that there is linkage between Turkish security policy and GAP but that water exerted little actual influence on policy that distinguished it from other, some more important, factors. It will also seek to predict probable future developments based on the discovery of any major trends.

The shortage of water has made hydropolitics a major issue for Syria, Iraq, and Turkey—it links these states' security policies. In a move away from the traditional military state-centered approach to security studies there has been an initial attempt by Michael Schulz to define this regional area as a distinct “hydropolitical security complex”¹⁷ through an adaptation of Barry Buzan's concept of a “regional security complex.”¹⁸ This was an important step in putting water at the center of analysis of the intricate web of amity and enmity linking the three states. There certainly existed a powerful regional conflict dynamic in the Middle East, and water could be viewed as an exacerbating factor in that it linked powerful interstate rivalry with the substate Kurdish insurgency.

This paper will adopt as an appropriate analytical tool, Buzan's latest concept of “security complex,” defined as “a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another.”¹⁹ This will allow Schulz's hypothesis to be taken one stage further in the process of securitization and will introduce desecuritization, which can be demonstrated as being the most prevalent Turkish process over water. This in turn will undermine the projection of “water wars” over the Tigris-Euphrates river basin.

The setting is the international subsystem (regional), but the focus will be on Turkey as a unit—individuals, bureaucracies, state, and nation. Interstate rivalry in

the regional setting was the predominant level of conflict in the Cold War Middle East as post-independence states successfully resisted pan-Arabism, transnational Political Islam and superpower attempts to control their behavior. The relative strength of the Middle East state continued post-Cold War, and therefore it is the *states* of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq that will form the “units” in this adoption of Buzan’s security complex. The focus on Turkey out of this triad will also allow the fullest examination of the domestic level, as the Turkish Kurd separatist threat was a fundamental challenge to state primacy as well as being connected to water. There will be limited coverage of the international system in three areas. First, the global scientific and environmental community that has had a minor influence in affecting Turkey’s environmental security. Second, it will be necessary to assess the reasons for supranational organizations’ and international law’s failure to defuse water as an issue of conflict. Third, the U.S. role as broker in linking water from the Tigris-Euphrates to the Arab-Israeli conflict will be touched upon. Finally, the evolving ethical debate over the GAP destruction of Kurdish culture is an important new element in the equation.

Research into this subject is hampered by the partisan and secret (due to “national security”) nature of hydrological data and by mutual suspicion. The recent United Nation (UN) Global Environment Outlook (GEO) report identifies major gaps in information on the impacts and responses to changing water quality and quantity.²⁰ The Turkish Ministry for Foreign Affairs Web site quotes parallel worldwide cases interpreted to reflect the rights of an upstream over downstream user.²¹ To this must be added the pronounced zero-sum approach of Middle Eastern diplomatic culture—“to the Middle Eastern political mind, making one concession, however minor, simply leaves one that much more at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the other(s). It becomes, accordingly, important to manipulate the other(s) into positions where they must be the first to concede.”²² This paper will therefore rely upon public statements, world broadcasts,²³ and interviews with official, media, and academic persons as primary sources. The key will be to determine to what extent they are truly reflective of security policies.

Before analyzing GAP itself, it will be necessary to review Turkey's perspective of the complex array of threats to its security. Chapter One will examine Turkish security policy through the lenses of Buzan's sectors: military, economic, environmental, societal, and political. After these discrete analyses and synthesizing the sectors it will be clear that Turkey faced key threats from two external and one internal front, and that water was involved in linking these together. Chapter Two will describe and analyze the development of GAP in the areas of internal and external conflict. This will identify hypotheses that can be explored and tested in detail in Chapter Three through the analysis of three case studies. First, the filling in 1990 of the Ataturk Dam, part of GAP, reduced the water flow downstream, causing friction with Syria and Iraq. Was this the first time Turkey used water as a tool in regional power politics or was it merely an unfortunate side effect of Turkish engineering? Second, during the Gulf War, Turkey found itself in a position to use water as a tool in the conflict with Iraq. Why did it choose not to? Had it learned from the Ataturk Dam incident? Finally, Turkey was alleged to have successfully deployed the threat of reduced water distribution in the crisis of October 1998 by pressurizing Syria to cease support to Kurdish insurgents, prior to the arrest of the Kurd leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1999. Did this happen and what had changed in Turkey's perspective on water as a tool to threaten Damascus?

The decision to use case studies is based on the premise that it is better to have a limited set of texts/data and therefore a complete representation of security policy than a large data set picked at random. This paper will conclude that there was a correlation between GAP and Turkish security policy but that water was only one dynamic in Turkey's relations with its southern neighbors—an irritant rather than a serious cause of conflict in this security complex. It did affect the Turkish perspective but that state was in a sufficiently powerful position not to consistently and irrevocably securitize the issue.

CHAPTER ONE

TURKISH SECURITY POLICY

To set the role of water and GAP in context and to identify areas for analysis in Chapters Two and Three it is necessary to examine Turkish security policy as a whole. Security is about survival. Buzan argues that “it is when an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object (traditionally, but not necessarily, incorporating government, territory, and society.”²⁴ The threat(s) justify the use of extraordinary countermeasures, including state mobilization. In each of the sectors below the form of existential threat will vary, both real and perceived. It is significant that Turkey faced multifarious internal and external challenges in the post-Cold War period, so much so that an element of paranoia existed where water was inextricably linked to both traditional and evolving constellations. I have chosen to divide these into Buzan’s sectors before attempting to reaggregate at the end, in order to prioritize and link separate threats. This approach will allow an effective unwrapping of the different layers of Turkish security in order to achieve a more holistic view of the security complex.

Historical Legacy

As Simon Mayall writes, “. . . in fashioning the new republic, Ataturk inherited an Ottoman tradition of state power and a security policy based on fear of Russia and alignment with the West. Ataturk turned this alignment with the West into the foundation of all Turkish policy.”²⁵ This tradition was continued throughout the Cold War as Turkey filled the role of a frontline state in the Western (and after 1952, NATO) Alliance. Turkey’s relations with the Middle East were considered “almost always secondary, in the minds of its architects, to its relations with the superpowers.”²⁶ The break-up of the Soviet Union signified a crumbling of the bipolar system, paving way for a re-emergence of regionalism and a desire for independence from the superpowers. This opportunity was combined with the legacy of Turkey questioning its Western ally reliability—“Sevres-phobia”, and the sense of

isolation over the Cyprus issue. Thus the stage was set for the relationships with Syria and Iraq to take on greater importance—this included conflict over the relative distribution of water.

Military Sector

The greatest threat to the Turkish state was that posed by other states' military capability linked to enmity. Conflict over water would ultimately lead to the deployment of military force, and this Turkish resource was finite. What constituted existential military threats to the Turkish state, and could Turkey meet the challenges simultaneously? If it could not, then Turkey was in a position of relative weakness, and its position over water would be affected. Historical enmity caused by a cocktail of history, geography, politics, religion, ideology, and material conditions applied to four external fronts and the crucial exercise of internal security versus the threats posed by the PKK and radical Islam. The former internal threat will be considered separately as a societal threat and the latter under the political sector.

Greece. There is a long history of antagonism between Greece and Turkey. In the 1990s areas of tangible tension included Cyprus, the Aegean (the demilitarized status of the islands, territorial waters and the continental shelf), the treatment of minorities, perceived hostility to Turkish European Union (EU) membership and alleged Greek support to the PKK. This axis was certainly Turkey's primary security threat during short and specific crises. Examples of these were the Imia crisis of January 1996 and during the proposed air defense missile deployment to Cyprus between 1996 and 1999, although the arms race surrounding that island can be seen to be driven primarily by the two intractable Cypriot sides.²⁷

Iran/Central Asia (CA). A recent hypothesis²⁸ argues that post-1989 there existed a Central Asian security complex, consisting of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, which tended to remove itself from a Russian-centered security complex, to consider then reject involvement in a Turkish-oriented one, finally shifting to an Iranian-oriented stance. After independence in 1991 the

“Turkish model of development” appeared to be accepted in the CA region. From late 1992, all CA states avoided a one-sided foreign policy, resenting the Turkish high-handed and explicit pan-Turkism. Turkey then opted for long-term implicit and gradual policies toward the region. Yet there was still no evidence that the Central Asians were looking for a big brother, and both Iran and Russia opposed Turkish advances (both have Turkic peoples within their borders). Turkey increasingly became marginalized. It had nothing to offer in terms of military or security affairs, and its economic role was insufficiently important. There was friction between Turkey and Iran over support by both to the other’s opposition groups.

Syria. There were two sources of background friction and two of real conflict between Turkey and Syria. First, as background, there exists a historical legacy of Turkish-Arab enmity dating back to the Ottoman Empire. Second, there is the issue of Hatay province. Damascus claims ownership of this region, which was transferred to Turkey in 1939 by the French, to prevent Syria siding with Germany. The two areas of real interstate conflict in the post-Cold War period were water and Syrian support to the PKK. These will be covered in detail in Chapter Two after an introduction of the Kurdish element under the societal sector below.

At this stage, it is important to assess the Syrian military threat and the Turkish-Israeli alliance that developed over the period, partly in response to the perceived pact between Syria and Greece reported in 1995. A former under-secretary and Turkish ambassador to the United States wrote that these two states “. . . are united by joint interest against Turkey. These countries have been providing every possible aid to the PKK in order to bring Turkey to heel. . . . Turkey must build its strategy of defense against these countries on the assumption that she would be forced to fight against them simultaneously on two separate fronts.”²⁹ In the mid 1990s, skirmishes were reported along the 850-kilometer Turkish-Syrian border, with casualties on both sides.³⁰ Nevertheless, a review of the data in the 1989–1999 issues of *The Military Balance*³¹ reveals that Turkey retained a decisive military advantage over Syria. Syria invested fewer resources in military spending over time and ceased

to be directly supplied with Soviet equipment after 1990. Syrian defense expenditure fell from \$4.8 billion (U.S.) in 1985 to \$2.1 billion (U.S.) in 1995. Suffering from an aging fleet of tanks and aircraft, Syria chose to instead obtain cheap weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and some high profile weapon systems such as surface-to-air missiles. These were the gloss on an otherwise unwieldy military machine that relied on mass of a dubious quality.

The Turkish military did fear that any Israeli-Syrian peace accord could lead to the freeing-up of Syrian forces that could then alter the balance of Turkish superiority in the “southeastern” theater. This balance would however remain overall in Turkey’s favor and was such that Turkey “would have launched a cross-border operation into Syria if Damascus had not expelled Ocalan in 1998.”³² In July 1999 President Assad visited Moscow and secured a \$2 billion (U.S.) arms agreement with Russia to purchase new technology.³³ This upgrade will not however come into effect until 2003, and Russia will insist on cash payment, but it added to Turkish paranoia.

The driving force behind the increasingly closer ties with Israel after 1996 was undoubtedly the Turkish military. The two states shared a common enemy—Syria. Israel appeared a natural ally, due to a shared distrust of Arab states and developing economic relations during the period. The Turkish-Israeli military training and cooperation agreement of February 1996 stemmed from the threat posed by the mutual enemies of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Islamic radicalism. Both sides achieved concrete benefits. Israel conducted air force training in Turkey’s extensive airspace and secured lucrative defense industry contracts. Turkey benefited from shared intelligence on the PKK³⁴ and access to Israeli expertise and technology. The extent of public acceptance of links with Israel was demonstrated in August 1999 when the public in Cinarcik, hit hard by a severe earthquake, organized a ceremony to see off an Israeli rescue team. A rabbi led a prayer, which was broadcasted live by a number of Turkish national television channels—perhaps the first of such occasions in any Muslim nation.³⁵ Nevertheless, this “phantom alliance,” as it became known, produced great consternation and criticism from the Arab world.³⁶

Iraq. 1986 and 1987 saw the first of cross-border raids by Turkish forces against Kurdish insurgent camps inside Iraq, and this issue remained a source of friction into the post-Cold War period. Another issue was ownership of the province of Mosul. As Turkish foreign ministry textbooks point out, the loss of the oil-rich Mosul to Iraq in 1926 was accepted only because the young Turkish republic was too weak to fight for it.³⁷ The Gulf War further exacerbated relations between the two states as Turkey was a crucial part of the coalition versus Saddam Hussein. However, as economic sanctions imposed on Iraq after 1991 began to bite, Turkey's relationship developed into one of uneasy economic reliance. The tension over Kurdish nationalism continued with frequent military strikes into northern Iraq, but as Graham Fuller points out, "in crudest terms, Turkey historically gains when Baghdad is able to control its own Kurds; any development in Iraq that ends up giving the Kurds greater freedom of action only frees them up to broaden their political quest for autonomy elsewhere."³⁸

A review of *The Military Balance* during the post-Cold War period reveals that Turkey retained a significant military advantage over Iraq after 1991. Iraq's military expenditure dropped from \$17.5 billion (U.S.) in 1985 to \$2.7 billion (U.S.) in 1995 due primarily to the UN oil embargo.³⁹ Nevertheless, Iraq remained a powerful regional military force and reconstituted itself after defeat in Kuwait. Like Syria, the armed forces are based on a large conscript army, with the separate Republican Guard Force consisting of six divisions. Equipment spares and opportunities for training were limited, and a large element was involved in internal security deployments, rendering it unavailable for cross-border operations. Against these negative aspects must be weighed the intense nationalism and pride engendered by continued effective resistance against the West.⁴⁰ Also, despite UN inspections, Iraq retained WMD and delivery systems, which greatly concerned Turkey.⁴¹

Thus the military threat to Turkey was multidirectional—"situated at the center of the most unstable region of the world. . . . The strip of the Balkans, Caucasus and Middle East that encircles Turkey, continues to be in turmoil caused

by the resurgence of old crises and conflicts, which are now being supplemented by new ones.”⁴² This sense of paranoia is reflected in Turkish academic discourse. As Gun Kut writes, “Turkey is at the junction point; intrinsically part of many regions simultaneously.”⁴³ Although not an officially declared military policy, some commentators have argued that Turkey based its “defense planning on two-and-a-half campaigns—for example, conducting two full-scale operations simultaneously along the Aegean and southern fronts (Syria) while being prepared for a “half war” that might be instigated from within the country.”⁴⁴ However, the likelihood of any combined enemy military operation over water was slim except the prospect of an Iraqi-Syrian alliance, an unlikely scenario given the enmity between those two states, which will be explored in Chapter Two. This meant that Turkey could act from a position of military strength in any water crisis and effectively choose between securitization and desecuritization.

Economic Sector

From the declared Turkish perspective, GAP is solely an economic project. What then was the economic background to GAP development in this period? The Turkish economy in general was on an upward curve but bedeviled by a substantial budget deficit and corresponding inflationary pressure. Statism was not seriously challenged until Prime Minister Ozal (December 1983–November 1989) directed a swift move toward a free market economy. By 1991, the average growth through the decade had been approximately 8 percent but was insufficient to achieve EU membership. Turkey entered a customs union with the EU in January 1996, but its application for full membership was stalled by a combination of the Greek veto and wider concern about Turkish human rights and its economic record. Ozal’s free market economics were also challenged domestically and were not pursued by his successors. In 1994, inflation ran at 106 percent⁴⁵ and only fell to 72 percent in 1998. This could have been the key factor in determining the level of Turkish resources available for GAP, notwithstanding the effect of friction between riparian neighbors. This will be assessed through specific cases in Chapter Three.

The large amount of resources that Turkey committed to GAP certainly affected that state's economic development, especially when the World Bank refused to finance the project. What about trade with neighboring Arab states? Did this influence Turkey's position over water conflict? There is little evidence of any significant trade with Syria, but the common interest in gas and oil meant increasing economic ties to Russia and Iran (in 1996 an agreement for the sale of \$23 billion [U.S.] worth of natural gas to Turkey was signed with the latter). Turkey claimed that UN sanctions had cost over \$30 billion (U.S.) by 1999 due to the closure of the Kirkuk/Yumurtalik oil pipeline and losses from Iraqi use of Turkey as a trade route (although continued smuggling from northern Iraq clearly contributed to the economy⁴⁶). This figure was almost equivalent to the projected overall cost of \$32 billion (U.S.) for GAP. It is important to note the huge benefits at stake for the winner in the ongoing battle for CA oil pipeline routing. Turkey was only one contender, but the potential prize surely turned Turkish economic attention north and east for much of the post-Cold War period.⁴⁷

The language of securitization in the economic sector implies an economically nationalist position. This is difficult to detect throughout the period except in the area of water. While more trade did contribute to a widening of the foreign policy base, water as a natural resource was the only tool used in economic nationalist rhetoric. "The day of the impotent Turk has gone," stated Ozal, as he sealed the Ataturk Dam in January 1990.⁴⁸ Repeatedly in this period there were public statements linking Turkish control of water to the Arab and Iranian monopoly on oil. How much this was posturing or a calculated design for GAP potential as a means for increasing trade receipts will become apparent in the analysis of Turkish plans for the export of water in the 1990s.

Environmental Sector

Did Turkey have to respond to threats regarding water in the environmental arena? There were two agendas at work in the environmental sector: the scientific and political. These overlapped in the arenas of media and public debate, but the global environmental epistemic community set the scientific agenda, while whether

an issue was securitized was determined by politics. The qualitative deterioration and quantitative scarcity of water are the only issues that will be considered here as it relates to GAP and no other area entered the public arena of “security” during this period.⁴⁹

Turkey as the upstream state in the Tigris-Euphrates basin was water “rich,” and the impact of GAP on Syria and Iraq will be covered in detail in Chapter Two. Turkey’s increased demand was caused by the region’s arid climate, the physical sharing of water with other states, high population growth, improved standards of living, financial constraints, and climate change.⁵⁰ The main reason for publicly debating environmental security is normally global warming and the destruction of the ozone layer. Despite a general awareness and criticism of the “North” for these phenomena, there was no disaster or even acute water crisis that affected Turkey and therefore no politicization let alone securitization from this sector. At the regional level, Turkey was careful to pre-empt criticism of GAP environmental impact by conducting initial environmental assessments of both rivers itself, “considering hydrology, pollution, soils, sediments, ecology, socioeconomics, health and imbalances.”⁵¹ These reviews were in-house, involving the Turkish ministry of environment, the GAP administration, and the university of Dicle (contracted for the Tigris only). Nongovernmental organizations would probably have been more critical, especially at the level of individual “water security” for the local peasants and farmers. It is clear that Turkey was not threatened directly by any environmental degradation caused by GAP and sought to head off criticism from downstream and abroad from a position of strength.

Societal Sector

Societal security in Turkey is distinct from political security. The state and societal boundaries are not coterminous as the question of Kurdish identity threatens the Turkish nation. This dynamic is intermingled with Turkish—Syrian—Iraqi state relations (as each has supported the others’ Kurdish opposition groups) and the development of GAP (part of the Ankara strategy to fight Kurdish poverty). The detail of this linkage will be examined in Chapter Two and the case studies. At this

stage, it is sufficient to describe the societal threat in broad terms to contribute to re-aggregation. The establishment of a secular Turkish republic in 1924 led to the total denial of Kurdish identity and an attempt to convert Kurds into Turks by decree. All public vestiges of Kurdish identity were crushed.⁵² The expropriation of land and import of Turkish settlers, mainly from the Balkans, led to periodic revolts against central government and a vicious cycle of atrocities. A Kurdish population explosion relative to that of the more prosperous Turks meant that by 1990 around 13.7 million Kurds lived in Turkey, and if demographic trends held, threatened to replace the ethnic Turk as the largest group in Turkey.⁵³

During the post-Cold War period, there were halting attempts to provide a political solution to the Kurdish problem, but the overwhelming reaction was military. It was generally accepted that the PKK did not represent the majority of Kurds in Turkey, and their supporters did not number above a few hundred thousand.⁵⁴ Most Kurds supported greater pluralism within Turkey instead of separatism. Yet “racism has started to mix with nationalism on both sides of a conflict already often marred by murder and terrorism.”⁵⁵ The intrastate war cost Turkey approximately \$8 billion (U.S.) per year,⁵⁶ around 70 percent of its army deployed and 30,000 killed. If the nonmilitary economic costs of the conflict were added (loss of U.S. and EU financial support due to Turkey’s poor human rights record and damage to the tourist industry), some outside commentators have argued that it could have been the largest single element of state expenditure in the period:⁵⁷ “One Turkish minister put the amount at \$85 billion (U.S.), four and a half times the sum spent [at that time] on the GAP.”⁵⁸ The Turkish perspective on this internal front will therefore be crucial and could well be the primary factor in any security policy reaction to water crises.

Political Sector

The political sector is rather a “rump” sector, as in some senses all security is political. As Buzan states, “the heart of the political sector is made up of threats to state sovereignty.”⁵⁹ Having discussed the Kurdish threat to the organizational stability of Turkish social order, only one other area requires mention before a

discussion of how institutions and normative pressures affect the formulation of Turkish security policy.

Radical Islam. Turkey prides itself as a successful model of secularism in the Middle East, yet in a country where 99 percent of the population is Muslim there are inevitable tensions. Islam has developed a strong presence in civil society, with religious foundations providing alternative support to the state in housing, education, and health. Necmitten Erbakan's *Refah Partisi* (welfare party) won 21 percent of the vote in the December 1995 national election and became the senior partner in a coalition government. Pressure from the Turkish military forced Prime Minister Erbakan to resign in a "bloodless coup" in June 1997. In April 1997, the military announced a new "concept of national military strategy," which openly branded domestic Islamic movements and Kurdish separatists as the "enemy no 1."⁶⁰ Turkey's Hizbullah, founded in 1979, the year of the Iranian revolution, is not Shi'ite, nor pro-Kurdish, rather pan-Islamist and anti-nationalist. It has never been recorded as having attacked Turkish security forces but instead targeted the PKK. There are allegations of cooperation between Hizbullah and the security forces during the 1990s.⁶¹ A theme in the analysis of crises will be how the political Islamic element reacted differently to water crises with Turkey's Arab neighbors and how this affected the official articulation of security.

Institutional Structures. What was the institutional setting for Turkey's reaction to conflict over water? Turkey's political scene was one of a fragmented party system, deep internal party divisions and weak coalitions. "Three poles separate the main parties, represented by Islamism, and the center-right and center-left traditions."⁶² There were military coups in 1960, 1971, and 1980 as the guardians of Ataturk's legacy stepped in when it appeared to be at risk. Nevertheless as the case study on the Gulf War 1990–1991 will illustrate, a politician's (Ozal) determined policy could prevail over military advice. As William Hale writes, the succession of Demirel as president in 1993 represented another landmark in the "civilianization" of Turkish

politics as “the sole exception to the general pattern of civilian control was in the southeastern provinces, where the continuation of the PKK campaign meant that the army had wider responsibilities, and autonomy, than the democratic system assumes.”⁶³

Control of the National Security Council (NSC), set up in 1961, generally rested with the military. It comprised the president, prime minister, the chief of the general staff, the ministers of national defense, interior and foreign affairs, and the commanders of the various branches of the armed forces and the *gendarmerie*. Its aim was to ensure agreement between the politicians and the military on security issues before they were publicly debated. The defense ministry was “reduced to a supply office for the army, rather than the determinant of defense policy.”⁶⁴ Although statistics remain secret, the armed forces always received the resources they requested. “In the 1990s, according to official figures, defense normally accounted for 12 percent of the national budget, 2 percent of GNP, and 4.5 percent of GDP.”⁶⁵ Even in June 1999, the NSC demonstrated its power over the Prime Minister, Ecevit, by requesting that he cease the activities of Fetullah Gulen, the head of an influential Islamic network.⁶⁶ Turkey’s national intelligence organization (*Milli Istihbarat Teskilati*—MIT) submitted reports direct to the chief of the general staff, although legally was answerable only to the prime minister.⁶⁷ “Turkey’s foreign policy establishment is highly professional, experienced, and very Western oriented,”⁶⁸ but its role was primarily limited to the execution of foreign policy and “selling” Turkey’s image abroad—“peace at home, peace in the world.”⁶⁹

Normative Pressures. Finally, as Mufti points out,⁷⁰ when assessing security policy orientation it is necessary to consider the normative pressures at work. There was certainly a debate as to whether the country was being too cautious in not seizing the opportunities presented by the collapse of the USSR and, over the post-Cold War period NSC monopoly of the formulation of security policy began to be affected by public opinion. An example was the effect of a public outcry toward the plight of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which influenced the government’s decision to

strongly advocate a cessation of the UN-imposed arms embargo.⁷¹ There is no doubt that the Islamist and Turkic elements in public discourse did contribute to a “liberalization” of security policy as Turkey found herself participating in multilateral conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and initiated regional cooperation such as the Black Sea Economic Conference (BSEC).⁷² The influence of public opinion over water is harder to quantify but will be examined in the three case studies.

Synthesis of Sectors. Security policymakers inherited a legacy of Western orientation from the Atatürk tradition in 1989. Opportunities were presented to modify this axis in the re-emergence of regionalism, whether this meant looking north to the new CA republics or developing existing links south with the Middle East. Militarily Turkey faced four external and two internal fronts. Relations with Arab states were complicated by Turkey’s “phantom alliance” with Israel. Economic reality dissipated the Iranian, and to a lesser degree, the Iraqi threat. The environmental sector was relatively “safe” as no disaster occurred and official Turkish pre-emption appeared to prevent any substantial internal debate. The formulation of security policy was centralized in the NSC, but the balance of military/political power within that organ was variable. Public opinion did have a limited influence on security policy as the process of democratization took hold in Turkey. It is clear from the prominence accorded to the internal threats to Kemalist secularism by radical Islam, and to Turkish identity by Kurdish nationalism, that these were crucial, if not the most important challenges to Turkish security policy.⁷³ The ranking of threats below these was unclear, but there was crucial overlap and interconnectedness between the sectors.

Conclusion

Whether there was a separate hydropolitical security complex cannot be determined at this stage, but water in the shape of GAP did link the military, economic, environmental, and societal sectors. Water was a source of tension with

Syria and Iraq (this will be covered in more detail in the next chapter); Turkish control of the resource was cloaked with economic nationalism and linked publicly to Arab control of oil; it was the focus for limited environmental concern, and, through GAP, was a government attempt to solve the Kurdish problem. A tentative regional security complex diagram linking the sectors considered above through the common denominator of GAP could therefore look something like the figure below.

Regional Security Complex Diagram

Such a regional security complex provides a distinct overarching framework and allows a separation of this analysis from the multiple regions, described by Kut, that Turkey is a part of.

Having divided up Turkish security policy into Buzan's sectors, then re-aggregating those elements to reach a tentative summary of priorities, it is now necessary to identify points that must be followed up in the detailed analysis of the

GAP role in influencing Turkish security policy in Chapters Two and Three. Turkey clearly faced a complex array of threats to its security. The relative priority afforded to internal and external fronts would determine Turkey's reaction to each crisis. Yet which sector was ahead in priority and when? Was the need to militarily deal with Kurdish nationalism the primary factor that over-rode any consideration of GAP, despite its long-term role in solving the separatist problem? Was Turkey in such a militarily strong position that it could disregard and face down any combination of threat from Iraq, Syria, and the PKK? How divided were these two states? How important was GAP to Turkey economically, both internally and as a means of increasing trade? What was the political, Islamic, and public opinion discourse at the time of water crises, and did this influence the official position? Finally, did Turkey securitize or desecuritize the water issue? This will be the most important evidence in an analysis of water's role in security policy.

CHAPTER TWO

The GAP

Introduction

This chapter will focus on GAP. It will first describe the geography to identify the hydrological and geographical “shares” in the Tigris-Euphrates river basin. It will then analyze the GAP role in Turkey’s internal and external conflict. The former arose in the linkage between the project and Kurdish nationalism and the latter in Turkey’s interstate relations with Syria and Iraq. The failure of cooperation between these three states at the supranational and regional levels will be examined. The recent developments of the linkage of GAP to the Arab-Israeli peace process and an ethical dimension to GAP progress will also be explored.

The Geographical Context

The Euphrates is around 1,875 miles long and flows through Turkey (41 percent of its length), Syria (24 percent), and Iraq (35 percent). The Tigris is around 1,164 miles long and flows through Turkey (21 percent), Syria (2 percent), and Iraq (77 percent). It should be noted that Syria’s percentage of the Tigris’ length is never entirely within that state; the boundaries with Turkey and Iraq run down the middle of that river for 22 and 5 miles, respectively. The country contributions of water to the rivers reflect the fact that both rise in the mountainous region of eastern Turkey. Turkey contributes 88 percent and Syria the remaining 12 percent to the Euphrates,⁷⁴ while Syria contributes nothing to the Tigris and Iraq only a limited amount to the tributaries (Greater and Lesser Zab, Diyala, and Adhaim). Overall, Turkey contributes more than 70 percent of the united Tigris-Euphrates flow.⁷⁵ Consumption is almost in inverse proportion to contributions with Turkey utilizing 35 percent, Syria 21 percent, and Iraq 44 percent of the Euphrates river water.⁷⁶

It should be noted however from the variety of sources above that it is difficult to evaluate contradictory data from the three states’ technical measurements. The water flow is also seasonal. July to November are low water months, and the big

overflow runs from March to the beginning of June. Floods of the Tigris can reach Baghdad within 24 hours. In terms of water quality, no reliable data exists, but there is a risk that returning water from Turkish irrigation affects the downstream states with its contamination by agricultural chemicals and raised salinity. Why then was there friction between the three riparian states?

External Conflict with Syria over GAP

The Syrian position over GAP was one of fear of its potential economic and military threats to security.

Supply and Demand of Water in Syria . Syria was in an unfavorable hydrological position regarding the Euphrates due to its midstream position and great dependence on that river for hydroelectricity and irrigation. Syria's population rose by approximately 3.4 percent per annum and agriculture was central to the economy, employing 32 percent of the population. The irrigated area produced over 50 percent of the total value of agricultural production on about 18.6 percent of the cultivated land in 1999.⁷⁷ Syria aimed to achieve "relative food security" by 2010. Such "security" was crucial when threats to the regime were perceived as coming from all sides (Israel, Iraq, and Turkey). Retaining the support of Syrian farmers and merchants was crucial to the Assad regime legitimacy. However, the results of Syrian irrigation were disappointing. Due to a lack of funding and reliance on old-fashioned techniques, the area of cultivated land under irrigation only increased from 11 percent to 16 percent between 1986 and 1998. Hydroelectric power was as important a factor to Syria as it was to Turkey as a cheap renewable energy resource. A series of dams were built along the Euphrates, but irregular flow rates led Syria to complain that the generating capacity of its Tabqa Dam fell from 880 to 150 megawatts.⁷⁸

Notwithstanding the limited effects of GAP development on Syria during this period, a great deal of the friction was due to the perception that Turkey did what it wanted without any consideration of the downstream effects. The acute drought of 1999 was aggravated by the Turkish "stealing" of groundwater that fed the river

Khabur (over the past 5 years the flow diminished by half), and seemingly “arrogant” reduced water flows as Turkish factories shut for the “Eid” holidays.⁷⁹ Turkey exacerbated the perception by repeatedly accusing Syria of complaining unnecessarily—Syria had plenty of water, it only needed to use it properly.

After Turkish protests in the 1950s, the Syrians withdrew applications for World Bank funding, and from within its own resources, made extensive use of the river for irrigation, building dams and draining the Ghab swamps. In September 1994, Syria and Lebanon signed an agreement to divide the waters with the latter allocated 20 percent and Syria the remainder. It is assessed that once all Syrian water projects are complete, the amount of water flowing into Turkish territory will be reduced by over 80 percent. Syria refused to discuss the Orontes river formally with Turkey as it regarded this river which rises in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon before flowing through Syria into the contested Turkish province of Hatay, as running entirely within Syrian territory. Any negotiation would have been tantamount to acknowledging Turkey’s sovereignty over the Hatay region—“double standards tend to prevail.”⁸⁰ In turn, Turkish public statements frequently compared GAP with a parallel situation on the Orontes. This rhetoric was deployed primarily to counter Syria’s objections to the construction of GAP dams on the Euphrates, rather than water shortages in the Hatay province.⁸¹ Despite the reduction in water, both quantitative and qualitative, entering Turkey, that state regarded the “ownership” of Hatay as more important. Syrian behavior with Orontes water worked against its arguments over water in the regional context.

Syrian Support to the PKK. As was outlined in Chapter One, Turkey’s perspective on its security in the societal sector could have been the primary factor in determining the direction of security policy. Syrian support to the Kurdish separatist organization, the PKK, was crucial in Turkish eyes. In the 1970s, President Hafez al-Assad identified the potential leverage that support to Kurdish insurgents inside Turkey could give Syria. The PKK leader Ocalan fled to Syria in May 1979, primarily because of the support afforded in that country from radical Palestinian groups also

located there. At the same time as the first PKK fighters re-infiltrated Turkey across the border, Cemil and Rifad Assad, brothers of the President, formally contacted Ocalan. The PKK was allowed to expand and develop its insurgency infrastructure within the safe havens of the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon and inside Syria itself.⁸²

The PKK began significant military operations against Turkey in August 1984. In the mid 1980s the issue of Syrian support to the PKK and the relative distribution of Euphrates water became linked informally at the interstate level due to the two issues' geographical and political correlation. Ozal's visit to Syria in 1987 resulted in an agreement whereby Turkey guaranteed a minimum water flow of a yearly average of more than 500 cubic meters per second at the Turkish-Syrian border; in return, Syria promised its cooperation in security matters. The security agreements were vague, and, as we shall see in Chapter Three, the filling of the Ataturk Dam in 1990 caused protest from Syria while Turkey maintained that it was sticking to the 1987 water protocol.

Bilateral security agreements in 1992 and 1993 proved to be worthless in Turkish eyes as Syria continued to support the PKK. At the former, there was clear linkage made between the triad of downstream effects of GAP; Syrian support to the PKK, and disputed ownership of the Hatay province.⁸³ "Empty" Syrian promises saw Ocalan and the PKK ordered by Assad to reduce visibility and the movement of main training camps to the Bekaa Valley. Turkey was advised to approach the Lebanese government over the matter, notwithstanding the fact that Syria had around 40,000 troops in that country. In 1994 at a trilateral summit meeting between the foreign ministers of Turkey, Iran and Syria, the Turkish foreign minister Hikmet Cetin again raised the linked issues of water and terrorism with his Syrian counterpart, to no avail. In 1995 friction worsened as the PKK mounted operations for the first time inside the Hatay province, and PKK insurgents fled to Syria after Turkish military operations in northern Iraq.

Linkage of the PKK to GAP continued to be frequently noted by Turkey; "Syria is trying to use the PKK as a trump card in solving its problems with Turkey, especially in solving the water issue . . . one cannot conceive of Turkey sharing this

water with Syria.”⁸⁴ Ocalan himself stayed under Syrian protection until the crisis of October 1998 when Turkey publicly charged Syria with support to the PKK, and threatened military action unless the Syrians complied with Turkish demands. After much bellicose language and President Mubarak of Egypt’s mediation, a secret agreement was signed at Adana. The Syrians agreed to close the PKK training camps inside Syria but continued to deny the existence of those in the Bekaa Valley. Syria made a number of arrests but several hundred PKK sympathizers fled into northern Iraq. Ocalan himself was expelled by Syria and captured in February 1999 in Kenya by Turkish intelligence after the refusal by various European states to offer him political asylum.

Turkey did win something of a victory over Syria and the PKK in October 1998. In August 1999, from his Turkish prison cell, Ocalan offered an unconditional PKK ceasefire and a withdrawal of all PKK forces from Turkey. Nevertheless in June 2000 Syria “still harbored PKK camps, even though it has currently banned militants from conducting military training in them.”⁸⁵ Turkey also quickly accused Iran of replacing Syria as a PKK sponsor. Border incidents in August 1999 saw Turkish air strikes inside Iran and a subsequent “security meeting” in Ankara where Iranian accusations were made regarding parallel “alleged Iranian opposition Mujahadeen-e-Khalq activity inside Turkey.”⁸⁶

There is no doubt that President Assad never lost sight of the grip on Turkey’s jugular that his support to the PKK afforded. Syria could not afford to altogether cease this support so long as the province of Hatay was contested, and GAP threatened downstream water quality and quantity. Assad ran an “archetypal security state”⁸⁷ whose aim was to secure the regime’s own survival. Despite the rising socioeconomic pressures of a hopeless economy and rapidly growing workforce, Assad could follow his desire for regional influence without much distraction. The flavor of post-Cold War Turkish-Syrian relations was thus one of suspicion and rivalry. Water and the PKK were political and strategic levers on either side. The Turkish-Israeli military cooperation agreements only reinforced Syrian fears.

Linkage to Arab-Israeli Peace Process. There was a regional widening of the water “agenda” in the post-Cold War period to include Turkey’s relationship with downstream states alongside water issues in the Arab-Israeli conflict. As we have seen in Chapter One, a “phantom alliance” between Turkey and Israel dated back to 1996. Furthermore various Turkish attempts to “export” GAP water to Middle East states, including Israel will be discussed under the “failure of cooperation” paragraph below. These two developments combined with a growing realization by the United States and EU that water security should be considered holistically in the region⁸⁸. The 1994 agreements between Israel and Jordan over ownership and use of mutually shared water resources were hailed by the international community as pointing toward a future resolution of the Tigris-Euphrates dispute.

Syria linked its demands for Israeli water in the Arab-Israeli peace process to achieving formal downstream rights on the Euphrates in the late 1990s. This was at the same time as a physically ailing President Assad appeared increasingly anxious to strengthen his son and heir, Bashar’s position and with it, the Assad legacy. This meant a re-opening of the talks with Israel, broken off in 1996 and re-started in 1999, which sought to regain the Golan Heights.⁸⁹ Indeed, Syria saw a multilateral approach to the whole water problem as preferable to bilateral negotiations with Turkey where Damascus operated from a position of relative weakness. The details of Israeli-Syrian discussions are unavailable but it was reported that “Syria will be scrupulous in respecting Israel’s downstream rights to Golan water, if only because Syria itself is seeking to uphold such downstream rights in its own dispute with Turkey.”⁹⁰ Turkey’s reaction to this linkage was one of nervousness as U.S. pressure to achieve an Arab-Israeli peace settlement threatened to make GAP and control over the Tigris-Euphrates headwaters part of wider negotiations. There was no evidence however of Turkish public statements resisting this regionalizing dynamic and both Turkey and America have informed the British Embassy in Ankara that no official request for linkage has been made.⁹¹ One can only assume that there were vigorous

Turkish attempts at governmental level to de-couple what it saw as a national issue, despite NATO allegiances.⁹²

External Conflict with Iraq over GAP

The Iraqi position over GAP was also one of fear of its potential economic and military threats to security, but to a lesser degree than Syria as the development of GAP focused first on the Euphrates river, which is less important to Iraq than the Tigris. Iraq was also distracted, first by the Iran-Iraq war, then by the Gulf War and its ensuing sanctions. Furthermore, Turkey and Iraq are economically dependent on each other (due to Turkey's role as conduit for Iraqi oil) as we saw in Chapter One. Finally, as the state furthest downstream, Iraq often fixed the blame for its reduced water share on Syria.

Supply and Demand of Water in Iraq. With a caveat that the limited data coming out of Iraq since 1991 was highly suspect and unverifiable, its population was estimated as 20.4 million in 1995, of which 25 percent were rural. The agriculture sector contributed only 5 percent to GDP despite consisting of 20 percent of the labor force.⁹³ Topographically, Iraq is shaped like a basin with the Great Mesopotamian alluvial plain of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers surrounded by mountains in the north and east, and by desert areas in the south and west. It is on this plain that the vast majority of Iraq's agriculture took place. However, due to soil salinity, fallow practices and the unstable political situation, it is estimated that only 4 million hectares were cultivated annually, representing just over a third of the total cultivable area. Soil salinity has always been a major issue in this area and was recorded as a cause for crop yield reductions some 3,800 years ago. Estimates in the mid 1990s indicated that 4 percent of the irrigated areas were severely saline, 50 percent medium saline, and 20 percent slightly saline. This salinity was strikingly apparent to outside observers: "the road from Baghdad to Basra reveals that the agricultural land in between has become one vast salt pan."⁹⁴ Blame for this phenomenon was often attributed by Iraq to GAP developments upstream but was equally due to the absence

of drainage facilities, higher evaporation rates in the hotter Iraqi climate, and the irrigation practices used (flooding).

Around half of the electricity produced in Iraq was generated by hydroelectricity, but any decrease in water flow due to GAP could be easily offset by switching to thermal energy production as that state boasted 10–13 percent of world oil reserves. Iraq had a long history of its own irrigation and hydroelectric projects. By the mid-1960s, when Turkey began construction of its first major dam on the Euphrates, Iraq was irrigating nearly ten times the amount of land as Turkey.⁹⁵ Iraq completed the Haditha Dam on the Euphrates in 1985, which had a 660 megawatt generating capacity and stored sufficient water to irrigate 1 million hectares. It was only in 1988 that the first GAP dam was completed at Karakaya. Iraq's "Third River" (renamed the "Saddam River" in 1991) was completed in 1992. Despite outside observers' assessments that this 560-kilometer canal from near Baghdad to Basra was Saddam Hussein's attempt to drain marshes providing cover to Shi'ite dissidents, its proclaimed aim was to irrigate land between the two connected rivers. Finally, Iraq also connected the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers by canals to Lake Tharthar, which "opened up the possibility that water from one river could be used to make up for low flow in the other."⁹⁶ Further studies and an action plan (focusing on the means of overcoming increased salinity) were announced in 1998 following the "monopolization" of Euphrates river waters by Turkey.⁹⁷

There was no doubt that Turkish "arrogance" in controlling and developing the Tigris-Euphrates headwaters through GAP antagonized Iraq. Its latent oil wealth, despite military containment by the United States and its allies, was of limited use after the Gulf War. The UN-approved "oil for food" deal (UN Security Council Resolution 986) primarily focused on humanitarian relief, non-proliferation, and reparations but did not offer any framework for economic growth or debt relief. The estimated 227,000 excess deaths of children under five from the start of sanctions in 1990 to March 1998 were partly blamed on polluted water. Saddam Hussein appeared to delay repair of war damage to water systems as such statistics suited his campaign to lift sanctions.⁹⁸ But there was no case of Iraq publicly linking the

Turkish development of GAP to such horrifying data. To what extent GAP caused friction between Turkey and Iraq that offset their economic dependence will be examined in two of the case studies in Chapter Three.

Iraqi Support to the PKK. The relationship between Iraq and the PKK was more complex than that of the Syrian proxy use of the insurgents. From 1984, Turkey cooperated with Iraq in trying to put down the Kurdish rebellion. During the Iran-Iraq War, when Turkey had a benevolent policy of “active neutrality” toward Iraq, it signed a treaty allowing Turkish “hot pursuit” of insurgents into Iraq. In 1988 however, the treaty was not renewed and Iraq began to tolerate PKK bases on its territory. In the 1990–1991 Gulf War, Turkey supported the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq, and shut down the oil pipeline between it and Iraq. “As states become weaker, the stateless Kurds become comparatively more important”⁹⁹ and following Saddam Hussein’s defeat of the Kurdish revolt in 1991 this adage assumed international proportions as refugees flooded toward Turkey. The solution proved to be Operation *Provide Comfort*, which ran from April 1991 to the end of 1996. Its aim was to provide humanitarian assistance to those fleeing Iraq, and it became a major political issue inside Turkey as many saw it as facilitating the power vacuum in northern Iraq that allowed the PKK sanctuary there. Others argued that the operation would lead to the creation of an autonomous Kurdish state in northern Iraq—a dangerous precedent for Turkey’s own Kurdish separatists. Yet “to abandon the force, however, would simply lead it to regroup elsewhere and strip Ankara of any influence whatsoever over the course of events.”¹⁰⁰

There followed a series of Byzantine alliances and schisms within the Kurdish movements with Turkey exploiting divisions to target the PKK, and both Iran and Syria supporting the PKK. From 1996, the PKK entered an alliance with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which controlled the east of the Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq. In turn Turkey enlisted the assistance of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), supplying intelligence and occasional ground support in the internecine conflict. These alliances were short-lived. In May 1997, the Turkish army launched a

six-week operation involving air and 20,000 ground troops against PKK positions in northern Iraq.¹⁰¹ By the end of 1999, a Turkish force of approximately brigade strength was permanently based in northern Iraq.

While allied aircraft operated from Turkish airfields to police the no-fly zone in northern Iraq, and Turkey supported humanitarian operation by international aid organizations, the Turks “do not like the United States conducting an undeclared war against Iraq from their territory.”¹⁰² Turkey refused to allow U.S. aircraft to operate from its territory to counter Iraq’s move north into Kurdistan in September 1996.¹⁰³ Saddam Hussein was not in control of this contested northern area of Iraqi territory from 1991, but he supported the PKK and KDP when it suited his own aims. Ultimately Turkey would have preferred the Iraqi Kurds to have settled their disputes with Saddam Hussein so that the PKK issue could have been isolated, but direct Turkish military action inside Iraq, combined with occasional Turkish rhetoric about regaining the “lost” province of Mosul, only added to the friction over GAP.

Failure of Cooperation over Tigris-Euphrates Water

Having explored areas of friction between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq over relative water distribution downstream of GAP, this section will examine the extent and failure of cooperation (both multilateral and bilateral), whether under the supranational aegis of international law and the UN, or through regional means.

Cooperation at the Supranational Level. Iraq and Syria viewed the Tigris and Euphrates as international rivers to be commonly utilized. Turkey regarded the water usage on its territory as a sovereign right. Two key principles emerged in international law making over water. The first was the equitable use of water resulting from the International Law Association 1966 Helsinki Rules, which stated that existing use would have to make room for a new use, with equal apportionment. This clearly favored Turkey as an upstream state. The second principle, developed from the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, did not sanction the equitable use principle but preserved rights to existing users. This favored the

downstream states Iraq and Syria, although the latter could use the first principle in arguments over Euphrates water with its downstream neighbor, Iraq.

After 1972 progress was limited. The International Law Commission of the United Nations attempted to draft principles on the “non-navigational uses of international watercourses” from 1959. After numerous drafts, the UN General Assembly adopted a convention on this subject in May 1997. To date the convention has been signed only by Syria, not Iraq and Turkey. All three states used elements of the convention to support their claims to Tigris-Euphrates water, but Turkey objected to article 7, which states that all states have an “obligation not to cause significant harm.”¹⁰⁴ Ultimately, there was no international court to which the states had recourse to, unless all parties agreed to this happening and there was no sign of any of the three states moving to this position during the period.¹⁰⁵ Finally, in further debate at the United Nations, Turkey, together with Egypt and India, “have made it taboo to suggest in agreed UN texts that there is a role for any international engagement in transboundary water issues.”¹⁰⁶

An interesting parallel to the failure of international law in effecting cooperation is the impact of the “virtual water” argument. This counter to “water pessimists” of the Malthusian camp argues that the political economy of water is subordinate to that of world trade. Tony Allan has argued that water should be recognized as a tradable commodity.¹⁰⁷ It is estimated that 1 ton of wheat is produced by 1,000 cubic meters of water, and if cheaper wheat can be purchased than the cost of securing that volume of water, then economic sense should dictate its import. There is no evidence that this rationalist concept took hold in Turkey, Syria, or Iraq during the post-Cold War period. It ignored the more immediate problem in Turkey of securing the socioeconomic development of Southeastern Anatolia. Furthermore, the Middle Eastern perspective of reliance upon international trade (that is, cereals from the West) was affected by the experience of sanctions (that is, withholding that resource), which affected more than one state.¹⁰⁸ Iraq would have been the most likely state to adopt the concept of “virtual water” once oil sanctions were lifted. Nevertheless, there are influential Turkish academics who argue that water must be

seen as a regional resource similar to oil and that economic interdependency through GAP as a regionally integrated project can only lead to confidence building and cooperation with Turkey's Arab neighbors.¹⁰⁹

Cooperation at the Regional Level. There were a series of bilateral and trilateral meetings between politicians and technicians from Turkey, Iraq and Syria over the water issue from the 1960s. The most important were the Joint Technical Committees (JTCs) that first met with representatives from all three states in 1965. These JTCs met on and off thereafter but the only concrete agreement was that reached in 1987 when Turkey granted Syria 500 cubic meters per second water flow on the Euphrates as part of the background to filling the Ataturk Dam in 1990. Thereafter, Syria demanded 700 cubic meters per second; Turkey consistently released more than 500 yet refused to sign any formal agreement. Turkey argued that it was not "water rich," that its GAP dams could make "optimal use" of water in the region by maintaining a steady flow instead of wide seasonal variations, and that this position was reasonable under international water law.¹¹⁰ Turkey's "Three-Staged Plan for Optimum, Equitable and Reasonable Utilization of the Trans-Boundary Watercourses of the Euphrates-Tigris Basin" was presented to the JTC in 1984 and discussed at a tripartite ministerial meeting in June 1990. This plan personified the Turkish approach—technical and scientific, with detailed collection of data required on all states' current water needs and practices, before any agreement dividing water could be contemplated.

Bilateral relations between Syria and Iraq were marked by their lack of cooperation. Iraq feared upstream Syrian projects and water extraction on the Euphrates. Indeed Iraq threatened to bomb Syria's Al Thawrah Dam in 1974 after the flow was reduced to approximately a quarter of the normal rate. The crisis continued into 1975 as both states mobilized their armed forces. It was only defused after Saudi Arabian, Arab League and Soviet mediation. The friction between the two downstream states had separate roots to the water issue. Rivalry between the two Ba'th regimes can be dated back to the late 1960s. Both claimed to be the leading

ideological force in pan-Arabism and sought regional hegemony. Furthermore, Syria was ruled by the Alawite sect, a branch of Shia Islam while Iraq's Sunni regime ruled over a Shia minority. Both regimes openly contested the other's legitimacy. Syria supported Iran in the Iran-Iraq war and joined the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq in the Gulf War.

Nevertheless, the sheer scale of GAP and its potential threat to both states did lead to a formal agreement over water distribution in April 1990. This agreement by Syria, to allow 58 percent of the Euphrates volume to flow into Iraq, remained in force throughout the remainder of the period. There were further examples of cooperation between Iraq and Syria, and delegations visited each other's capitals to develop a joint stand on the water issue,¹¹¹ but wider interstate relations determined the timing of such rapprochement. There was certainly no likelihood of a formal alliance between Iraq and Syria, which would have threatened Turkey militarily due to the background of regime and regional rivalry. In addition, Turkey's superior armed forces, geography and membership of NATO outweighed any combined Arab military potential.

As a water "rich" state and probably also to diffuse diplomatic protests and interstate friction, Turkey consistently articulated the cooperative benefits that an economic handling of water would bring (but clearly also expected to make a profit). From 1987 to 1991 President Ozal championed the plan to supply 1.1 billion cubic meters of water per year commercially to other parts of the region through two huge pipelines from the Ceyhan and Seyhan rivers.¹¹² The western pipeline would have conveyed water to Syria, Jordan, the West Bank, (and possibly Israel) and thence to the Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia. The eastern pipeline would have taken water to the Gulf states.

This "peace pipeline" concept failed as most Arab states refused to take part in a "water summit" convened in Istanbul.¹¹³ From their perspective, why should they have paid for water that GAP had withheld from them in the first instance, and "why become even more dependent on the Turkish water monopoly?"¹¹⁴ A similar "peace canal" proposal also failed. The theory of interdependence on water was

affected by the historical experience of oil dependency (that is, potentially fatal vulnerability to outside economic sanction). Arab suspicion of Turkish designs was further exacerbated by the Israeli factor. Israeli-Turkish plans to deliver water from the Manavgat River, not far from Antalya to Israel using supertanker or huge water-filled plastic bags towed by tugs, were reported in 1994.¹¹⁵

Internal Conflict over GAP

The GAP was regarded by the Turkish state as a long-term solution to the Kurdish problem. It considered this problem as primarily economic. If Kurdish poverty could be eliminated through GAP opportunities for socioeconomic development then the source for PKK support and general Kurdish dissatisfaction could be eliminated. Closer examination of other audience perspectives is required; those Kurds affected directly by GAP, primarily through resettlement, and the wider Turkish electorate and public opinion.

First, the local population in the GAP region, of which over 50 percent were Kurds, 40 percent Turks and 10 percent Arabs—the majority of whom were subsistence level farmers. Their perspective was almost impossible to determine due to the state of emergency that existed and because of the Turkish government and GAP administration's control of information. The only outside survey carried out was a questionnaire sent to 12 prominent Kurdish figures and organizations in the European Diaspora in 1993.¹¹⁶ The results of this limited stock-take indicated that there was a significant division between the Kurdish and Turkish government perspective. The first Kurdish fear of GAP was that it was a means of forcefully assimilating them into Turkish society by moving families from their land into cities. This concern was unsurprising, as by 1990 over 210,000 residents had already been moved from their land that was to be flooded under the Ataturk, Karkaya, and Keban projects.¹¹⁷ There were undoubtedly a large number of young Kurd nationalists, who along with their families, settled in cities and towns all over Turkey. The Kurdish society affected by GAP was essentially tribal and heterogeneous with kinship an important source of unity. As Nestor points out, integration meant the abandonment of what was known (clanism) for what was unknown (statism).

The second fear was that there was to be no land redistribution under GAP and consequently only the Turkish government, “collaborators,” and multinationals would benefit from the change in agricultural practice and sale of hydroelectric power. Olson comments that there was a limited talented and literate Kurd workforce left in the GAP region in 1996 and a general belief that the new industrial plants planned would be Turkish owned.¹¹⁸ Clan leaders, or *agha*, did increase their grip on land and power. Their involvement in local water management boards and the consolidatory nature of the GAP agricultural practices meant that the poorer peasants saw limited changes to their lot. GAP administration accepts that limits to landholding, through restricting single ownership to 60 hectares of irrigated land, has only been partially successful and is limited to the Sanliurfa province.¹¹⁹

The third and final fear was the “drowning” of Kurdish historical sites, a phenomenon seized upon by Kurdish pressure groups to galvanize opposition to the Ilisu Dam project, as we shall see in the next section. A further fear articulated by the Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP), but more difficult to verify was the perceived hidden agenda of Turkish authorities seeking to build new villages near roads and away from the mountains in order to better control the Kurdish population.¹²⁰ Recent media visits to the GAP region most affected by the Kurdish insurgency detected no policy on GAP from the pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democracy Party (HADEP). It seemed as if GAP was not that unpopular at grassroots level unless it was your land being swallowed by dam water.¹²¹

Did these internal fears of GAP translate themselves into disturbances or PKK attacks on GAP? There were plenty of “terrorist incidents” reported by the official Turkish media as having occurred in the GAP region during the period. There were reports of isolated incidents when contractors were attacked by the PKK,¹²² but there was no evidence of consistent PKK or environmental “terrorist” targeting of GAP as a legitimate target. It is not clear why this was so, but the prestige GAP sites are heavily guarded by the *gendarmarie* and PKK activity was low in much of the western GAP area around the Euphrates river projects. Interestingly, Ocalan stated “there would be jobs for everybody in Turkey if the

system were put on the right track. Let us make the waters of the Tigris and the Euphrates flow in the region [Anatolia]; they are enough for a country double the size.”¹²³ Perhaps GAP was recognized by the PKK as an ongoing source of friction between the Turkish state and the Kurds that could be exploited but which ultimately would benefit the region.

What of the wider Turkish electorate and public opinion? A survey of the literature and the overwhelming impression gained from a field visit in Spring 2000 is that the vast majority of Turks understand why GAP is required and believe that the cost is worth it. It offered direct employment opportunities for up to 200,000 people, cheap power, clean drinking water, improved infrastructure and possibly an end to the Kurdish insurgency. There was little evidence of a wide public debate on GAP merits during the post-Cold War period. Syrian and Iraqi perspectives were not aired, and there was only limited editorial comment in the Turkish media on the “drowning” of Hasankeyf (see below) and the lack of education in new techniques for GAP farmers,¹²⁴ The government did respond to the latter with an improved emphasis on “farmer field days” and the establishment of GAP Entrepreneur Support and Guidance Centers.

GAP was not a partisan political issue raised in elections. Turkish political parties did differ on the relative importance of the project in terms of resources, but this was seldom raised¹²⁵ Economists were divided over GAP absorption of resources and its contribution to Turkey’s inflation, and there was an indigenous environmental lobby, which criticized GAP effects on downstream water quality, but their impact on public opinion was limited. Psychologically, there was enormous national pride of Turkish technical achievement in harnessing the Tigris and Euphrates.

Ethical Dimension

A late development in GAP influence on Turkish security policy was the emergence and hardening of an ethical dimension to external opposition to the project’s goal of “solving the Kurdish question.” Exiled Kurdish groups, such as the KHRP, conducted effective media and political campaigns to pressure foreign

governments and companies into stopping commercial support to GAP, at a time when Turkey was seeking to increase the proportion of private sector involvement.

As we have seen, human rights issues did affect other democratic states' perspectives of Turkey's counterinsurgency war versus the PKK. Turkey's reaction to what it saw as outside interference, often aggravated by the "perfidious" Greeks, in an internal matter was exemplified by President Demirel: "linking the solution of the southeast problem and trial of the chief of the separatist terrorist organization, efforts to give an international profile to these problems and misconcepts, like the international court and international conference, are direct intervention to Turkey's internal affairs."¹²⁶ Throughout most of the post-Cold War period, Turkey could afford to ignore external pressure and seal off the southeast from the prying eyes of journalists and investigative politicians with human rights agendas.

Nevertheless the increasing effects of globalization and a polished media assault by the Kurdish Diaspora saw more detailed reports coming out of the Turkish interior. Village curfews, food embargoes, forced "evacuation" of Kurds, arrests and alleged atrocities were recounted to visiting journalists.¹²⁷ Three years after an application was lodged with the European Commission of Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights delivered judgment in 1996 on the first case involving the destruction of villages in southeast Turkey. The case was brought against the state by individuals, Akduvar and others, from the village of Kelekci, near Diyarbakir and the headwaters of the Tigris river. Their case was assisted by the KHRP. The court held that on account of the burning of the applicants' houses by Turkish security forces, the Turkish state had violated the right of the applicants to private and family life (article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights) and the right to peaceful enjoyment of their property (article 1 of the First Protocol to the Convention). The court also held that on account of the pressure put on the applicants to withdraw their petitions to the European Commission, Turkey was in violation of article 25(1) of the European Convention, which guarantees the right to individual petition.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry responded to losing this case by stating that “the decision taken by the European Court of Human Rights, a subsidiary body, conflicts with Turkish sovereignty. We regret to say that the Court has reached an *ultra-vires* decision which exceeds the scope of its application.”¹²⁸ Nevertheless, Turkey soon faced dozens of individual cases brought against it in front of the European Court of Human Rights. It proved to be “the most intractable issue for the EU’s future relationship with Turkey”¹²⁹ as that state appeared unable to meet the standards expected in human rights for its citizens. To those alleged violations of human rights investigated by NGOs, such as Amnesty International, was added in 1999, the direct impact of Turkey’s GAP.

At the center of this development was the \$1.52 billion (U.S.) Ilisu hydroelectric dam on the Tigris river, 60 kilometers upstream from the Syrian border, due completion by 2008. A Swiss-led consortium, Sulzer Hydro, headed the group, involving companies from Sweden, Italy, and Britain that would build and finance the dam. The dam’s reservoir will cause the resettlement of a significant number of villagers, but the overall impact was played down by Sulzer Hydro as being “relatively uncomplicated.”¹³⁰ The scheme was bitterly attacked by the London *Guardian* newspaper and headlines appeared such as “Dam threatens *cradle of civilization*”¹³¹ as numbers of expected displaced persons were assessed as being 25,000, twice that estimated by the consortium. The historical town of Hasankeyf, first settled more than 10,000 years ago, was expected to disappear under a lake covering 130 square miles.

Following a European Council of Ministers’ resolution in June 1999, judging against Turkey, that the same kind of violation as the Akduvar case could not be allowed to happen again, exiled Kurdish groups decided to target the displacement of persons in southeast Turkey that were being carried out to speed-up GAP progress. An agreement was reached with the Friends of the Earth. The organization would focus on the GAP project environmental impact.¹³² The KHRP carried out an investigation in November 1999 into the Ilisu Dam, which concluding that it “threatens to precipitate widespread human rights violations.”¹³³ The organization

recommended that no governments should grant export credits to those firms involved in the consortium until a proper assessment and alternatives had been explored. At the end of 1999 such media and Kurdish Diaspora pressure had slowed external funding for this GAP dam as the British government was forced to reassess its plan to back Balfour Beatty, the British civil engineering company, with £200 million worth of credit. The onus for compliance before these credit guarantees were granted was shifted onto Turkey: proper resettlement and compensation under independent monitoring for those displaced, saving as much as possible of the archaeological heritage, treatment upstream to ensure water quality, and an assurance that water flows will be maintained to neighbors. The Swiss government insisted that an international expert be appointed to investigate the resettlement issue.

Turkey's reaction to the building external pressure manifested itself on many fronts. A number of "non-partisan" surveys (for example, by the Sociology Association of Ankara) collected data on the positive impact that the dam and GAP, in a wider context, would have on the socioeconomic development of southeastern Anatolia. The consortium and the Turkish ministry for foreign affairs in a countermedia campaign then deployed these figures externally. The literature and briefings offered a vision of an understanding and scientific approach to resettlement that sought "to prevent a sudden fall in displaced families' standard of living, and indeed to rehabilitate them by improving this standard to achieve realization of sustainable development."¹³⁴ European journalists were also offered facilities to visit the Hasankeyf site to see for themselves the opportunities such socioeconomic development offered the local people. It is also alleged that internal threats to elected officials in the region were made.¹³⁵

Nevertheless, Turkey refused to debate the issue at the interstate level, as it saw this as a principle of sovereignty. Instead "an informal consultation process" was reported between Turkey and Britain.¹³⁶ At a time when the demand for power was expected to rise from 110 to 300 million-kilowatt hours between 1998 and 2010, Turkey needed the investment from private sector sources. Muzaffer Selvi, the general manager of Turkey's state-owned electricity company, stated that the

government could afford to fund \$1 billion (U.S.) worth of the required power projects, leaving a shortfall of \$3.5 billion (U.S.) to be filled by foreign and national private sector investment.¹³⁷

An interesting parallel to the water issue was that of defense negotiations. Turkey had already regularly experienced difficulties in negotiations with European governments over armaments contracts. An example was the French national assembly's adoption of a bill in May 1998 recognizing Turkish responsibility for the 1915 Armenian genocide, which threatened a \$450 million (U.S.) deal to supply 10,000 Aerospatiale Eryx antitank missiles.¹³⁸ Turkey adopted a position of outrage and cancelled the planned signing of a joint military memorandum of understanding with France in June 1998. Behind the scenes, however, a deal was struck in July 1998.

Turkey's reaction to such a move was reflected in the ethical dimension of GAP. It saw it as Western "unreasonableness," and reacted with rhetoric similar to that expressed by Demirel above. But Turkey would not bow to pressure. There was never a moment when water as an internationalized ethical issue directly altered Turkey's stand over threats to its external and internal security. It knew that Western firms needed export orders, and that their respective governments would have to weigh up the advantage to domestic employment and economy of any ethical foreign policy stance. There were other, less ethically critical governments that could replace the consortium. What is less clear is whether ethical pressure forced Turkey to increase the resources earmarked for compensation to those displaced by GAP.¹³⁹

Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed water and GAP as a source for conflict and failed cooperation. The focus switched from Turkey's security policy in Chapter One to include the perspectives of those external and internal threats to GAP contained within the regional security complex. This is crucial as Iraqi, Syrian, and Kurdish perspectives and moves versus the project would provoke a counter-reaction by the Turkish state in any crisis. The threat discourse has primarily been set in Buzan's military and societal sectors because Turkey's Arab neighbors regarded Turkey and

GAP through traditional state-military lenses and sought to securitize the issue. Also the societal threat of the PKK appeared predominant from the Turkish state and nation's perspective.

The role of GAP in external conflict with Syria was to provoke Syrian fear of a Turkish economic and military threat, but water was inextricably linked to the regime's legitimacy, the Hatay issue, the "phantom alliance," and Syrian support to the PKK. Syria saw the latter as a lever, but did Turkey see GAP as a possible countermove? Syria led on the external conflict as Iraq was distracted by two wars and UN sanctions and had less influence on the Kurdish option than Syria. Furthermore, Iraq was less affected by GAP geographically and ultimately expected to be able to use its oil wealth to offset "water-poverty" before the full extent of GAP was realized.

The linkage of GAP to the Arab-Israeli peace process further complicated the security complex due to different expectations of the project's inclusivity. Supranational and regional cooperation over GAP failed in the shape of UN, international law, Syrian-Iraqi friction, and the "virtual water" argument. This explained why Turkey was able to take such a unilateral or "arrogant" stand over water distribution. Turkey's strategy was to desecuritize water and discuss it only in the technical arena. As Soffer points out, Turkey's plans to export water were motivated by a mixture of financial (profit), geopolitical and image-building factors.¹⁴⁰

Internal conflict over GAP is more difficult to assess. The project offered varying opportunities or penalties to those living in the region. There was no direct action against it, but as Schulz indicates there was no evidence that the concept of "sustainable development" was being implemented at the local level. Flooding, increased sediment and salinity, and a system that appeared to favor the larger landlord meant that the majority of the population affected saw "the new development projects constitute a threat to their existence, so the socioeconomic consequences of these projects automatically lead to political implications for the regimes."¹⁴¹

The reaction of public opinion to GAP has been touched on but will be followed up in the last chapter, when crises potentially forced a debate. The ethical dimension was analyzed in detail in this chapter because its influence was outside the crises covered next. It was a new factor linking GAP and Turkish security policy, which will probably play an increasing part, depending on Turkey's response to the perceived economic sector threat (that is, loss of foreign funding for the project) and its perspective of foreign "meddling."

The context of real friction over water is now set for an analysis of case studies. The Syrian and Iraqi perception of threat(s) from Turkey did lead to moves against Turkish security, which in turn led to Turkish countermoves. The real or perceived role of GAP in provoking these moves, its relationship with other security issues (the PKK and power vacuum in northern Iraq), and its use or non-use as an extraordinary measure can now be explored.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDIES

The aim of this chapter is to examine three case studies in detail in order to test and explore the hypotheses identified in Chapters Two and Three. Firstly, the filling of the Ataturk Dam in January-February 1990 provoked great condemnation and posturing from Syria and Iraq with support from the wider Arab world. It was also the catalyst for a wider discourse on “water wars” and is still quoted as an example of how water can be used by the upstream state as a weapon or tool versus its downstream neighbors. The second case study is that of the 1990–1991 Gulf War when Turkey and Syria found themselves in the same coalition opposing Iraq. Turkey did shut off the Iraqi oil pipelines crossing its territory but did not “turn off the water taps.” Finally, seven years later and toward the end of the period under examination, Turkey and Syria almost came to blows in October 1998 over the issue of Syrian support to the PKK, which as we have seen, was linked inextricably with wider issues including GAP. Once again Turkey did not use the water weapon.

After a brief explanation of the background and narrative of these case studies, the focus will be on analysis of the influence of other security sectors within the regional security complex; how water fitted into the discourse; and what the effects were on GAP development, and Syrian, Iraqi, and Turkish moves as regards each other and the PKK. The argument will attempt to discern what is constant and what is changing in the relationship between Turkey’s security policy and GAP.

Background / Narrative

Turkey had signed a security protocol with Syria in 1987, which contained provisions for economic cooperation and a note setting out Turkey’s commitment to allowing at least 500 cubic meters per second water flow at the Syrian border. This amount was to be a yearly average, and Turkey undertook to increase the flow during the following month if any given month’s average fell below that figure.¹⁴² The text implicitly acknowledged that Turkish filling of the dam would lead to a reduced

water flow. From the Turkish perspective, they did everything in their power to ameliorate the impact of filling the dam, including the dispatch of a delegation, at official level, to tour Damascus and Baghdad in order to inform downstream states of Turkish plans in detail.¹⁴³ A survey of world broadcasts gives no indication of a developing crisis.

The dam began to fill as Turkish engineers blocked the flow of the Euphrates on January 13, 1990. The following day Saddam Hussein dispatched his oil minister to Ankara to discuss the issue and on January 15 a note of protest was delivered to the Turkish ambassador in Damascus. Libya became involved on January 16, as did the Arab League on January 18, as its general secretariat issued a statement condemning Turkey. Water was finally released from the dam into the Euphrates on February 12, 1990. Syrian drinking water, hydroelectric power output and irrigation were affected, as were Iraqi winter crops.¹⁴⁴ The incident did provoke the signing of an agreement between Iraq and Syria in Tunis on April 16, 1990 to divide the Euphrates water on a percentage basis, but Turkey rode out this storm of protest linked to the wider GAP issue and never once wavered in what it perceived as a technical engineering phase. The dam was formally opened as an electric power generating plant on July 25, 1992.

No major GAP development took place before Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Turkish anxiety with Iraq's development of an advanced military industrial sector (especially in nonconventional and missile technology) had led to its cooperation with Britain in intercepting parts intended for Iraq's "Supergun."¹⁴⁵ Iraq had not been willing to extend the "hot pursuit" of the PKK agreement that expired in 1988. Nevertheless, economic ties were strong and Turkey did not close the Kirkuk-Yurmurtalik oil pipeline until August 8. As Hale states, "at this stage, the government appears to have assumed that it could preserve its neutral attitude in what was seen as a purely inter-Arab dispute, without damaging its links to the Western powers."¹⁴⁶

The next phase of the crisis saw an internal debate in Turkey as to the degree of future participation in the anti-Iraq coalition. The water weapon was not

discussed, instead the issues were over Western air force use of NATO bases in Turkey, whether Turkish troops should be sent to the Gulf itself, and should a second front be opened from Turkey in any ground operation. The latter did not occur, but Turkish deployments did tie down eight Iraqi divisions at the westernmost border alongside the Tigris. A Turkish contingent was not sent to the Gulf, and the decision to allow the use of Turkish airbases for operations against Iraq was only taken the day before the air war commenced. Iraq placed human shields on its Thawra Dam to prevent Syrian sabotage, and the allies targeted Iraqi water resources in the air campaign.¹⁴⁷ Iraq destroyed Kuwaiti desalination plants and also started to drain the Marsh Arabs' environment after the war to assist in suppressing the Shi'ite rebellion. The defeat of Iraq by the coalition (which included Syria) was followed by an Iraqi Kurdish refugee crisis in March–April 1991 when some 700,000 fled to the Iraqi-Turkish border. Thus, water was used only as a target, not a weapon, but post-conflict “water for peace” projects involving GAP were proposed by Turkey to repair regional cooperation.

The most significant GAP development before the next case study was in 1995 when Turkey began work on the Birecik Dam, located between the Ataturk Dam and the Syrian border. It was assessed that building this and the Karkamish Dam “will cause indirect damage to downstream states if Turkey decides to speed the implementation of the water project and interrupts the river flow.”¹⁴⁸ This acceleration did not occur, and the Birecik Dam was still filling in June 2000, despite western media reports of increased tension during the period between the last two case studies.¹⁴⁹ On the other hand linkage between Syrian support for the PKK and the general water issue was increasingly noticeable. Four days after Turkish officials' in Damascus refused to sign a formal guarantee on the Euphrates water flow in May 1993, the PKK broke a two-month-old ceasefire by killing 30 unarmed Turkish conscripts.¹⁵⁰ By 1998, the Turkish armed forces had successfully contained the Kurdish insurgency in the southeast but were exasperated by the logistical support and “safe havens” in Syria.

In mid-September 1998, General Ates, Chief of the Army, stated during a visit to Hatay: “our patience is exhausted. Some of our neighbors, namely neighbors like Syria, misinterpret our goodwill.”¹⁵¹ On October 2nd the Turkish Chief of the General Staff announced that there was a state of undeclared war between the two states, mobilized 10,000 troops along the border, and threatened to bomb PKK bases in Syria and Lebanon. President Mubarak of Egypt’s mediation defused the crisis and an agreement was signed at Adana on October 20, 1998. The details of the agreement was secret, but reports from both states’ media indicated that PKK activities were the only item on the agenda.¹⁵² Syria maintained that it could not extradite Ocalan, who had already left the country. He was eventually arrested on February 15, 1999, in Kenya. Water from GAP was not used as a pressure point on Syria, although it was a factor in the build up of this crisis.

Analysis

How was the Turkish securitization of water influenced by other sectors? Which security sector was dominant in each case study—that is, why did Turkey do what it did? Immediately before the Ataturk Dam crisis, there were multifarious security threats facing Turkey on all sides, but none critical. Syria had shot down a Turkish plane over Hatay in October 1989, and this certainly did contribute to tension between the two states.¹⁵³ But the main focus of Turkish attention was directed north toward the dispute with Greece and Bulgaria over its treatment of their Turkish minorities, and east at the Azerbaijan crisis. Indeed, these other crises dominated Turkish politics, despite external rhetoric over the dam filling. This is illustrated by the only major internal disagreement over policy when Foreign Minister Yilmaz resigned over the dispute with Greece concerning the ethnic Turk minority in Western Thrace in February 1990.¹⁵⁴

It was clear that Turkey was not threatened “extraordinarily” so which sector was dominant? As Philip Robins points out, “This uncharacteristic fortitude in Turkey’s dealings with its Middle Eastern neighbors was chiefly due to the importance of the issue domestically.”¹⁵⁵ This domestic emphasis was situated in the economic sector, which dominated the Turkish perspective. GAP was simply too

important a project for Turkey's socioeconomic development to be derailed by Arab protests. This bullish approach was illustrated by the Turkish government's rejection of its own ministry of foreign affairs' suggestion that the shut-off of water be reduced by two or three days.

The security sectors in play during the longer 1990–1991 Gulf War crisis were more complex. The unfolding impact of GAP on Iraq and Syria certainly contributed to tension in the region, but it was the economic sector that appeared as the primary sector at the start of the crisis. Economics were extremely important, as the “enemy” was Iraq, the main oil supplier to Turkey and a large trade partner. The initial cautious response by Turkey to the oil pipeline closure and then escalating participation in the coalition were evidence of this. Nevertheless, what was noticeable was the degree of different emphasis placed on the Iraqi threat in the military sector against this intrinsic economic interdependence by President Ozal and the more traditional Kemalist elements within Turkish security policymaking elites. As Mahmut Ali Baykan wrote, the latter saw the need for “a balance between the requirements of Turkey's membership in the Western alliance and those of preserving friendly relations with its neighbors.”¹⁵⁶

Ozal's risk strategy and attempts to securitize the Iraqi military threat were crucial. He dominated security policymaking during the crisis. His government suffered the resignations of its defense and foreign ministers before January 1990 and on December 3^d General Torumtay, the Chief of the General Staff, also resigned. This almost-unheard-of decision sent shock waves through Turkey. In his written statement Torumtay said, “My principles and understanding of the state render it impossible for me to continue my service.”¹⁵⁷ The widespread feeling was that Torumtay disagreed with Ozal's directive style and the proposal that U.S. planes could be allowed to attack Iraq from Turkish airbases. Later, Ozal stated “...some Generals are not keeping in step and are acting to preserve the status quo. While we are taking brave steps forward, they are trying to put the brakes on.”¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, institutional opposition prevented the opening of a second front versus Iraq. In the same vein, Ozal's plan of “claiming” Mosul and Kirkuk from a disintegrating Iraq

were quickly replaced by diplomatic moves seeking “regional cooperation.” This was linked to the power vacuum that developed in northern Iraq and the opportunities that this afforded the Kurdish separatist threat. This post-war crisis-within-a-crisis demonstrated where Turkish security priorities lay, as will be discussed below.

From the Turkish perspective, the October 1998 crisis was all about Syrian support to the PKK, and nothing else. Thus the threat was based in the military and societal sectors. Water from GAP did however feature in the Syrian countermoves to Turkish pressure and was inextricably linked in Arab minds and public statements to the PKK and also to the Turkish-Israeli alliance. Throughout September and October, Turkey steadfastly refused to include the water issue in the exchange of rhetoric that marked the lead-up to the Adana agreement. Signs that Syria and Iraq were increasingly coordinating their positions over GAP certainly did add to Turkish frustration with its neighbors.¹⁵⁹ These two states’ representations to the Arab League also led to an Arab call to boycott international establishments and companies that took part in GAP.

Nevertheless, the reasons behind Turkey’s timing of this crisis (and it always held the initiative) exposed the true prioritization of Turkish security concerns. Turkey had been losing the diplomatic war over the Kurds.¹⁶⁰ Ocalan had reduced the PKK’s demands as part of his September 1, 1998, unilateral ceasefire. He renounced claims to an independent Kurdistan and recognized the Turkish state’s territorial integrity. American negotiations with the rival Kurdish factions in northern Iraq, without consulting Ankara, also worried Turkey. Kurdish nationalism appeared to be emerging as a legitimate political force. Finally, all Turkish political parties and public opinion were unequivocally united behind the robust government line against Syrian harboring of “terrorists.”¹⁶¹

This unprecedented societal strength combined with effectively an “amber” light from the United States meant that Turkey could go right up to the line with Syria. Again, the motives behind Syria’s decision to “give in” were situated entirely in a traditional military “cost-benefit analysis.” The threat from GAP, and the need to retain a “lever” over Turkey in the shape of Ocalan and the PKK, was not worth war.

Unsurprisingly, this long Syrian “habit” was not totally broken and the lever lost. By February 1999, the Syrian foreign minister was already claiming that Turkey had not “imposed” any conditions, and Turkey continued to allege that Syria supported “terrorism” and should extradite PKK suspects.¹⁶²

How were water and GAP “sold” to Turkey’s internal and external audiences during these three crises? In the first case study, Turkey used only technical and unemotional language. There had been no major crisis over GAP before 1990, and from a perceived position of military strength Turkey believed that Iraq (emerging from the Iran-Iraq war and linked increasingly economically to Turkey) and Syria (economically fragile and militarily tied up in Lebanon) were either too weak or economically interdependent to react. Indeed, Turkey was surprised by the extent of the reaction—around 400 articles in the Arab media.¹⁶³ President Ozal had stated at the outset, on 13 January 1990, “...we always exploit our resources while taking our neighbors into consideration as well.”¹⁶⁴ The Turkish desecuritization of water as an issue continued throughout the crisis as spokesmen stated that the downstream states had had adequate warning. Indeed Turkey claimed that it had chosen the winter months for the dam filling to minimize the downstream impact and that it had released more water than normal in preceding months from the Keban and Karakaya dams. There was no evidence of an internal Turkish debate over the rights and wrongs of withholding water for 30 days.

Despite articles in the Western media speculating that the Euphrates could be used as a weapon against Saddam Hussein, President Ozal publicly ruled out water as a weapon on January 17, 1991, as air operations began. GAP dams on the Tigris were in the planning stages only and therefore Iraq had plenty of water; indeed even if Turkey had wanted or been pressured into blocking its Euphrates dams, this would have had a serious effect on its coalition ally, Syria. Turkish spokesmen stressed the technical reason behind temporarily reducing the water released from the Ataturk Dam on February 12, 1991, during the air campaign.¹⁶⁵ Turkish involvement in direct conflict against one of its Arab neighbors had not occurred in the Cold War, and it proved difficult to throw off a tradition of noninterference in the region. Repeated

public assurances by Ozal both that Turkey would not retaliate against Iraq unless itself first attacked, and that Turkey did not seek a “carving-up” of Iraq, were evidence of this tradition.

Water did enter the discourse as a tool for regional cooperation both during and after the crisis in two important ways. First, there was a rapprochement with Syria and the allies in the coalition versus Iraq. On February 12, 1991, the Turkish Foreign Minister, on a visit to Damascus, pointed out the need to cooperate on the issue of the Tigris and Euphrates. He stated “Those rivers should be a source of cooperation among neighbors and not a source of conflict.”¹⁶⁶ Interestingly, the same news conference exposed that Syria and Turkey had discussed “bilateral security issues,” but the PKK was not specifically mentioned, and the Cyprus issue received more coverage than either water or Syrian support to the PKK.

Secondly, water from GAP was an ideal means for Turkey to develop a new post-Cold War regional grouping around its intrinsically strong water resources. On February 11, 1991, with the coalition air campaign ongoing and the same day as many Iraqi diplomats departed Ankara at Turkey’s request, Ozal proposed a regional summit after the war was over on water resources.¹⁶⁷ This proposal envisaged water becoming “something even more precious than oil” in the Middle East and was linked to the “peace pipeline” project. Turkish rhetoric deliberately did not exclude Iraq from attending the summit, indeed expressed concern at the “excessive militarization with arms supplied by the West” and “the lack of effective economic cooperation” in the region. After the ground war had expelled Iraq from Kuwait, on March 2, 1991, Ozal stated “Turkey has not participated in the war.”¹⁶⁸ On the same day, amidst calls for lasting peace and cooperation, Turkey once again proposed a “water for peace project.”

It was clear that water was being used in desecuritizing rhetoric in order to both improve Turkey’s standing amongst its Arab neighbors and develop a new strategic role in the region. This role failed to develop, not because of the water itself, although as we have seen, Arab fear of Turkish control of this resource led to the failure of “water for peace projects.” It failed because the Turkish security

priority increasingly became countering the Kurdish threat, leading to a commensurate turning in on itself. The links with Israel further exacerbated Arab mistrust. Ironically, water reappeared as a theme in the regionalization of the Arab-Israeli peace process, not at the instigation of either Israel or Turkey.

In the 1998 crisis, there was only one public statement warning that the flow of the Euphrates could be reduced.¹⁶⁹ This was however at official spokesman level, was not picked up on publicly by Syria or Iraq, and was probably a technical hydrological warning only. Senior-level Turkish discourse attempted to de-link water from the real issue at stake—Syrian support to the PKK. President Demirel called Syrian linkage of the issues an excuse: “There isn’t an issue of water today and there won’t be for 25 years.”¹⁷⁰ Turkey claimed that it gave its downstream neighbors as much water as they needed, yet they misused that, and asked for more. Turkey even produced a captured Kurdish leader, codenamed “Fingerless Zeki,” whose court defense detailed Syrian goals (including water) as being pursued through support to the PKK in order to weaken the Turkish state.¹⁷¹ When Mubarak tried to place water on the agenda during the crisis, he was firmly informed by Ankara that Syrian support to terrorism was to be the only item negotiable. Only once this *sine qua non* had been settled could separate normal politics, of which water was one, be discussed bilaterally.

The internal Turkish discourse focused entirely on the Kurdish threat and unanimously condemned Syria. Even the Islamist Party merely questioned the timing of the crisis, arguing that it was a classic state means of distracting minds from more important domestic issues. Finally, there was evidence of the “water for peace” rhetoric that marked the end of the Gulf War. In October, Minister Yildirim stated “the GAP is not a strategic weapon that can be used against others, but rather a peace project.”¹⁷² But this Turkish tactic was kept low-key and regarded as relatively (to the Gulf War) unnecessary, as no war was likely to occur with a state that mattered.

What were the effects of Turkish action or inaction in each case study and what means were open to Syria and Iraq to counter the developing GAP? In January-February 1990, the Arab language was one of Turkish “water imperialism” and

“arrogance” in driving ahead with GAP without consideration of others. As Gun Kut points out, the filling of a giant dam was such a “mediatic event” that no downstream state could afford not to exploit it.¹⁷³ The crisis did lead to an unprecedented level of cooperation between the two rival Ba’th regimes. Yet Turkey was in such a strong position—united internally, psychologically robust and militarily powerful—that the Arab response was limited to rhetoric and the potential use of support to the PKK (which will be treated separately below). There was no financial or ethical lever available in 1990, nor for Iraq in 1990–1991. It would only be later in the post-Cold War period that these became available.

What was noticeable was that the Ataturk Dam incident provoked widespread discussion of the threat of “water wars”: in “...April 1990, the international western press started an informational campaign to the effect that a water war was very likely to break out in the Middle East over the Euphrates.”¹⁷⁴ This “campaign” lasted, with varying degrees of prophetic doom until the next war in the Middle East between Kuwait and Iraq, which was more about oil than water. The origins of this discourse were due more to the attraction such headlines had on newspaper editors than anything else.

The idea of “water wars” was thus a Western creation originating in 1990 and used then in some of the Arab media, but it had no effect on the growing Turkish determination to control and exploit its own water resources through GAP. On August 3, 1990, Turkish state television gloated “The Arab bloc opposed to us on the water question has effectively split up.”¹⁷⁵ But, as exposed above, Turkey only used the language of water in a desecuritizing manner in the Gulf crisis. This was not because it had learned the lessons from early 1990; rather, water was outside the primary Turkish security considerations. Similarly, both Iraq and Syria were distracted from the water issue by varying degrees of involvement in the war. There were therefore no security moves against GAP.

In 1998 Iraq continued to be distracted by UN sanctions and no-fly-zone encounters with America and Britain. There was no evidence of real Iraqi assistance being offered to Assad. Syria, as we have seen above, viewed the disagreement as

three-dimensional (PKK, GAP and Turkish-Israeli alliance) and attempted to include water in the diplomatic exchanges of October. However, it had no countermoves against the GAP available, except rhetoric and appeals for support to the wider Arab world. These continued after the crisis, including a reiteration of their call to boycott international firms involved in the GAP. These were ineffective in the short term but did contribute to the background of growing Western governments' unease with financing construction associated with riparian disagreement (especially when this argument was also articulated by ethical and environmental pressure groups).

To analyze the Arab response still further to Turkey's GAP, it is necessary to briefly determine whether there was a pattern of increased external support to the PKK and the Turkish reaction to that. Between 1984 and the ceasefire in 1993, approximately 5,000 people were killed in the insurgency in the southeast. There was no marked increase in either Iraqi or Syrian support to the PKK after the Ataturk Dam crisis but what focused all three states' attention was the power vacuum that developed in northern Iraq after the Gulf War. Both the sanctuary this area offered the PKK and the wider societal threat to Turkey that any real Kurdish autonomy would potentially pose, led Turkey to execute extraordinary security measures. It proposed the "safe haven" concept to the U.K.'s Prime Minister John Major as a "second-best" option by which Turkey could influence events without being swamped by refugees. Ozal held meetings with the senior Iraqi Kurdish opposition, a move that was initially unpopular with the Turkish military. After November 1992, Turkey held unprecedented periodic, formal meetings with Syria and Iran at foreign minister level to discuss the future of Iraq and regulate tensions among them.¹⁷⁶

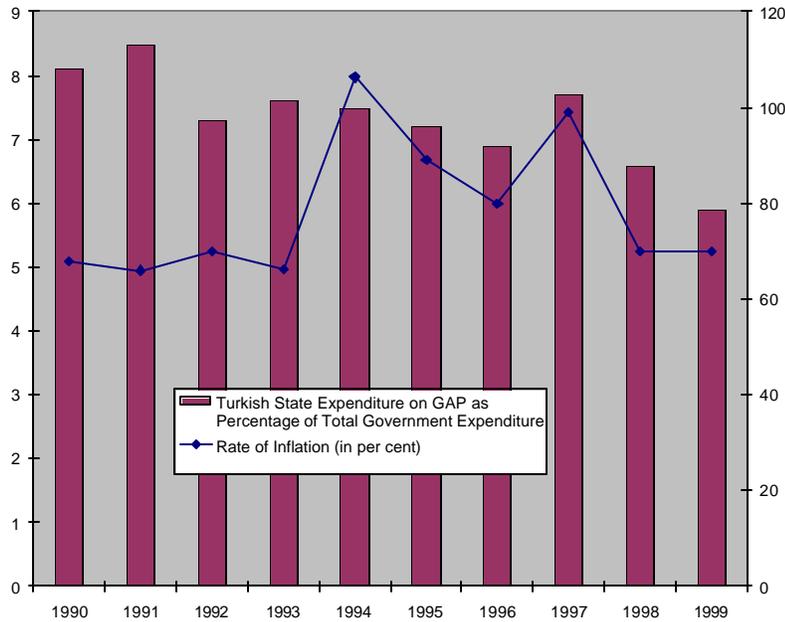
Throughout the post-Cold War period until the arrest of Ocalan, it was clear that the Kurdish issue was the predominant threat from the Turkish perspective. There were important changes to the Turkish internal strategy of countering the radical Kurdish threat. On January 26, 1991, it was announced on Turkish radio that a bill would be prepared to "legalize" the Kurdish language.¹⁷⁷ But as this would not allow that language to be used in any official capacity, in education, in court, or in official documents, it could have been considered as merely "amounting to

legalization of the de facto situation in the southeast.”¹⁷⁸ Some argued that such populist pronouncements by the President were in fact only aimed at brightening up Turkey’s reputation overseas and passing cursory inspection against the standards called for by the Paris Charter, signed by Turkey in November 1990. Indeed in April 1991 Turkey widened its definition of terrorism with a new anti-terror law, making it more difficult to prosecute torturers and increasing press restrictions.¹⁷⁹ It was evident that Turkey regarded its extraordinary moves against the Kurdish threat as separate to the water issue.

The Adana agreement in October 1998 did lead to considerably reduced Syrian support to the PKK. That organization had already been effectively defeated by the Turkish security forces’ counter-insurgency campaign and posed less of a threat than in the early 1990s. PKK members fled to Iran and Iraq (into PUK controlled areas and around Makhmur, inside territory controlled by Saddam Hussein). Turkey continued to seek their extradition from Iran and Syria but began to see the PKK more as an irritant than as a real security threat. New developments for the southeast that were reported in March 1999 were merely ongoing GAP socioeconomic development projects, not a conscious attempt to appease the Kurdish majority in that region in the short-term. However, now that Ocalan has been arrested, regional politicians are seeking a “peace dividend” (that is, more resources for economic development in the southeast).¹⁸⁰

Evidence of the correlation between Turkish security policy and GAP during these crises should be detected in any change to rate of development of that project. With the caveat that this analysis relies upon Turkish government statistics for the percentage of state expenditure on GAP with outside objective statistics from sources such as *The Economist* Intelligence Unit, it was clear that none of the three crises directly affected Turkish resourcing of GAP.

Comparison of Turkish Government Expenditure on the GAP with Rate of Inflation



Bar graph of Turkish state expenditure on GAP with linear representation of inflation superimposed 1990–1999

As the bar graph illustrates, the percentage of public investment in GAP remained steady between 5.9 and 8.5 percent. The sharp fall in 1999 was due to the serious earthquakes Turkey suffered in August 1999, which, it is estimated, cut 2 percent off GDP.¹⁸¹ As the government and public commitment to GAP remained unchanged, the determining factor in the level of public investment was inflation. The economic crisis of April 1994 saw work on GAP come to a halt.¹⁸²

As we have seen, because only 44 percent of the necessary public investment in this \$32 billion (U.S.) project was achieved by the end of 1999, Turkey increasingly liberalized its approach to funding and seeking external funding. This made it more vulnerable to outside criticism and pressure.

Conclusion

What was constant and what changed in the Turkish response to each crisis? Each case was unique, and the priority afforded to Turkey's security sectors varied; yet the constants associated with water were more important than the variables. First, it was clear that there were crucial constraints on the Turkish use of its GAP as a "tool," both theoretically in the military context ("turning off the taps"), and practically in the diplomatic context ("water for peace"). In the former context, GAP was far from finished, and altering the water flow was problematic. The dams on the Euphrates were the only real option, and any reduction in discharge would affect not one, but both, downstream states. Furthermore, without water to turn Turkish turbines below their dams, no hydroelectric power would be generated. In the latter context, any Turkish offering of water to increase cooperation came up against Arab suspicion and hostility.

The second constant was the relative economic importance, attached unanimously inside Turkey, to GAP. The project was simply too important to subordinate its progress to other threats to Turkish security. This attitude, by the very nature of its homogeneity, contributed to the position of strength that Turkey operated from in the three crises. And it was the wider Turkish strength that meant it was able to retain the initiative in the Gulf War and 1998 crises. No Arab derailing effort could affect the Turkish stand on water, which prevailed. This position was that water should be kept separate from other factors, discussed in technical language at technical meetings, and detached from wider security. The evidence of no link between Turkish resourcing of GAP (as a means of solving the roots of the problems in the southeast) and PKK levels of activity, illustrated the detachment of water from Turkey's primary security concern.

The third and final constant was the Arab reaction to GAP. The project caused friction between Turkey and its downstream neighbors, either bilaterally or in informal alliance. In response to Turkish attempts to desecuritize water, Iraq and Syria sought to securitize and to raise the issue to a wider audience. In Arab rhetoric,

water became an important symbol of conflict while some Turkish discourse symbolized water as a tool for cooperation.

Some important changes in response can, however, be detected in the singular environments provided by the case studies. Turkey's swift ruling out of the "water weapon" versus Iraq in August 1990 was probably linked to the vociferous Arab reaction to the filling of its Ataturk Dam and the "water wars" theme developed over that summer. The ending of the Cold War allowed Turkey a greater freedom of maneuver and widened its options in its next crisis. Although President Ozal had raised the peace pipeline proposal before the Gulf War, its deployment in post-conflict rhetoric was a conscious effort by Turkey to enhance its regional influence. This was an important tactic after the Gulf War turning point in Turkey's security policy.

By 1998, three important developments had occurred in the regional security complex. Firstly, the Turkish-Israeli alliance had added a new dimension to the Arab perspective on Turkish "arrogance" over water, yet as far as Ankara was concerned, it had changed nothing. Secondly, Turkey was resisting the regionalization of water in the shape of linkage of GAP to the Arab-Israeli peace process. Although there was no sign of this factor directly influencing Turkish moves in the crisis, it probably contributed to the low-key use of the "water for peace" proposals. The final change was in the funding of GAP. If Turkey was seeking increased external resources then it became more vulnerable to international calls for conditionality in the sphere of agreement with downstream states.

CONCLUSION

GAP in itself did not determine Turkish security policy. It was an important link between Turkish security sectors in an analysis employing Buzan's methodology. Similarly, it was a fundamental interconnection and intra-connection in the analysis of external and internal conflict within a distinct regional security complex. Nevertheless, an argument examining "the influence of the PKK threat on post-Cold War Turkish security policy" could well have detected parallel links and possibly reached a more unequivocal conclusion. For water was only a minor influence in the course of friction and tension between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq.

By way of geographical accident, Turkey was "empowered" by its water and sought to enhance both its domestic socioeconomic and wider national "strength" through the ambitious GAP. Water was not an "existential threat" to Turkey. The issue was downplayed and desecuritized as far as possible. However, the Arab reaction to GAP reflected their perception of water as a Turkish "weapon" poised to strike versus Arab vulnerability and regime legitimacy. Their securitizing of the issue combined with some doomsday literature in the West served to keep water higher on the security agenda for this regional security complex than really should have been the case.

There was conflict and a marked failure of cooperation over water. In part, the conflict was due to the GAP effect on Turkish domestic politics and society, which in turn influenced security policy. GAP was never really exposed as having contributed to Turkey's parlous economic state—inflation averaging over 80 percent in the 1990s. In addition, there was an effective non-partisan approach to GAP and enormous Turkish pride in this "hydraulic mission" to bring prosperity to the southeast. Even Islamist political activity avoided drawing attention to the fact that Turkish water policy was denying a precious resource to the Muslim Arabs to the south. This homogeneous Turkish perspective reinforced by the historical distrust of Western motives and view of Arab perfidy had an important psychological influence in the moves and countermoves over GAP. It meant that developing conflict over

water was extremely unlikely to be diffused by Turkey—it had the unity and strength of purpose not to blink first.

What could change this perspective? The three case studies illustrated that in a changing world, Turkey did learn the lessons from previous water crises. Its unilateral approach has succeeded, but there is increasing wariness after over a decade of external criticism of GAP. There are two areas where change in the internal environment could alter the Turkish stand on water—economic development and political reform. A recent survey by *The Economist*¹⁸³ argued that the latest series of Turkey’s economic reforms, at the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) initiative, may well “deliver the goods.” Devaluation of the lira, reduction of the deficit, cutting agricultural subsidies, raising taxes, and privatization are linked to a conditional IMF loan of \$4 billion (U.S.). If these reforms have the desired effect of enabling a dynamic private sector to take off, it will be at the expense of Turkey’s massive state sector, of which GAP is huge part. The effects of economic liberalization will mean that increasing Turkish private sector and international firms’ involvement in the project will absorb Turkey’s political and economic “risk” with GAP. This ultimately could lead to a fall in ranking for GAP in Turkish state and society’s eyes, and the erosion of Turkish unity on the water issue. The increased role of foreign investment also renders GAP more vulnerable to Arab, environmental, and ethical calls to boycott.

Turkish political reform is more problematic. There are enormous vested interests and a legacy of direct military intervention in politics—three coups between 1960 and 1980. Nevertheless the Kurdish threat has all but disappeared. “Terrorism” still exists but the number of incidents in 1998 was below 15 percent of that recorded in 1994. The Turkish General Staff estimated that there were only 500 PKK “terrorists” in Turkey in 2000.¹⁸⁴ To meet EU political criteria for membership, Turkey must demonstrate that, among other things, it has a “government free from military influence, and complete freedom of expression. Turkey must show that it is at least moving in that direction before it can hope to accede.”¹⁸⁵ There are some important signs that Turkey is now taking a greater notice of the critical international

perspective on its human rights record. President Sezer, a lawyer, called for reform of elements of the constitution. Even the Army is began to reflect the GAP parallel counter-media campaign¹⁸⁶ and publicly called Prime Minister Ecevit “to introduce a civilian structure in Kurdistan, where the war has ceased.”¹⁸⁷ Although it is important not to overestimate the extent of political reform executed or the depth of state elite intentions, any movement in this direction will affect Turkish security policy priorities and make Turkey more susceptible to ethical pressure on GAP.

Notwithstanding the forces for change outlined above, Turkey’s approach to any immediate crisis over GAP with its downstream neighbors will continue to be marked by Turkish twentieth-century notions of sovereignty. Ankara will argue that there is no real dispute, there is plenty of water to go round, and the solution lies in a Mesopotamian adoption of its “Three Staged Plan.” In response to this desecuritizing move, the Arab options will be limited mainly to rhetoric. Turkey demonstrated in 1998 that it can unilaterally and militarily “face down” Syria. There is still Turkish frustration over Syrian support to the PKK “rump,” and Turkey must see an improvement in this area before it will consider any cooperation over water.

While this Syrian lever has all but disappeared, it can only seek to mobilize regional and international pressure against external funding for GAP. The former has a long tradition and will continue to be exacerbated by the Turkish-Israeli alliance. The latter is becoming more feasible, given the sophisticated environmental and ethical campaigns being run against the project, and Turkey’s increased vulnerability to such threats. The Iraqi position continues to be determined by the survival of its pariah regime. It would be interesting to speculate whether, without Saddam Hussein and UN sanctions, Iraq could have more effectively used support to the PKK as a lever against GAP, or whether economic interdependence with Turkey would have prevailed.

Developments in the region could change Arab counter moves against GAP as a perceived economic and military threat to their security. First, Iraq could re-enter the regional security complex as a full player (that is, with a wide range of options) once the Hussein regime disappears or when Western hostility is replaced by

comprehensive peaceful engagement. This could enhance Arab opposition to GAP, especially if improved bilateral relations with Syria meant a more united front against Turkish control of water.

Second, one of the constants of the post-Cold War Middle East, President Hafez al-Assad, died in June 2000. His son Bashar, aged 34, is an important new factor in determining how autocratic Syria will treat the water issue. Bashar will first need to demonstrate that he is in charge domestically, especially to the elite that surrounded his father, and who expect him to preserve the regime. But his youth and Western education may mean he is more likely to seek cooperation within the region in the longer term. Interestingly, the first public statement by Bashar on relations with Turkey stressed the need for continued dialogue: “there is now a common desire to develop relations.”¹⁸⁸ There was no mention in the eight-page interview of the water issue.

Finally, the bloodless withdrawal of its occupation force from south Lebanon on May 24, 2000, marked a change in Israeli strategy in the Middle East peace process; “now it has effectively side-stepped Damascus.”¹⁸⁹ Both sides in the seemingly intractable negotiations that ran throughout the post-Cold War period now have a wider variety of options. The prospect of a settlement between Syria and Israel alarms Turkey as it will remove an important source of friction that has served Turkey well in the past. The common element of the Syrian threat would be diluted in the Turkish-Israeli alliance and Syria could deploy military capability north. Nevertheless, any final Middle East peace settlement must be in the long term. In the short term Turkey continues to resist the regionalizing effect of water on the peace process.¹⁹⁰

Interstate friction over water in this regional security complex contributes to the wider lack of trust, which in turn militates against cooperation. There is, however, ongoing cooperation at the technical level between Turkey, Syria and Iraq, which should not be underestimated.¹⁹¹ Also, Turkish attempts to offer “water for peace” after the Gulf War were an important precursor both to the detailed negotiations with Israel on sale of water, and the more general rhetoric on solving a

regional shortfall in this precious resource. The former complicates the latter due to Arab mistrust of any Turkish-Israeli agreement. Yet Israeli purchase of Turkish water has also been affected by an internal Israeli debate on the relative merits of such a scheme versus desalination, and traditional Turkish prickliness over the most minor of issues.¹⁹² More recent general Turkish rhetoric on cooperation have included the offer of 250,000 tons of purified water and 250,000 tons of pure water “to the world”¹⁹³ following the Second World Water Forum in the Hague in March 2000.

This rhetoric can be related to increasing economic interdependency in the region. There were reports of opening a new free trade border zone with Syria in 1999,¹⁹⁴ and in May 2000 Turkey offered to transport Syrian natural gas (its only really attractive export item) by pipeline.¹⁹⁵ Presidential statements through the 1990s stressed Turkey’s candidacy to become the energy terminal of the twenty-first century. Demirel stated in his annual review of national achievements in 1998:

The Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean are the regions which have priority in our foreign policy. Peace and stability of these geographies...will gain more importance in the future since in the coming century the “Silk Road” will be revived and eastern Mediterranean and Middle East will again be connected to Central Asia via Turkey.¹⁹⁶

Water is the least profitable resource for which Turkey can provide a conduit, but regional economic interdependency offers the only real opportunity to break the nexus between water and security in the long term. The record of interstate relations post-Cold War over Turkey’s GAP has demonstrated that while “water wars” are most unlikely, so is cooperation in the short term. While the natural disaster recounted in the first millennium BC seems improbable:

You know the city of Shurru-pak, it stands on the banks of Euphrates? That city grew old and the gods that were in it were old. . . . In those days the world teemed, the people multiplied, the world bellowed like a wild bull. . . . So the gods in their hearts were moved to let loose the deluge.¹⁹⁷

So does the utopian Turkish vision for GAP:

The ultimate aim of GAP is to create an environment in which the people of the Region can fully translate their potentials and preferences into actual life. Turkey views the project as a comprehensive *sustainable integrated regional development project*.¹⁹⁸

¹ Quoted in J. Aiton, *The Drying Up of the Euphrates, or, the Downfall of Turkey, Prophetically Considered* (London: A. Hall, Virtue, and Company, 1853), 44. This is an early example of the doomsday scenario.

² Two examples are J. Bulloch and A. Darwish, *Water Wars: Coming Conflicts in the Middle East* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1993) and “Water Wars Threaten to Engulf World,” *The Express*, March 20, 1999, 19.

³ A.R. Turton, “Water Wars in Southern Africa: Challenging Conventional Wisdom,” unpublished paper presented at Pretoria University, February 24, 2000, 2.

⁴ Example quoted in G. Kemp and R. Harkavy, *Strategic Geography and the Changing Middle East* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1997), 101.

⁵ Turkish acronym for *Guneydogu Anadolu Projesi*.

⁶ O. Bilen, *Turkey and Water Issues in the Middle East* (Ankara: GAP Regional Development Administration, 1997), 59.

⁷ Quoted by I.H. Olcay Unver, speech at GAP Seminar, Turkish Embassy, Washington, DC, February 17, 2000.

⁸ Figures extracted from *History of Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP)* (GAP Regional Development Administration, 1998), 1–2.

⁹ Figures extracted from *Latest State in Southeastern Anatolia Project* (GAP Regional Development Administration, 1999), 8–9.

¹⁰ *Anatolia News Agency*, July 17, 1999, EEW/0598 WB/4/14.

¹¹ *Latest State in Southeastern Anatolia Project*, 6.

¹² I.H. Olcay Unver, speech, February 17, 2000.

¹³ A. Soffer, *Rivers of Fire, The Conflict Over Water in the Middle East* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 105.

¹⁴ Figures from Food and Agriculture Organization, accessed at <<http://www.fao.org>>; “Aquastat” Report on Turkey, 1.

¹⁵ D. Godrej, “Gathering Storm,” *New Internationalist*, December 1999, 8.

¹⁶ Interview with H. Semati, July 13, 1999.

¹⁷ M. Schulz, *Hydropolitics: Conflicts Over Water as a Development Constraint*, L. Ohlsson, ed. (London: Zed Books, 1995), 91–122.

¹⁸ B. Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (Hemel Hempstead and New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991).

¹⁹ B. Buzan, O. Waever, J. De Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Press, 1998), 201. *Securitization* means “the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics,” 23. *Desecuritization* is the opposite, that is, returning an issue to “normal” politics. It should be noted that the securitization approach originated from Ole Waever, and the concept of *sectors* (used in Chapter

One) and *security complex* from Barry Buzan. For ease of reference, the three authors' new framework of analysis of security will be accredited only to Buzan in the text.

²⁰ Technical report, chapter 5, 44, accessed at <<http://www.unep.org/unep/eia/geo2000/>>.

²¹ Accessed at <<http://www.gap.gov.tr>>.

²² L. Carl Brown, "The Middle East after the Cold War: Systemic Change or More of the Same?" in *Collective Security Beyond the Cold War*, Ed. G. W. Downs (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 206.

²³ The Turkish media itself must be considered carefully as in many ways it reflects "kemalist groupthink."

²⁴ B. Buzan, O. Waever, J. De Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 21.

²⁵ S. Mayall, *Turkey: Thwarted Ambition*, McNair Paper 56 (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1997), 105.

²⁶ W. Hale, *The Cold War and the Middle East*, Eds. Y. Sayigh and A. Shlaim (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 250-278.

²⁷ See S. Boyne, "Cyprus: Divisions Are Deep 25 Years On," *Jane's Intelligence Review* December 1999, 14-16.

²⁸ H. Peimani, *Regional Security and the Future of Central Asia: The Competition of Iran, Turkey and Russia* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998).

²⁹ S. Elekdag, "2 ½ War Strategy," *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, 1, no. 1 (March-May 1996), 56.

³⁰ A.J. Venter, "On the Brink: Syria Considers Its Next Move," *Jane's International Defense Review*, May 1997, 58.

³¹ The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) annual publication.

³² Correspondence with G. Jenkins, *The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)*, Istanbul, May 12, 2000.

³³ "Middle East Arms Race," *Jane's Foreign Report*, 2553 (July 22, 1999), 1.

³⁴ R. Fisk, "Jerusalem Draws in the Turks to Spy on Arab Foes," *Independent*, February 24, 1999, 16.

³⁵ K. Kirisci, "Turkey's Threat Perceptions and the Search for a Security Regime in the Middle East," Draft manuscript for *Workshop on Promoting Regional Security in the Middle East* (Cairo, March 29-30, 2000), 12.

³⁶ N.E. El-Shazly, "Arab Anger at New Axis," *The World Today*, January 1999, 25-27.

³⁷ N. Pope and H. Pope, *Turkey Unveiled: Atatürk and After* (London: John Murray, 1997), 226.

³⁸ G.E. Fuller, *Turkey's New Geopolitics: From the Balkans to Western China*, G.E. Fuller and I.O. Lessor, eds. (Boulder: Westview, 1993), 62.

³⁹ Figures from F.M. Lorenz and E.J. Erickson, *The Euphrates Triangle: Security Implications of the Southeastern Anatolia Project*, 22.

⁴⁰ In 1999 there were still up to six or seven air strikes a day on Iraq. See E. Blanche, "War of Attrition as Iraq Absorbs the Ongoing U.S. Punishment," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, June 1999, 27-33.

⁴¹ See L. Sariibrahimoglu, "Interview with Hikmet Sami Turk: Turkey's National Defense Minister," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, April 14, 1999, 32. Turkey was the only major state in the Middle East that did not possess ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. This affected the Turkish military's perception of the region.

⁴² General Huseyin Kivrikoglu, chief of Turkish General Staff, quoted in "Peace in the Nation, Peace in the World," *Military Technology* no. 9, 1999, 9.

⁴³ Interview with Professor Gun Kut, Department of Political Science, Bogazici University, Istanbul, May 25, 2000.

⁴⁴ L. Sariibrahimoglu, "Arming For Peace," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, August 19, 1998, 26.

⁴⁵ "Trouble in Turkey," *Jane's Foreign Report*, no. 2438, March 6, 1997.

⁴⁶ "One Man's Joy in Iraq," *The Economist*, February 12, 2000, 69.

⁴⁷ For a more on the geopolitics of oil, see S. Mayall, *Turkey: Thwarted Ambition*, 98-101. For a recent update, see N. Pope, "Losing the Great Game," *Middle East International*, June 16, 2000, 15-17.

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- ⁴⁸ N. Pope and H. Pope, *Turkey Unveiled: Ataturk and After* (London: John Murray, 1997), 222.
- ⁴⁹ During interviews with Turkish academic and media sources in May 2000, the overall impression gained was one of relatively tame indigenous nongovernmental organizations whose only success to date had been the closure of a Polish-built coal burning power plant in 1995–1996.
- ⁵⁰ For more detail on the general impact of these factors, see M.F. Abu-Taleb in E Boulding, ed., *Building Peace in the Middle East: Challenges for States and Civil Society* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994), 251–256.
- ⁵¹ Speech delivered by I.H. Oclay Unver, president of GAP Regional Development Administration to the Dams and Environment Workshop in Tokyo, November 22, 1996, 109.
- ⁵² O. Sheikhmous, “The Kurdish Question: Conflict Resolution Strategies at the Regional Level,” *Peace Building in the Middle East*, E. Boulding, ed., (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994), 147–161.
- ⁵³ M.M. Gunter, *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 59.
- ⁵⁴ K. Kirisci and G.M. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 151.
- ⁵⁵ N. Pope and H. Pope, *Turkey Unveiled*, 344.
- ⁵⁶ M.M. Gunter, *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey*, 127.
- ⁵⁷ R. Olson, “The Impact of the Southeast Anatolian Project (GAP) on Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey,” *The International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 9, no. 1–2 (1996), 101.
- ⁵⁸ K. Kirisci, “Turkey’s Threat Perceptions,” 2.
- ⁵⁹ B. Buzan, O. Waever, and J. De Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 141.
- ⁶⁰ D. Waxman, “Turkey’s Identity Crisis: Domestic Discord and Foreign Policy” *Conflict Studies* 311 (1998), 16.
- ⁶¹ J. Gorravett, “Hizbullah Horror—A National Shame,” *The Middle East*, March 2000: 7–8.
- ⁶² W. Hale, “In Deep Trouble,” *The World Today*, January 1999, 22.
- ⁶³ W. Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (London: Routledge, 1994), 288.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 294.
- ⁶⁵ Quoted in S. Mayall, *Turkey: Thwarted Ambition*, 80.
- ⁶⁶ C. Kutschera, “A World Apart,” *The Middle East*, February 2000, 21–22.
- ⁶⁷ S. Boyne, “MIT Riding High on its Foreign Success,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, February 2000: 22.
- ⁶⁸ G. E. Fuller, *Turkey’s New Geopolitics: From the Balkans to Western China*, 172.
- ⁶⁹ Quote by Ataturk on opening page of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Web site, accessed at <<http://www.mfa.gov.tr>>.
- ⁷⁰ M. Mufti, “Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy,” *The Middle East Journal*, 52, no. 1 (Winter 1998), 32–50.
- ⁷¹ D. Waxman, “Turkey’s Identity Crisis,” 16.
- ⁷² For a comparison of the “realist” and “liberal” elements of Turkish foreign policy, see I. Kazan, “Turkey and the Eastern Mediterranean,” paper presented at Catalyst to Where? The EU and Cyprus Conflict, Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, December 3–4, 1999.
- ⁷³ This is reflected in official Turkish documents released for the media; for example, see L. Sariibrahimoglu, “Arming for Peace,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, August 19, 1998, 24–43.
- ⁷⁴ T. Naff and R.C. Matson, *Water in the Middle East—Conflict or Cooperation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), 84.
- ⁷⁵ Figures from N. Kliot, *Water Resources and Conflict in the Middle East* (London: Routledge, 1994), 114–116.
- ⁷⁶ F. M. Lorenz, *The Euphrates Triangle: Security Implications of the Southeastern Anatolia Project*, 7.
- ⁷⁷ Figures from FAO Web site, accessed at <<http://www.fao.org>>.
- ⁷⁸ G. Shapland, *Rivers of Discord: International Water Disputes in the Middle East* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1997), 129.
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