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# Contested Hydrohegemony: Hydraulic Control and Security in Turkey

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**ABSTRACT:** The article seeks to expand the understanding of the emerging concept of hydrohegemony (Zeitoun and Warner, 2006). Illustrated by Turkey's strategy with respect to the Euphrates-Tigris it looks at the layered nature of water-related political strategies at different levels. The article therefore introduces hegemony as a layered phenomenon whose multi-level interactions impinge on each other. It zooms in on Turkish hegemony in its hydraulic control and security strategies, and the international repercussions of that strategy.

The present analysis suggests that Turkey's basin and regional hegemony is contested and constrained from different sides, not least at home. Its water projects are a flashpoint of domestic, basin as well as global politics. It argues that the need to access capital in the international market to realise these ambitions necessitated a 'passive revolution' in Turkey which opened a window of opportunity utilised by the internationalised counter-hegemonic moves against Turkey's dam projects in Southeast Anatolia, notably the ongoing Ilisu dam on the Tigris.

**KEYWORDS:** Hydropolitics, hegemony, multi-level governance, Tigris, Turkey

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## INTRODUCTION

Due to their fortuitous geographical location, some actors have far better access to water than others. Infrastructure, technology and institutions enable control and even capture of the resource, inducing scarcity for some and abundance for others. But structures are not enough to gain the upper hand. Downstream locations have countervailing strategies at their disposal and may contest upstream primacy. The Euphrates-Tigris basin is an especially interesting case. The basin does not present a picture of acute resource scarcity and, despite dire and influential predictions (e.g. Starr, 1991), has never been a theatre of water wars. Yet, Syria and Iraq went head to head over the river after the filling of the Tabqa dam, and each time Turkey subsequently filled a major dam (the Atatürk, Birecik, Izmit and Ilisu dams) the Euphrates – Tigris basin has been presented with some frequency as a key arena for potential 'water wars' – itself a hegemonic discourse that gained prominence in the 1990s and "widely contribut[ed] to shaping the perceptions of many present international situations" (Trottier, n.d.; see also Warner, 2000 on environmental security as global hegemonic discourse).

Yet, the widely predicted 'water wars' have not happened and despite downstream protest and international NGO campaigns, the dams continue to be built. Despite gloomy assessments of chaos and disorder, the countries are meeting and a tripartite cooperative initiative was launched in 2006. Has Turkey, as the ancient Chinese master Sun Tzu (1988) would call it, won the war without fighting the battle?

This article first seeks to develop a better understanding of hegemony as a control strategy that is qualitatively different from dominance. While dominance is based on 'hard power', 'soft power' promises "a way to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion" (Nye, 1990). It is a form of power and control that can be exercised through influence and legitimacy: "cultural values, ideals,

and visions", ideology and representational force rather than the threat of violence (Bially Mattern, 2005).

Applying those ideas to the case of Turkey and its hydraulic aspirations, I proceed to ask: when Turkey is depicted as the hegemon for the Euphrates-Tigris basin, what exactly does it mean? Is Turkey's hegemonic strategy successful? What is the role of the GAP (the 22-megadam development project being built in Turkey's Southeast) project in all this?

The present contribution suggests that the accusations of Turkish hegemonic behaviour seem correct, but that Turkey's basin and regional hegemony is contested and constrained from different sides, not least at home. The Turkish state is not only involved in a regional hegemonic strategy, but also in a struggle for control on the domestic front.

The present article introduces hegemony as a layered, multi-level phenomenon – global hegemony, regional hegemony, river basin hegemony, state-society relations – whose interactions at various levels impinge on each other. While the concept of hegemony is probably best known at the global level, accounts of regional hegemony are frequent in realist (e.g. Mearsheimer, 2001) and more constructivist-leaning security studies (e.g. Buzan, 1991). Zeitoun and Warner (2006) and several authors in a recent Special Issue of the *Water Policy* journal (2008 Vol. 20, Supplement 2) have drawn on both strands, but their analysis was mostly limited to the interstate level. In the critical tradition, however, Gramsci (1971) himself analysed hegemony at the national level, while critical scholarship inspired by his work takes the analysis to the transnational, global level (e.g. van der Pijl, 1992). The present analysis draws on elements of these analytical traditions.

After exploring the meaning of hegemony in the next section, the following section delves into the different evaluations of hegemony at different scales. Applying the building blocks developed in the earlier sections, the final section analyses Turkish hydraulic control and security strategy in a "rough neighbourhood" the internationalised counter-hegemonic moves against Turkey's hydropolitical ambitions, in their 'hard' and 'soft power' manifestations.

## Hegemony and legitimate leadership

*What is this thing called hegemony? Is it a euphemism for 'empire' or does it describe the role of a primus inter pares, a country that leads its allies but does not rule subject peoples? And what are the motives of a hegemon? Does it exert power beyond its borders for its own self-interested purposes? Or it is engaged altruistically in the provision of international public goods? (Ferguson, 2003)*

'Hydrohegemony' is still a loosely used term. Thought on hydrohegemony is bound up with thought about hydropolitics primarily (though not necessarily) at the level of international river basins. For political actors frustrated by unilateral acts on which they were not or insufficiently consulted, it is a convenient epithet to lambast the behaviour of regional great powers or multinational water companies.

While hegemony and dominance are often used interchangeably, there is a clear difference between the two. In the present article, as in Zeitoun and Warner (2006), dominance is defined as leadership buttressed by coercion and hegemony as leadership buttressed by authority. Hegemony thus cannot be perpetuated by repression, it is a mix of coercion and consent: to acquire and maintain this consent, hegemonic power has to take the nonhegemon(s) into account. It needs two parties for hegemony to work.

If hegemony is authoritative leadership, and authority is identical with legitimate power,<sup>1</sup> what is meant by 'legitimate'? Legitimacy is "the extent to which social or political norms are accepted, especially those applying to the exercise of power or domination of some individuals or groups of

<sup>1</sup> "Legitimate power is identical with authority, and depends upon the belief of individuals in the right of senior people to hold their positions, and their consequent willingness to accept the power holder" (www.wikipedia.com).

individuals by others" (Rush, 1992). All hierarchical power relations must be legitimated at every level of social life from the smallest scale to the level of multinational regimes (Beetham, 1991; see also Lipset, 1957). Even Machiavelli's amoral theory recommends that the Prince who seizes power by force must cultivate belief that his actions are just and legitimate.

Legitimacy combines the idea that there should be (justified) difference between dominant and subordinate actors in the political arena with a (perceived) *common interest* between the two (Beetham, 1991). Discussion of how this 'common interest' itself (and the resulting sense of solidarity) is constructed in hegemonic control strategies is important. Since finding and exploiting a political formula that seems to capture the interest of both stronger and weaker actors makes it that much easier for the stronger to enforce or maintain their rule.

A hegemon can force others to do what they would otherwise not do – this is the power of control. The coercive aspect of such control however has different degrees of indirectness ('degrees of removal') – ranging from a gun to one's head (hard power) to a situation where power and sanctions are only implied (soft power) – up to a point where the desired behaviour is so internalised (normalised) that there is no need for enforcement. Those in power therefore have realised the importance of also controlling the level of ideas. Education and propaganda as well as the passage of time takes the limelight away from alternatives to the existing power configuration. A hegemonic actor has considerable power to (re)write the rules of the game (van der Pijl, 1992): for instance, as metapower, to set or keep issues off the agenda (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970) and, as Lukes (1974) has argued, even shape the consciousness and perceptions of the ruled. Theories of hegemony, then, attempt to explain how hegemons can maintain their pole position other than through direct repression. This position depends on the hegemon's capacity to persuade subordinate actors to accept not just his authority but adopt and internalise his values and norms; to choose and impose one solution over all others and to get them to accept his problem definition.

The hegemon may not be the only prime mover in the political arrangement. To prevent a single state from becoming tyrannical, an appropriate balance of power can be struck between nations. In the 19th century, the UK being a famous example of a balancer on the European scene, supporting the weakest and restraining the strongest power on the continent. The same holds true at the national level between interest groups. For this, a joint hegemonic strategy (concept of control) needs to be worked out, in which one actor co-opts others into a vision, a platform that makes one's self-interest look like the common interest. People are far more likely to agree with your leadership role if they believe your agenda is going to benefit them too, or at least *want* to believe it – a "comprehensive concept of control" (van der Pijl, 1992; Overbeek, 1990). An illustrative case study will analyse how the Turkish republic's multi-chessboard 'comprehensive concept of control', its overarching value 'peace at home, peace abroad', works out in its hydropolitics.

## **MULTIPLE LEVELS OF HEGEMONY**

The developing literature on basin level hegemony is a new addition to the hegemony debate. The basin as a hydropolitical security unit as first suggested in Ohlsson (1995), comes from the competing claims as well as need for coordination that are both inherent in the interdependence of the resource. Upstream-downstream position with respect to a river or a channel means a natural but unequal interdependency. An upstream position allows control of the resource, supported by control of enclosure technology – weirs, dams, ponds and sluice gates.

### **Hegemony at home: Do states need hegemonic strategies to control their subjects?**

It may strike the reader as surprising that the state cannot take its own hegemonic position for granted within its territory. Charles Tilly (1990) however has shown that states are in fact a relatively recent and European (Westphalian) phenomenon – many areas in the world survived without one before the

colonial age. Like international hegemonies, the state sector needs to secure and defend its position vis-à-vis other actors within the territory. States tend to result from quite violent processes, and are not sure of their continued existence. They de-merged by uniting the country in external wars ('states made war and wars made states'). The war effort required and legitimised taxing the middle class, helping states to survive and consolidate their position domestically. Next, they offered their subjects protection deals ('social contracts'), which as Tilly (1990) describes it more often than not turned out to be protection rackets.

Even today's states do not necessarily have the monopoly on the means of violence as assumed by Weber (1947). They are in competition with non-state actors, such as paramilitary groups, warlords and private security services. Migdal (1988) has shown that many states are weakly developed within a strong society. Power abhors a vacuum, so that control and regulatory capacity in practice is always shared by social actors (Migdal, 1988; Kamrava, 1991; Trottier, n.d.). These social actors may well play along and take maximum benefit from the state's weakness, and it may well be civil-society institutions that are the conduits of hegemonic power rather than the agencies of the state itself. "When the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was ... only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks" (Gramsci, 1922).

In its desire to expand control by speeding up development, the state may use irrigation or hydropower projects to push through a land reform programme, overcoming entrenched feudal relations. Laws in many countries allow states to wield extraordinary powers. For example, the public sector as opposed to private or common ownership may formally own all water resources on its territory. This enables the state to use its legal ownership of water resources to play off groups within society against each other, granting irrigators regular water supplies while denying it to others, or alternatively to buy social peace. Divide-and-rule requires the placation of agriculturalists, meaning sufficient water always had to be ensured, for example, settling nomads in Saudi Arabia or Jordan. In the Saudi Arabia water-for-settlement swap, the state reduced administrative uncertainty (political security) while the nomads got resource certainty (water security). Infrastructure thus brings water to client groups, but can also be taken away at will.

A concomitant control strategy is patronage, where loyalty is bought for favours (material incentives). The credibility of a threat depends on the perception of the ability to withhold the favour. It is essentially a distribution and dependency strategy. Externally funded development projects can help maintain this dominant position. This is where we start crossing the bridge into 'soft power'. While the non-hegemonies are highly aware that they have little alternative other than to comply, the spoils of the arrangements may be enough to persuade them that it is a good deal.

Thus, the Tennessee Valley Authority model of integrated regional development, a Fordist approach to developing one's way out of the US Great Depression, co-opted farmers and workers to prevent them aligning with the socialists. It became an exemplar for water development, spawning similar projects in, among others, Jordan (Trottier, 1999), the Mekong (Bakker, 1999), and of course the GAP in Turkey (Warner, 2004). Because development is an aspiration, not a reality, it has the advantage of promising the world to all (win-win) rather than making difficult redistributive choices (zero-sum allocation). The 'hydraulic mission' promised prosperity in an all-out developmental drive. For this, the state needs to ensure full control of the territory if only to ensure a tax base. Ferguson's (1995) case study of Lesotho likewise shows how development projects help states expand their control into the backwoods.

Water resource development can blend into resource capture, however, when it ignores local 'prior use' – whether by institutional or technical intervention – or in a quest to overturn the status quo. In the 1990s, Saddam Hussein initiated his Third River project connecting the Euphrates and Tigris in part to 'dehydrate' the marshes to gain access to the elusive Ma'adan (an ethnic community referred to as

marsh Arabs) in Central Iraq, who had so far eluded his control.<sup>2</sup> However, most states seek less obviously aggressive ways of 'smoking out' outlying groups by offering regulation and development. In fact the earliest states emerged in fertile valleys in otherwise semi-arid regions, out of a desire to regulate water resources: Egypt, China and the succession of states in Mesopotamia. In hydraulic states (Wittfogel, 1959) wealth flowed from the outback to the centre, in exchange for water-based development of the outback. Swyngedouw's (1999) account makes a highly consistent case for Spanish internal colonisation as a domestic hegemonic strategy for water development after loss of empire – to overcome class differences and cement national integration – as well as Spain's integration in the Western Cold War Alliance to secure international support (2007). These mixes of coercion (force) and a negotiated 'live and let live' governance association with non-state actors (trade) to keep state power on top may be captured as Zeitoun and Warner's (2006) strategy triangle (Resource capture, Integration, and Containment) and has striking parallels in the case of Turkey.

The role of normative hegemony in this respect should not be overlooked. Norms, customs, and ultimately formal laws are ways of 'normalising' citizens such that they can be more easily controlled (Foucault's (1991) 'governmentality'). Modern hegemonies also maintain themselves through cultural institutions such as the media, art, education, religion, and civic institutions often with 'voluntary' membership, such as for the 'law abiding citizens'.

As Elsner (1998) notes:

Power is very rarely limited to the pure exercise of brute force. The Roman state bolstered its authority with the trappings of ceremonial – cloaking the actualities of power beneath a display of wealth, the sanction of tradition, and the spectacle of insuperable resources. Power is a far more complex and mysterious quality than any apparently simple manifestation of it would appear. It is as much a matter of impression, of theatre, of persuading those over whom authority is wielded to collude in their subjugation. Insofar as power is a matter of presentation, its cultural currency in antiquity (and still today) was the creation, manipulation, and display of images.

A hegemon's material power undergirds its power to represent the world in a particular way. Hegemonic states are involved in image-building in the press, public information campaigns, education and cultural life, so that others believe and subscribe to their authority. These images, of conflict or cooperation, are supported by rhetorical devices, if ultimately underwritten by the state's disposal of the means of violence.

Hegemonic strategies can thus achieve different forms of ever more indirect control, captured in Lustick's (2002) continuum of four degrees of hegemony: coercive (force or direct threat of force); utilitarian (bribes, trades of services, gifts); normative agreement; and ideological hegemony.

### **Hydrohegemony at the basin level**

Basins are a particular arena of international relations, where relations between neighbouring states almost inevitably get tense due to their water development initiatives (Williams, 2003b). Downstreamers like Iraq and Egypt are usually the first to develop the river as their being located on low-gradient, fertile floodplains give them a head start. But once the upstreamer starts harnessing the river in infrastructural works for their development aims, downstreamers start to worry about the upstreamers' ability to 'turn off the tap', inducing scarcity, or unexpectedly turning it up, inducing floods. They may thus react by building a preventative coalition against the power holder to forestall upstream hydraulic leverage and future loss (Williams, 2003a). The Syrian-Iraqi alliance of convenience against Turkey is a straightforward example.

Upstreamers may manifest themselves later than downstreamers but can, as a rule, take advantage of geography (Warner, 2004). Due to their position as upstream co-riparian, hegemonies are at liberty to

<sup>2</sup> In the context of the restoration of marshlands after the deposition of Saddam Hussein, Leah Wells (2003) pointedly asks why the re-hydrating of the marshlands was so urgently important for American interests, but does not venture an answer.

do as they please without consulting those affected by their actions, although some upstreamers have occasionally notified downstreamers. It doesn't necessarily have to be intentional that "upstreamers use water to get more power, downstreamers use power to get more water". But when it is perceived that way, it will inspire accusations of resource capture and hegemonic power politics. A counter-hegemonic strategy in the sense of turning the tables on the hegemon doesn't happen very often, but downstreamers who feel threatened will seek to strengthen their hand. They can threaten to deny ships from upstream states access to the sea, issue linkage (see Meijerink, 2008 for the river Scheldt and Wegerich, 2008 for the Amu Darya) mount formal or guerrilla resistance to contest hegemony, form alliances or seek outside help from a Great Power. Downstream states are far from helpless, as most convincingly shown by the case of Egypt (a hegemon on the Nile) and the Netherlands (a prime mover in the Rhine and North Sea regimes).

The accusation of hydrohegemony is expected when the upstream state undertakes a major intervention without consulting its downstream neighbour. Thus, we find complaints about the 'hydrohegemonic' pressure tactics used by India by Bangladeshis, of Egypt by Ethiopians, etc.<sup>3</sup>

Yet the quibble is not necessary about who is the hegemon. After all, there are significant transaction costs to taking responsibility which is part of the explanation why non-hegemonic actors comply with hegemony. Non-hegemonic actors will accept and comply with the hegemon's leadership, even if it is unpopular, when they see sufficient benefit in not having to assume the burdens that come with leadership. As hegemonic stability theory maintains, a leader has to provide stability of expectations, thus reducing transaction costs – this is traditionally valued as a key international public good (Kindleberger, 1981; Daoudy, 2004, 2005 applies this body of work to river basins).

If hegemony increases non-hegemons' 'power-to' undertake actions (acting capacity), the hegemon will be more easily accepted (Haugaard and Lentner, 2006). But non-hegemons may feel they do not draw sufficient benefit from the stability of expectations the hegemon provides. The issue then concerns the terms of the hegemonic arrangement; if their interests are perceived to be more seriously taken into account, nonhegemons may accept these arrangements.

Hegemons may seek to buy off discontent by offering cooperation. Incentives such as loans and gifts, represent the 'friendly face of power'. But there is a downside to calculated generosity: offering cooperation, 'bearing gifts' to domestic and external actors creates obligation on the part of the accepting party.

This brings us to the knotty concept of 'transboundary cooperation'. In water literature, a sometimes unhelpful distinction is frequently made between conflict and cooperation, where conflict is bad and cooperation is good. It is assumed that given the right conditions, conflict can be turned into cooperation. Obvious as this may sound, 'cooperation' does not mean there is no underlying conflict and power imbalance. The way states 'cooperate' with each other may be suspiciously like the way a detainee 'cooperates' with her captors (see for example Selby, 2005). The relationship between hegemons and non-hegemons in a transboundary river basin is not necessarily peaceful or cooperative. The term 'hegemonic stability' (Snidal, 1985) only tells us that there is no overt conflict. How the stability is evaluated depends on whether non-hegemons perceive sufficient benefits in maintaining the status quo. A sense of excess dependency, being at the mercy of others' unpredictable wiles, can make actors even more control-minded. Recent events on the Euphrates-Tigris nevertheless clearly see the three riparians tending towards cooperation.

## Regional hegemony

It would seem that a state's ambition to project one's power regionally or even globally cannot easily be wrested without tightly controlling affairs at home. But one way of aligning a fragmented domestic constituency is to develop regional aspirations. Regional hegemony refers to the influence exercised

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<sup>3</sup> e.g. S. Rasheed in 2003 in Bangladesh's *Daily Star*, [www.thedailystar.net/2003/10/07/d31007150188.htm](http://www.thedailystar.net/2003/10/07/d31007150188.htm), and Y. Yacob in 2004, [www.tigrai.org/news/articles2004/thenilebyyacob3.html](http://www.tigrai.org/news/articles2004/thenilebyyacob3.html)

over neighbouring countries. Unlike the fledgling literature on basin hegemony, the regional scale has been the subject of extensive, especially American Realist, scholarship, most famously Mearsheimer (2001). The Middle East is an especially fractious, fluctuating arena with Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Israel and Syria having made hegemonic bids in the recent decades.

The overwhelming power of one state brings into effect a degree of *order* in the region. While water is unlikely to be the sole basis for hegemonic aspirations, natural resources may play a crucial part in shaping hegemonic ambitions in a water-stressed region. Kolars and Mitchell (1991) have called attention to the Turkish aspirations for a *pax aquarum* in the region (beyond the basin), while Egypt's Aswan Dam was in a way symbolic of Egyptian prowess and independence and confirmed its leadership of the Arab (and Third) world until the 1970s oil boom. Given its water scarcity and geopolitical importance, the Middle East has been an especially fractious hydro-political security complex.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, after the end of the Soviet Union, the region suddenly expanded eastward to include Central Asia. As we shall see, Turkey's unparalleled (relative) water wealth makes the country a key player outside the Euphrates and Tigris, in its hydro-political dealings with Israel, the Arab Peninsula and the Turkish-speaking majority of Central Asia.

The region is notoriously subject to external intervention, most recently in the war on Iraq. The hegemonic overlay of the global over the regional arena appears to be economic and ideological as much as it is political. The next section goes into the overlay of forces in the global political economy.

### **Global overlay: Hegemony of market-led development**

The overlay of global governance has a decisive impact on how regional water relations are managed or mismanaged. Regional water conflicts easily become part of other, ulterior international geopolitical goals. As Zeitoun and Warner (2006) indicate, the key strategic interests of the global powers – the US, Russia, and now China – in the Middle East ensure that changes in the balance of power in the Euphrates-Tigris, Nile or Jordan regions have ripple effects on the global scene. Conversely, a change in the hegemonic relationships with respect to the global governance of water has ripple effects in the region as will be shown in the case of Turkey.

Gramscian historic materialism sees foreign policy orientation as the result of a particular class formation and strategy within that country. In the Gramscian sense, hegemony is the capacity of a social group to present its interests as the general interest. It is a class compromise, based on a particular model of development, regulated by institutions. A Neo-Gramscian school, spearheaded by Cox (1981), analyses how land-based capital fractions (agriculture, industry) compete with internationally oriented fractions (banking, air transport). Each contender tries to form successful hegemonic coalitions, trying to improve their position through different hegemonic strategies ('comprehensive concepts of control') to enrol other fractions of capital. These national-level hegemonic and counterhegemonic alliances, neo-Gramscians argue, have become transnationalised as multi-national formations with a global reach.

Global hegemons have always been champions of free trade. Their military and economic superiority assured them a competitive edge, as well as the power to make the rules. They could afford to become 'Lockean', liberal states pressing for trade liberalisation (van der Pijl, 1992), on the strength of their overpowering stature, and rely on 'soft' rather than 'hard power' to maintain it. Their competitors needed to be 'Hobbesian', authoritarian, controlling states to catch up. The hegemony of 'Lockean' free-trade liberalism induces what Gramsci calls a 'passive revolution' in those countries – those who first rejected or were too slow in picking up the original (economic, technological) revolution, will have to carry through reforms containing elements of the original, in a top-down manner to stay alive.

While water management was traditionally a local, regional or at best national concern, French, British and American water companies expanded their ambitions in the 1990s and negotiated contracts in

<sup>4</sup> A hydro-political security complex is "a set of states that are geographically part owners and technical users of a water body, and that consider that water body to be a major national security issue" (Schulz, 1995).

developing countries, forming alliances with construction companies and investment banks to secure different permutations of Build, Operate, Transfer (BOT) or continued management of dams, hydropower plants and water supply and sanitation schemes. But given the risky nature of such investments, they require the backing of states and multilateral institutions, as we shall see illustrated by the case of water projects in Turkey. From a Gramscian perspective, this constitutes a successful alliance of 'fractions of international capital' and states pursuing domination of the world market.

In this line of analysis, a hegemonic state lends space to the social basis that supports it, in order to internationalise. International organisations and multi-national companies act as transnationalised hegemonic actors who find little resistance from the elites of the South. International organisations such as the World Bank can act as 'transmission belts' to socialise elites from the periphery according to the norms of the hegemonic order, so that leaders in the South start to believe it is in their interest too, as Biersteker (1992) has argued to explain the popularity of the neo-liberal 'Chicago school' with Southern elites.<sup>5</sup> The 'soft power' rests in the attractive discourse of these alliances that institutional reform will bring peace and prosperity to the privatising regions, if they will just go along with a 'passive revolution' towards the global model. The Turks clearly decided not to fight the 'consensus' but rather conform to it when money became very tight in 1994. In the final section, I will argue that the swift privatisation of the Turkish water sector in the 1990s can be explained as a 'passive revolution' in response to the consolidation of liberal capitalism on a global scale. To be able to count on its water wealth to help secure its security position – but finding itself able neither to access multilateral funds nor to shoulder the cost of GAP on its own – Turkey liberalised its water sector.

The analysis below of the protest against the Ilisu project, Turkey's first major hydropower project on the Tigris River, brings anti-hegemonic NGO forces into play, who, it will be argued, could make themselves heard exactly because of the aforementioned 'passive revolution'. Counter- and anti-hegemonic stirrings from organised activists and intellectuals against global hegemony of marketisation of natural resources make themselves felt with some frequency (Day, 2005; Davidson-Harden et al., 2007). Local resistance to this hegemonic structure appears in popular conflicts such as the Cochabamba 'water war' in 2000 (e.g. Bidaseca, 2004, Shiva, 2003; Westerman, 2003; Warner, 2004). The Bolivians and other opponents to water sector liberalism promote water as the common heritage of mankind (Petrella, 1998), respect for traditional water rights structures, and dispute treating water as an economic good. To activist groups, the displacement of the semi-nomadic Kurds through hydraulic development of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris became symbolic of the crushing of traditional values by the forces of modernism. The Kurdish uprising in turn points us to another level of hegemonic struggle: the domestic arena.

### **TURKEY: IN SEARCH OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONTROL**

Turkey is well placed at the crossroads of Southeast Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. Some Turkish politicians never really abandoned an aspiration to regain the so-called past glories of the Ottoman Empire (ca. 1299-1922), which formerly incorporated present-day Syria and Iraq. These dreams led one Turkish president, Turgut Özal, emboldened by the collapse of the Soviet Bloc giving independence to Turkic peoples in Central Asia, to proclaim in the early 1990s that "the 21st century will be the Turkish century from the Adriatic to the Chinese Wall" (quoted in Zürcher, 1998). However, in today's state system, all states are equal, and the Turkish leadership, certainly the armed forces, accepts that the ways of the emperor (conquest, resource capture, imposing a civilising mission) are not an option for republican Turkey. But the Turkish republic finds itself in a 'rough neighbourhood' which has given it a perennial 'insecurity complex' (Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz in 2001, quoted in Aydin,

<sup>5</sup> In this context, it is perhaps no coincidence that in the international water sector, Egyptians are occupying prominent positions in the UN (Boutros Ghali), World Bank (Serageldin), WWC (Mohammed Abu-Zeid presiding over the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum), which no doubt help perpetuate the cause of Egyptian security in the Nile on the international agenda.



2003). As Aydin (2003) notes, this insecurity has led to an obsession with security, geography and identity. In this context it is perhaps both a blessing and a curse for Turkey that the control of water for development in its bold Southeast Anatolia Project also meant control of water vis-à-vis its downstream neighbours.

### Domestic hegemony

Turkey's transformation from imperial autocracy, permanently at war with Russia, into a parliamentary democracy raised expectations of modernisation through peaceful development 'Peace at home, peace abroad'. A comprehensive hydraulic 'concept of control' (Warner, 2004) to modernise the Southeast Anatolia region seemed to kill many flies in one swat: removing regional disparities, integration of centrifugal groups, modernisation of land ownership in the Southeast, and a boost to the agricultural, energy and industrial sectors.

As Swyngedouw (1999) has shown, a hydraulic mission can be a substitute for lost empire.<sup>6</sup> 'Internal (resource) colonisation' and a civilising mission for the hinterlands would bring wealth and prosperity to an economically backward region, and integrate the Kurds into the Turkish socio-economic fabric by a Fordist regional development strategy (the carrot) rather than force (the stick). The Kurds, however, maintain they had been promised an independent Kurdistan by the colonial powers at the Locarno treaty and refused to be assimilated in a homogenised, secular Turkish state. In the early 1980s the Kurdish Workers Party PKK presented itself as the voice of the (socially and culturally fragmented) Kurdish and in 1984, the year the Atatürk Dam started construction, launched a campaign of violence against Turkish targets, including the incipient GAP work on the Euphrates.

Turkey faced a quandary. Should the Turkish army – which the State Hydraulic Works department, DSI (*Devlet Su İşleri*), is closely linked to – repress the violent protests or integrate the Kurdish population? The crushing initial response from the Turkish army to 'smoke out' the PKK suggested repression. Moreover, as PKK started intimidating Kurdish villages to ensure their allegiance many found themselves in a quandary: Kurdish villagers undertook a mass exodus to Diyarbakir and Istanbul and even fled to the countries in Europe. A reluctance to allow expressions of Kurdish identity and culture reinforced the repressive image. But notably, President Turgut Özal, part Kurdish himself, saw economic integration as a better way to undermine PKK violence by promoting regional development. Apart from these regional objectives for South East Anatolia, a quest for national self-sufficiency in food and energy (Middle East Policy, 2007) and stronger export position (currency) coupled with a skyrocketing energy bill in the 1970s were also key economic reasons for Turkey speeding up the plan. Moreover, state ambitions to overrule traditional quasi-feudal tenure relations and class divisions also featured in the Turkish GAP (*Güneydogu Anadolu Projesi*) area; however, the power of *aga* landlords proved resilient (Mutlu, 1996).

When Turkey launched what was to become the Greater Anatolia Project in the 1960s, it was primarily a 'hydraulic mission'-type regional development project, in line with the TVA model practiced in the United States and exported to many countries (Molle, 2006). In all, the irrigation schemes are scheduled to develop a 2 million-hectare area, and nearly 1.7 million ha out of this acreage is to be irrigated. This was to be combined with several large hydropower plants to meet Turkey's growing energy needs. But in 1989, in response to recurring criticism, a Master Plan was drawn up whose emphasis shifted from water development to people development (GAP-RDA, 1989). GAP director Olcay Ünver and his team made many daring modifications by including socio-economic, environmental, educational and participatory facilities (Kibaroglu, 2002, 2003), echoing emerging global norms of 'good governance' and sustainable development. Such initiatives earned the megaproject an award for innovativeness from the Stockholm Water Symposium.

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<sup>6</sup> Kemal Atatürk and his successors set their sights on water as an engine of national integration early on: studies for water development started from the 1930s, rapidly expanded into basin-wide master plan studies in the 1940s were plans for large-scale hydraulic development, but only came to fruition in the 1960 (Erdoglu, 2007).

This 'soft power strategy' won over some important allies: the 'GAP promotes peace' argument was repeated by the British government that was backing export credits for the Ilisu dam. The timing was propitious: after open Turkish threats of military action against Syria in 1998, PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's unexpected extradition and arrest in 1999 cleared the air between the two countries, some cultural freedoms were granted to the Kurdish population and relations seemed to become more constructive. But after keeping relatively quiet, the PKK resumed violence in the Southeast in 2003, to which the Turkish armed forces responded by tightening their grip on the region. The semi-independence of Northern Iraq after 2003 gave the PKK much greater opportunity for cross-border attacks, in turn eliciting repeated Turkish army incursions there. As a result, Turkey remained caught in a somewhat schizophrenic 'two-nation project': tending towards a more horizontal, liberal, open Western region governed by the 'Lockean' logic of peace, as well as a vertical, more closed East, governed by the 'Hobbesian' logic of war (see also Jacoby, 2005).

### Basin-level strategy

As early as 1920, the then colonial powers, Britain and France, concluded a Euphrates treaty, while in 1946 Turkey and Iraq signed a treaty of friendship and good neighbourliness including data sharing and mutual consultation. However, tension built up as all three riparians started to build large works and from 1974 until 1998-99, most of the indicators for the Euphrates-Tigris security complex would indicate an 'anarchic' state: Iraq and Syria almost went to war in 1975 after Syria blocked the Euphrates River to fill the Tabqa reservoir (Bari, 1977).

Turkey for its part has always maintained its actions were clearly in the interest of the downstream actors as well claiming that its dams would help regulate the hydrological regime of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, cushioning floods downstream, and improving the timing of the flow regime to coincide with downstream agricultural needs.

Syria and Iraq however saw differently. They pointed out that the historic flow before Turkey started its project was calculated at 1,000 cubic meters per second ( $m^3/s$ ) at the border with Syria. The Arab states argue that since three states are sharing the river's flow, each is entitled to one-third, giving the two Arab states a total of around  $667 m^3/s$  (Gruen, 2004). Turkey could not agree with that amount; instead, it guaranteed a minimum of  $450 m^3/s$  in 1976 (Kaya, 1998) and promised in 1987, in a protocol signed with Syria, to release an average of  $500 m^3/s$ , which is about half the normal river flow, across the Turkish/Syrian border (Guner, 1997). Beaumont (1991) feels this ratio is not an unreasonable promise for an upstream state to make, and notes that Turkey has also never flagrantly defaulted. Except in very dry years, keeping its promise may not have been too difficult for Turkey,<sup>7</sup> but from a positive hegemony perspective, it is significant as this state of affairs created a stability of expectations which can be seen as an international public good, even if downstream neighbours do not usually like to see it this way and have greeted any new dam with loud protests, while occasional arrest of the flow to impound reservoirs have been branded as unilateral and self-serving by the downstreamers.

However, these threats have always stopped short of actual bloodshed, and a closer look at the basin reveals certain 'mature' regime elements. Kibaroglu (1996) argues that despite recurring threats of military action at the political level, there were unmistakable signs of regime formation in the Euphrates/Tigris even in the 1990s. Technical teams on the Euphrates-Tigris met on and off since 1982, a pragmatic acceptance of the *faits accomplis* on the part of the downstream neighbours.

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<sup>7</sup> When under stress, as in consecutive drought years, the heat both increases domestic demand for water and reduces electricity demand. Turkey defaulted from December 2000 until June 2001. When the Euphrates received only 55% of the average flow and dams operated at one fifth of their capacity. Later that year rising electricity forced demand Turkey to produce more hydropower and as a consequence to release more water to Iraq (Zawahri, 2006).

## Regional level

*(T)here is no local great power in the multipolar Middle East complex. It is also a region in which Ankara, interestingly, acts in a more unilateral fashion, and 'dares' more than in the other regions (Kazan, 2005).*

Turkey however has also had to make considerable concessions to Europe to keep the door open to membership in the European Union of which it would, at a stroke, become the largest member. Converting Öcalan's death penalty into a life sentence is only one of many European demands for reform that Turkey decided to swallow whole. Realising that European membership would mean the obligation to accede to existing European water legislation (see also Hermans, 2005), the Turkish government had the foresight to commission a Dutch consultancy, Grontmij, to make a study of what a Europe-compliant integrated basin plan of the Büyük Menderes River would look like. Turkey also studied a transboundary river plan for the Maritsa River, which Turkey shares with Greece and Bulgaria (Kibaroglu et al., 2005).

Turkey is the most water-rich country in a water-scarce region, and it is acutely aware it is the only country (apart from Lebanon, which has been too much in disarray to capitalise on it) to have a considerable water surplus, as well as the political stability to exploit and deliver it. It has repeatedly made offers to states outside the Euphrates-Tigris basin: the Gulf states, Syria, Israel and Palestine, to build so-called 'peace pipelines'. In 1987 Turkey proposed to build a two-branch Peace Pipeline at the cost of US\$20 billion (1987 dollars) to provide water for the whole region, branching out to the East into the Gulf region and to the West into Israel and Palestine. Its intended recipients however declined politely, perhaps fearing that the offer might prove a political 'Trojan horse', creating dependency and vulnerability in terms of water quality and quantity. Only Israel expressed a keen interest in water deliveries from the Manavgat estuary, close to Antalya. As a pipeline would have to cross Syria and giant nylon 'Medusa' bags experimented with earlier had an annoying tendency to sink, it was decided to transport the water in supertankers to Israel. But while Turkey was eager for a public relations success as a peacemaker, Israel was slow to proceed: for the Israelis the deal was always going to be more politically symbolic of the Turkish-Israeli alliance than economic; when in 2004 a deal was struck for the delivery of 50 million cubic meters per year, no price or company was indicated (Gruen, 2004). Theories on the part of more cynically-minded commentators, claiming Turkey threatened to call off military equipment orders and participation in GAP projects if Israel continued to tarry with the water contract (Kenon, 2003; Vidal, 2004), gained in force when both the water deal and the arms deal fell apart in the same week in April 2006 (Middle East Times, 2006). Turkey made a similar water offer to countries in Central Asia but structural water trade has not been in evidence yet.

Given its 'rough neighbourhood' (Aydin, 2003), Turkey meanwhile seeks a strong enough role to make sure the neighbours do not misbehave. Although Turkey is materially the stronger party, Iraq's attempted invasion of Kuwait logically made Turkey sit very tight. Prime Minister Akbulut warned the Turkish Parliament in 1991 that Saddam Hussein "with his habitual expansionist policies, wants to establish hegemony in the region and has a nasty habit of using military conflicts for this aim" (in Aydin, 2003). There are however, limits to the degree to which Turkey is willing to antagonise Iraq – for example when it occasionally needed the Iraqis to grant rights to the 'hot pursuit' of Kurdish rebels. The defeat of Saddam Hussein at the hands of a US-led military alliance in 2003 must have elicited a deep sigh of relief in Turkey. This points to the crucial importance of extraregional interference in the region, expounded in the next section.

## Water globalisation: A passive revolution in Turkey

Despite its important geopolitical position Turkey is very aware of the need to be friendly with the superpowers to enable the containment of domestic and foreign contenders. The country has been a long-time member and cornerstone of NATO and was one of the top three recipients of American

foreign aid until the war against Saddam (after which Iraq entered the top three). For the US and NATO, Turkey has always been seen as a cornerstone for stability in the Middle East.

Turkey can afford to be less compliant where its hydropolitical actions are concerned. In international jurisprudence, there is as yet no clear international water law. As a result, upstreamers can claim sovereignty while downstreamers can claim equitable (and, where expedient, prior) use with equal validity. Not signing up to the UN Treaty on non-navigational watercourses in 1997 (China and Burundi were the only other naysayers) therefore has no repercussions, although it does little for the country's international image.

Nevertheless, Turkish water leadership has kept a keen eye on international developments on the water scene of the past decades, notably the currently hegemonic 'holy trinity' of Integrated Water Resource Management, the river basin as the preferred unit of water management and multi-stakeholder participation (Warner et al., 2008). The reformulation of the GAP from straightforward resource development to comprehensive regional water, environmental and people management, such as investments in education and participation, won Turkey plaudits in the global water scene. Turkey does not have the same status in the development sector as Egypt. The World Bank, active on the Nile, did not grant a loan for GAP, as downstream neighbours withheld their consent, a precondition for obtaining Bank loans.<sup>8</sup>

By focussing on the bilateral donor community, the NGOs targeted the GAP project's key weakness. Given an acute shortage of project funds, Turkey needed to co-opt the global hegemony of liberalisation and privatisation in the water sector. But Turkey faced obstacles in access to international funds to cover the crippling cost of such an ambitious multi-dam project (up to \$15 billion in 2008 only), the Turkish liberalised their water sector overnight in 1994. Privatisation means an important erosion of the state's primacy over public services. In the case of Turkey, multilateral backing for GAP was lacking. An expensive legal process, as well as a change in the constitution, was needed to secure international private-sector funding for the GAP – a passive revolution under the pressure of global hegemonic forces. Privatisation, however, exposed foreign donors and guarantors to activist NGOs and the larger public demanding ethnical governance practices, which led to a lengthy interruption in the construction of the Ilisu dam project.

As we shall see, the contest over the Ilisu dam served as a notable flashpoint in Turkey's relations at multiple levels – at home, in the basin, and also in the global political arena.

### **The abortive contest over Ilisu**

While the Euphrates-Tigris basin has never been a very convincing case for the Malthusian water wars hypothesis, conflicts abound at domestic, fluvial and regional level, some violent, some 'cold', some 'silent' (Zeitoun and Warner, 2006).

The perception that Turkey in principle has the ability to cut off Euphrates water for six months instils acute discomfort in downstream countries as well as predictions of a Gilgamesh-like deluge, should Turkey one day lose its temper and open the dams all at once. Turkey has many unresolved issues with Syria including the contested province of Alexandretta (or, from a Turkish perspective, the Sandjak of Hatay), which was given to Turkey by its colonial French rulers, as well as with Iraq, a lingering dispute over the oil-rich Northern Iraqi region of Mosul and Kirkuk, which Turkey was denied despite a considerable Turkoman (Turkmen) presence there (Peuch, 2003).

Syria has tended to claim damage from Turkish decisions on the river. Its government as a matter of course protests against each new dam, complaining of failed harvests and interrupted water services in Damascus as a result of the closing of dams. It made much noise about Turkey's admittedly late prior notice of the filling of the Ataturk Dam in 1992, for which the Turks closed off the river for a month. Whether or not the claim that GAP benefits Syria or Iraq is substantiated does not really matter in the

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<sup>8</sup> A Syrian expert explained his country's refusal of the Turkish overture as follows: "Our leaders thought the terrain was too rugged for Turkey to ever develop the rivers. They forgot about technological advancement" (cited in Zawahri, 2006).

war of words over the project. GAP's opponents criticise Turkey's positing its self-interest as the regional common good without conferring much with its neighbours. In the 1990s, Syria repeatedly protested that Turkish interventions damaged Syrian agriculture and water supply, and wrote angry letters not only to the Turkish government but also to foreign investors and constructors involved in GAP projects, including on the Ilisu Dam (e.g. Syrian Arab Republic, 1999). In parallel, Syria and Iraq, who have come to the brink of water wars with each other in 1975, set aside their long-standing differences over the river to mobilise the Arab League against the GAP (enlisting powerful allies).

Syria has long relied on the Kurdish trump card. First Syria used Lebanon's Beqaa valley as a training ground for violent Turkish and Kurdish radicals of the left (Devsol and PKK), then when Turkey protested, moved the Kurds to northern Iran. This way, Syria held a 'stick' behind its back in its confrontations with Turkey in the 1990s (MacQuarrie, 2004).

The domestic military campaigns against Kurdish resistance, which left tens of thousands killed, and the repression until 1991 of manifestations of Kurdish identity in Turkey were played by opposition to the Ilisu Dam on a human and cultural rights platform. This proved instrumental in strengthening the international anti-GAP coalition that also homed in on environmental and cultural heritage issues such as the drowning of the lower layers of the historic town of Hasankeyf by the Ilisu reservoir.

An astute international anti-GAP lobby targeted bilateral export credit agencies (ECAs) backing up private sector companies involved in the project to get them to pull out of the Ilisu dam. Turkey's dependence on bilateral funds provided an inroad for the project's opponents: they reckoned the European guarantors were more likely to lend an ear to human-rights concerns than the Turkish government. The progressive social and environmental recommendations of the World Commission on Dams' report (World Commission on Dams, 2000) seemed to legitimise their protest.

As there was no way of challenging the developmental discourse by claiming that the dams would not be economic, and environmental arguments had little impact with targeted international audiences, NGOs and press commentators targeted other values with heavy verbal artillery: for example, the resettlement to make room for the reservoir constituted a form of 'ethnic cleansing' as well as inducing environmental and cultural disaster. According to its opponents, the Ilisu Dam would precipitate war in the Middle East rather than promote peace, and signified a manifestation of Turkish imperialism at home and abroad (see for example Monbiot, 1999; Ronayne, 2005).

This horror image did not fit the preferred strategy of Western donors to strengthen basin hegemony to keep the peace and prevent 'water wars', a powerful hydropolitical narrative of the 1990s (Trottier, n.d.). The anti-GAP coalition moreover could bank on the successes of a wider 'counter-hegemonic' campaign against large infrastructural projects in the 1990s: the Narmada, Pergau and Arun Dams, the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge and the Lesotho Highlands Project, all were successfully confronted (although rarely defeated for good). This campaign proved no exception: the UK dropped its export guarantee, and several investors and consortium members pulled out of the Ilisu project soon afterwards (see Warner, 2004; MacQuarrie, 2004 and Shoup, 2006 for this little-analysed episode). It seemed that an activist coalition had defeated a symbol of hydrohegemony, not only in the basin but also in a different kind of 'water war' (Shiva, 2003), that against water capture by the global 'hydrocracy'.

However, this victory proved very temporary. In 2005 a new international consortium<sup>9</sup> was formed to revive the Ilisu project; in 2006, the export credit agencies and banks agreed to back it,<sup>10</sup> and construction started for real in August 2006. The NGO coalition shows no signs of giving up. Local and international NGOs are keeping a close watch on proceedings ([www.ilisu.org.uk](http://www.ilisu.org.uk)). Syria and Iraq have lent occasional verbal support to the protests but recent events this time around also give a different impression.

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<sup>9</sup> The European Union's antitrust agency summoned Siemens to sell the hydro-electricity part of its daughter VA-Tech (Brennsell, 2005). Alstom (formerly part of ABB) is involved, while Cengiz, Celikler and Lider Nuroel are Turkish partners.

<sup>10</sup> See [www.banktrack.org/?id=99&show=167&visitor](http://www.banktrack.org/?id=99&show=167&visitor).

While angry words were spoken over the Ilisu dam, the mood between the riparians changed perceptibly towards conciliation after 1998. Turkish GAP and Syrian GOLD<sup>11</sup> development project administrations established technical cooperation and Turkey and Syria shared a Training and Expertise exercise in 2002. After the U.S President started Syria, the Turkish and Syrian leaders started paying mutual visits in 2004 during which President Bashar Assad was assured that Syria could make further use of the Tigris. A free trade agreement between the two countries was signed and the year 2005 saw the establishment of the Euphrates-Tigris Initiative for Cooperation (ETIC). The initiative aimed to promote cooperation for technical, social and economic development within the river system (Dinar, 2008) and included a group of scholars and professionals from Turkey, Syria and Iraq. Turkey started meeting to discuss an increased Syrian share in Euphrates water, while a remarkable Iraqi *volte-face* on Ilisu on the Tigris in 2008 (Yavuz, 2008) saw all three countries indicating much greater willingness to cooperate. Iraq's Water Minister Rasheed told Turkey's environment and forestry minister Veysel Eroğlu, former head of DSI, that he wants the dam to be built as fast as possible. The three countries will establish a joint water institute and Turkey's Minister is talking of joint projects.

As Daoudy (2005) notes, the new hegemonic discourse is all about benefit sharing. This would presume the exercise of collective power ('positive-sum') instead of distributive (and divisive) power, a radical change of scene. Now that cooperation is on the agenda, Syria finds itself in a dilemma. Both Turkey and Syria benefit from a stability of expectations but if cooperation becomes more structural, as seems to be the case, Syria loses its leeway for making strong stances. While there seems to be a movement from the realist going-it-alone to forms of cooperation, this new stable equilibrium remains within a context of hegemonic power relations at the global level. The fact that the Fifth Water Forum (as well as many other international conferences) will be held in Istanbul in 2009 appears to bear testimony that the international community is accepting Turkey's position as a 'Middle Power'.

### **CONCLUSION: A NEW HEGEMONIC DEAL?**

Turkish leaders, like their Egyptian, Israeli, Syrian and Sudanese counterparts, read and understand their Machiavelli and Hobbes, literally or in spirit. All operate within the limits of the possible in the power-political arena, and that horizon still favours Turkish leadership. For all practical purposes, Turkey's neighbours have generally complied with Turkey leading the political dance. While GAP has not proceeded without 'collateral damage' in Syria and the Southeast, it has not come without its benefits to affected parties, either. It is therefore highly simplistic to dismiss Turkish predominance as merely coercive and destructive, as its opponents have done.

The assessment of Turkey as a basin hydrohegemon is not undisputable. Moreover, it is even doubtful that what seems like a long-term strategy is the result of a coherent plan. However, there is hardly question of equal power relations between the riparians. 'Peace at home, peace abroad' has translated into a strong role for the army in politics and, at several instances, also deployed on the ground. Resource capture and development, integration, and containment appeared as three faces of the same strategy to safeguard the legitimacy of a strong position in the midst of unruly neighbours, played out both at home and in the basin. In this respect, the domestic and foreign arenas seem closely interrelated. For example, a better human rights record in the south-east is crucial to GAP's international acceptance, while strong language directed at Syria in the 1990s has secured political capital at home.

The Kurdish resistance meanwhile prefers to see the project as the control and *capture* of a common-pool resource that should be managed by the Turkish people (Reyes Gaskin, 2005). The Turkish GAP project can be regarded as at least partly incited by a desire to control the Kurdish-majority

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<sup>11</sup> The General Organisation for Land Development (GOLD).

area, to *contain* 'terrorists' and to entice the Kurds to emerge from their mountain hideouts (Jongerden, 2000) and *integrate* them in the Turkish fabric.<sup>12</sup>

Turkey's international acts seem to be aimed at maintaining its role of a regional superpower, straddling Europe, the Middle East and, more recently, Turkic Central Asia, for which it competes with Iran, Russia and, more recently, China. Rather than using an aggressive expansion strategy, Turkey bides its time and seeks to extend its spheres of influence (*Realpolitik*), in the strong belief that this will benefit all concerned (hegemony as public good). Turkish rulers have until today refrained from using the 'water weapon' and are investing great effort into trying to convince others that their regulation of the rivers is just and legitimate. While Turkey lent its territory to the alliance against Iraq following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the Turkish government reportedly refused to block the Euphrates in 1991 despite Allied requests to do so, arguing that 'water is life' and therefore it will not use water as a military instrument. Bearing 'water gifts' far afield has so far met with underwhelming response, but good relations with Israel and the USA underpin its regionally powerful position. With respect to its downstream neighbours, it has decided to lead in regime formation, despite Lowi's (1993) prediction that upstreamers have little interest in this.

Playing simultaneous hegemonic games on multiple chessboards is a slow process with many repeated offensive and defensive (often merely symbolic) moves. It is a game for control, but also to target normative consensus and legitimacy. While the Turkish state seems to be enjoying a less strained hegemonic position both at home and regionally since 1998, the last lap of GAP is still not safe from international NGO attack and Turkey is only slowly finding inroads into Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. Still, gains in cooperation with Syria and regime change in Iraq have made continued international NGO opposition to Ilisu since 2006 far less likely to succeed than in 1999-2001.

The heavy overlay of American hegemony in the Middle East, especially since 2003, also constrains what each of the three Euphrates and Tigris riparians can do. However, as a former (Ottoman) Great Power with a long memory, Turkish leaders know that all things must pass.

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<sup>12</sup> The government only recognises three minorities with a right to practice their customs: Jewish, Greek Orthodox, and Armenian Orthodox communities. The Kurds, an ethnically distinct Sunni Muslim group, are excluded from this protection (Reyes Gaskin, 2005).

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