

I. CASE BACKGROUND

Hydropolitics—the study of conflict and cooperation among nations over shared water resources has increased in importance as a field, as scholars have recently focused on the potential for conflict over the world’s 200-plus trans-boundary river basins. Those basins that cover already-contentious regions, or those located in regions with an existent relative scarcity of water, are the most demanding of attention. The Euphrates-Tigris River Basin, by possessing both of these elements of concern, brings this issue into the forefront of hydropolitical considerations. The Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) is an ambitious development project meant to control, sustain, and distribute the water resources of this river basin from within Turkey, the nation which serves as the source of 88% of the Euphrates’s water and 43% of the Tigris River. The project poses major multiple implications, both positive and negative. Its impacts range from soil degradation to local Kurdish resettlement to insufficient water provisions for Iraq and Syria to regional economic development.



<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/tu.html>

The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers both originate in the Anatolian Highlands of Turkey and flow through Syria and Iraq. Turkey contributes 88 percent of the water flow of the Euphrates River and 43 percent for the Tigris, making Syria and Iraq heavily dependent on external supplies of water. In addition to Turkey’s geographic advantage, its recent water management policies and large-scale irrigation and hydro-energy projects, particularly the Guneydogu Anadolu Projesi (GAP, Southeast Anatolia Project), put Turkey in a position of great command over the river basin. GAP has the potential for optimal use of land and water resources in Southeast Anatolia to provide for Turkey as a whole, and for sustainable socio-economic development in the poor, largely Kurdish populated region, characterized by social and economic instability. Conversely, both Syria and Iraq contend that GAP could diminish and degrade their water supply in the years to come. Water shortage is especially a threat in the region due to the history of drought in Syria and the political instability and war-torn infrastructure of Iraq. Equitable and effective methods of sharing the waters will allow the riparian states to prevent water and food scarcity, while also conserving water. The key to attaining these goals is cooperation, both internal and external.

Internally, there is hope that GAP will eventually help resolve the Kurdish conflict in Turkey. The majority of the Kurdish population in Turkey resides in Southeast Anatolia. Armed conflict with Kurdish rebels is often incited by factors relating to the poor socio-economic development of the region. In addition, the social structure of the

region is still largely feudalistic. There is a major inequality in land distribution. About 61% of the farmers (approximately 150,000 families) own less than five hectares and 10% of the population own 75% of the land. Economic development and an increase in resource investment in Southeast Anatolia may help to integrate the alienated Kurdish population and stop separatist PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) activity by eliminating the economic motivation of the rebel movement.

The GAP project, expected to be completed by 2017, will consist of a network of 22 dams, 19 hydroelectric plants, 1.7 million hectares of irrigated lands, and several related socio-economic redevelopment projects meant to support populations resettled by this ambitious effort. By that time, the GAP project will provide 23% of Turkey's total energy supply.

Further complicating matters, a diversity of ethnic groups with a history of conflict with the Turkish government, inhabit the region being altered by the GAP project. The area being developed by the Turkish government is heavily populated by the Kurds and to a lesser extent, by ethnic Armenians as well. The Turkish government has a history of denying the rights and even the political and cultural existence of both Kurds and Armenians. From the exterminations of over a million Armenians after the turn of the twentieth century, a series of events still denied by Turkish society, to the incarcerations, exiles, and assassinations of Kurdish political and separatist leaders, the Turkish government and the ethnic groups resident in the Euphrates-Tigris headwaters region have undeniable enmity between one another.

The main Kurdish party is the PKK. Its goal has been to create an independent socialist Kurdish state in a territory which it claims as Kurdistan, an area that comprises parts of south-eastern Turkey, north-eastern Iraq, north-eastern Syria and north-western Iran; those states oppose any such change. The total number of deaths through three major Kurdish uprisings in Turkey in the 20th century (1925-28, 1937-38, 1984-present) could number as high as 330,000. The number of deaths since the latest war's outbreak in 1984 had risen beyond 12,000 by 1994. According to official figures, more than 1,500 PKK guerrillas were killed and 7,600 captured during the first eleven months of 1993. During the same period, the number of government security personnel killed came to 676. Civilian deaths totaled 1,249, more than double the 1992 total. The latest war has claimed between 30,000 and 40,000 lives since 1984.

CRISIS

The PKK is listed as a terrorist organization internationally by a number of states and organizations, including the USA, NATO and the EU. More than 37,000 people have been killed in the Turkey-PKK conflict since 1984.

The PKK had declared ceasefire since September 28, 2006. Although Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Chief of Staff, General Yaşar Büyükanıt do not recognize such a motion. Erdoğan was quoted as saying; "A ceasefire is done between states. It is not something for a terrorist organization," The Turkish army is calling for action against PKK training camps in northern Iraq.

On September 29, 2007 "PKK terrorists set up an ambush in the Beytüşşebap district of Şırnak on Saturday. The assault claimed the lives of seven village guards, five construction workers working on a dam project to bring water to their villages and one young child, while wounding two others".

On the 17th of October 2007, the Turkish parliament approved a military incursion into Iraq to pursue the PKK fighters. The vote for incursion won with an overwhelming 507 to 19. Action was delayed on request by the US government on the condition that "swift steps" were taken to deal with the rebels. However, on November 25, following a particularly bloody attack of PKK fighters on a border outpost, mass demonstrations in main Turkish cities convinced the Turkish government that it could not exercise restraint anymore. On November 28 at dawn, in a vast combined operation, Turkish troops crossed the border into Syria, Iraq and Iran, on a "search and destroy" mission against the PKK. In an atmosphere of crisis, the Security Council gathers to assess the situation

and find an acceptable solution to the crisis. PKK representatives have threatened that PKK has acquired the capacity to destroy the main GAP Attaturk Dam if the military operations were not immediately discontinued.

Source: <http://www.american.edu/TED/ice/iceall.htm>