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# Hydraulic Mission at Home, Hydraulic Mission abroad? Examining Turkey's Regional 'Pax-Aquarum' and Its Limits

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Received: 24 November 2018; Accepted: 22 December 2018; Published: 4 January 2019



**Abstract:** Water resource development has always been considered as a strategic tool by the Turkish ruling elites to reach food and energy security, as well as to enhance domestic peace and stability since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. Therefore, the concept of “hydraulic mission” fits this strategic understanding, and it has become a prevailing paradigm in Turkey’s water resource development. Many academic works have already been conducted to understand how Turkey has waged an ambitious hydraulic mission by securitizing its water resource development primarily on economic and political bases. However, fewer studies have shown how the Turkish ruling elites have also considered Turkey’s extensive hydraulic development, sanctioned by the hydraulic mission, as a foreign policy tool to enhance its influence at the international level. Drawing primarily upon the concept of opportunitisation and the body of literature that looks at, albeit indirectly, the international aspect of the hydraulic mission, this study fills this gap in the literature by looking at three case studies: The Southeastern Anatolian Project (GAP), the Water Export Initiatives to the Middle East, and the Water Transfer Project to Cyprus, namely the Peace Water Project. Being informed by an in-depth investigation of those three case studies, this study argues that ambitious hydraulic development projects conducted by the Turkish government do not only serve to keep peace and stability at the domestic level, but they are also strategic tools to enhance Turkey’s influence abroad. However, this study also shows the limits of Turkey’s hydraulic mission abroad. While Turkey promotes those water initiatives as tools for improving regional peace and stability, they are challenged by the recipient countries on social, economic, and political bases.

**Keywords:** hydraulic mission; Turkey; water diplomacy; water conflict; Middle East

## 1. Introduction

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, once famously stated, “peace at home, peace abroad”, which has become the leading motto of the Republic of Turkey.

However, rarely Turkey has enjoyed peace and political stability at the domestic level since its foundation. At the international level, Turkey has often had tense relations with its neighbours such as Greece, Syria. In fact, considering the current situation, the conflict with the PKK, the involvement in the Syrian Civil War (The Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch), the motto represents an ideal. Nevertheless, the motto formalizes Turkey’s general view on domestic and international matters. This article shows that the same notion can be applied to Turkey’s hydraulic mission. Here,

the hydraulic mission can be defined as states' strong conviction to utilize every single drop of water by building hydraulic infrastructures [1] (p.75). The definition implies that the hydraulic mission and the related concepts of water nationalism and securitization are discursive processes that occur at the domestic level. However, is there an international dimension of hydraulic mission? If yes, how can it be conceptualized? This article argues that the Turkish ruling elites do not only consider water resource development as a strategic tool to maintain peace and stability—even with aggressive means in order to secure their control on the territory and on the society through water resource development—at the domestic level, but they also consider it as a strategic foreign policy tool to enhance Turkey's regional influence. This study finds that while the domestic and quasi-domestic projects, which are conducted unilaterally, were successfully realized, the international ones, which required collaboration with the neighbouring states, have failed. The study considers three empirical case studies to show the international dimension of Turkey's hydraulic mission: the GAP and its international dimension, the water export initiatives from Turkey to the Middle East, and water transfer project from Turkey to Cyprus (also labelled as the Peace Water Project).

The internal dimension of the hydraulic mission has been largely researched in the literature analysing a variety of case studies across the world [2–5]. Concerning the Turkish case, previous research has examined the central tenets of Turkey's hydraulic mission at the domestic level [6–8]. This article builds on initial studies on the relation between domestic hydraulic mission and its implication for transboundary water governance. In fact, initial studies argued that domestic dynamics that are strongly informed by the hydraulic mission and securitization often led unilateralism in the transboundary water contexts which corollary led to water conflict at the inter-state level [9,10]. For instance, Menga and Mirumachi show how water resource development is portrayed as a symbol of self-determination and how it enhances states' soft power at the transboundary level [11]. In a similar vein, Menga also argues that states tend to consider their hydraulic development as a foreign policy matter [12]. Hussein and Grandi [13,14] show the necessity of considering the broader context in order to understand why hydraulic projects are successful or not; while Hussein argued that hydraulic projects on transboundary basins are successful when aligned with the geopolitical interests of the riparian states [15].

The structure of this article will be as follows. First, this article provides a critical review of the literature on the hydraulic mission, focusing on the international dimension of hydraulic mission. Second, it analyses three case studies: the international aspect of the GAP, Turkey's water export initiatives to the Middle East, and the recent water transfer project to Cyprus. Third, after briefly summarizing Turkey's water initiatives beyond its borders, it discusses the limitations of Turkey's hydraulic mission abroad.

The methodology adopted in this article is qualitative. The methods of data collection deployed to shed light on the hydraulic mission of Turkey nationally and internationally are: documentation and interviews with the key informants that have appeared in the media outlets. Specifically, interviews conducted with policy makers; their statements and speeches made by the politicians constituted the backbone of the study.

## 2. Understanding the Domestic and International Aspects of the Hydraulic Mission

This section reviews the concept the hydraulic mission in the literature, and the role that it plays in states' domestic influence. While the focus of the literature has been on the hydraulic mission at home, and on how they can increase their power and influence in their country, the second part of this reviews aims at discussing the state of the art in the literature concerning the hydraulic mission abroad. These concepts will then be applied to the Turkish case study in Section 3.

### 2.1. The Brief Review of the Hydraulic Mission and Its Role in States' Domestic Influence

The concept of hydraulic mission is defined as “the strong conviction that every drop of water flowing to the ocean is a waste and that the state should develop hydraulic infrastructure to capture as

much water as possible for human uses" [5] (p. 10). As understood from this definition, "hydraulic mission" refers to a paradigm change regarding issues related to water resource development, management, and ownership. Since the period of industrialization, the state control over water resources has significantly increased. Thanks to the development in technology, it has become possible for states to conduct extensive hydraulic development works to be able to control water resources thereby controlling nature and utilizing water resources as much as possible for human uses [9]. However, Wester's definition partly explains how the hydraulic mission serves as a tool to justify their extensive hydraulic development projects. The main problem with Wester's definition is that it does not explain why states seek to develop extensive hydraulic development projects justified and legitimized through the hydraulic mission. In this regard, Turton and Meissner provide a more comprehensive definition of hydraulic mission. Accordingly, they define hydraulic mission as "the overarching rationale that underpins the state's desire to establish conditions that are conducive to socioeconomic and political stability. As such it can be regarded as a form of ideology in the study of hydropolitics, infusing itself into the dominant or sanctioned discourse, serving to legitimize (and thereby sanction) this discourse" [16] (p. 38). The definition implies that state elites impose the hydraulic mission as a prevailing paradigm to enhance states' political, economic, and symbolic power. Here, enhancing states' political, economic and symbolic power is strongly related to state making that refers to "states' ability to accumulate power" [17] (p. 29); and nation-building that refers to "set of policies aimed at creating a common identity and sense of patriotism and loyalty toward the state" [18] (p. 488). Thus, in his seminal thesis, the *Water Nationalism*, Allouche [9] shows how state making and nation-building processes are inherently related to extensive hydraulic development led by the state. In this regard, the hydraulic mission informs water nationalism. In other words, discourses promoted by the state elites in the context of the hydraulic mission constitutes the main discursive component of states' water nationalisms. Therefore, in the more recent study concerning Egyptian water nationalism in the context of the Nile basin, Hanna and Allouche [19] (p. 91) label water nationalism conducted by the states as "national hydraulic missions at the domestic scale." Concerning the link between symbolic power and hydraulic mission, there are essentially two components. First, the idea that wild nature must be harnessed for the benefit of humankind is promoted by discursive elites in the context of hydraulic mission. For instance, in the inaugural ceremony of the Hoover Dam in the United States (US), president Roosevelt stated "pridefully, man acclaims his conquest of nature" [20] (p. 219).

Likewise, the extensive hydraulic development conducted by the State Hydraulic Works (DSI-Turkish acronym) is considered as "a battle between the steppe and the green" [21] (p. 19). Similar discourses that show the human enthusiasm to control and harness nature can be found in different contexts across the world. The discourses such as "to make the made rivers sane" [22] (p. 17); "War against nature", "to tame and domesticate rivers" [23] (p. 111); can be considered as typical examples. The second component is the idea that an entire water potential of any given watershed must be utilized for human needs. According to this view, any water that flows to the sea without being utilized is a wasted water [24]. Thanks to the technological advances in the 20th century, states are able to utilize the entire watershed, including mainstream rivers, its tributaries, groundwater resources, and so on. This idea of harnessing the watershed in its entirety was materialized for the first time when the US government founded the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in 1932. The TVA model was also applied across the country, after which it was cloned across the world primarily by developing nations [25]. The TVA model is considered as an effective tool to tackle socio-economic problems at the local level.

Second, discursive elites often portray large-scale hydraulic infrastructures as symbols of state's progress. In virtually all countries, the view that large-scale projects are symbols of national progress can be found. For instance, Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian prime minister at the time, described dams built in India as "the new temples of India" [26] (p. 33). Likewise, Kaika [27] shows how the Marathon dam is portrayed as a symbol of modernized and westernized Athens in Greece. Furthermore, states often name their large dams, reservoir lakes, irrigation systems after their influential national figures.

For example, the reservoir lake of the High Aswan Dam was named after Gamal Abdul Nasser in Egypt. In Syria, the reservoir lake of the largest Al-Tabqa Dam was named as Asad Lake. Similarly, the crown project of the GAP was named as the Ataturk Dam, and one of the largest dams in Jordan is named after late King Talal of Jordan. Such symbolism is also carried through visuals. For instance, many countries across the world put dam sites on their banknotes to enhance such symbolism. It is also worth noting that such symbolism also improves state's symbolic power, thereby it becomes a useful propaganda tool to strengthen its authority [11].

Concerning the role of extensive hydraulic development justified via hydraulic mission and states' economic, social, and political power, it is evident that hydraulic works play a vital role. As Meehan bluntly states, hydraulic works are "wellsprings of state power" [28] (p. 215). However, it would be misleading to consider hydraulic works as mere tools for socio-economic welfare of the country. In fact, technological advances in the early 20th century made possible to utilize water for different purposes such as increasing agricultural product via irrigation, generating alternative energy via hydropower generation and utilizing water to meet industrial and domestic needs.

Apart from these material benefits to socio-economic welfare, hydraulic works are also seen as strategic tools to enhance states' social and political power. In Wittfogel's pioneering study, *Oriental Despotism* (1957), the relationship between extensive hydraulic development and control and the foundation of authoritarian states constitutes the backbone of Wittfogel's thesis [29]. Accordingly, establishing large-scale flood control systems and irrigation networks, necessarily requires centralized-despotic and strong state-structures. Wittfogel's thesis was debated and it was challenged by later works since counter-examples are presented by these studies undermining the causal relationship between large-scale hydraulic works and emergence of strong states [30]. Yet, it is safe to say that examples can be found both in the past and present states, in which water resource development played a vital role in centralization of power and state-making processes. A wide range of academic works from different empirical contexts confirm the view that hydraulic works are important assets for states' authority over territory under their control and people within [31–33]. States establish strong water bureaucracies (hydraucracies), which are important elements of state making processes and centralization of power [34]. During this process of the hydraulic mission as a prevailing paradigm, centralization and bureaucratization in water resource development feed one another [35]. Furthermore, in many cases, extensive hydraulic development is not only considered as a recipe for socio-economic development, but it may be strategically linked with domestic matters such as secessionist aspirations. Empirical examples can be found in Turkey and Spain in which the state elites consider large-scale hydraulic development to curb ethnic secessionist aspirations to keep the territorial integrity of states [2,4,36]. Furthermore, large-scale hydraulic development projects are also portrayed as the progress of the state thereby helping to galvanize state's symbolic power [18]. As mentioned previously, portraying large-scale dams as symbols of national progress is one of the important elements of the hydraulic mission. Even though hydraulic mission has lost its attraction in developed countries, the appeal of building large-scale hydraulic infrastructures retains its symbolic value among developing countries in the world [37,38].

The latest research by Obertreis et al. [39] revisit and take Wittfogel's thesis further by investigating how new ways of conceptualising water, infrastructure, and rule can raise understandings of their interplay and interactions. For Obertreis et al. 2016, "it is only on the basis of the state-of-the-art on how water, infrastructure and political rule are understood today that it is possible to appreciate what new avenues of connectivity between them can be revealed and what fresh insights this can bring" (p. 169). It is also worth noting that the hydraulic mission does not only inform water nationalism, but it also strongly influences securitization of water resource development at the domestic level. Those states where hydraulic mission is a prevailing paradigm, state elites tend to give utmost priority to their hydraulic development in the context of the hydraulic mission. Therefore, where the hydraulic mission is a dominant paradigm, water resource development projects are often put beyond the political debate in which classical haggling process occur among a variety of interest groups, but in such contexts

these projects are “securitized”. When the issue is securitized, “the issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure” [40] (p. 24). Therefore, the Securitization Theory developed by the Copenhagen School is extensively used by the body of scholarly literature concerning water politics [41–43]. Especially in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region where hydraulic mission continues to be a prevailing paradigm, water resource development is often securitized by the ruling elites given the importance of water resources in the MENA region [44]. A concept linked to securitization is “de-securitization”, which implies that issues are moved back to the ordinary public sphere and out of the threat-defense sequence, in which they are phrased as threats against which countermeasures are needed. Instead, the concept of a-securitization relates to the technicalization of issues and projects [45,46].

## 2.2. International Dimension of the Hydraulic Mission

The hydraulic mission and the related concepts of water nationalism and securitization are discursive processes that occur mainly at the domestic level. However, the hydraulic mission also drives states to conduct extensive hydraulic projects strongly influencing the transboundary water policies of those states at the international level. As Allouche [9] convincingly shows in his framework of Water Nationalism, hydraulic mission often leads to unilateral development at the domestic level, which often leads conflict-prone relations at the transboundary level. In other words, when riparian states pursue their “national hydraulic missions” at the domestic level, it also strongly influences inter-riparian relations at the transboundary level [19] (p. 91). However, the impact of the hydraulic mission at the domestic level is not the only way in which the hydraulic mission influences the international level. As the empirical cases will show, the state elites may use their hydraulic mission as a foreign policy tool to increase their influential capacity at the international level. Even though the previous aspect of hydraulic mission abroad is researched extensively, relatively fewer studies systematically focused on this aspect. This aspect of hydraulic mission abroad can be conceptualized in the following ways. First, state elites may portray their large-scale hydraulic projects as symbols of their independence and self-determination. For instance, in his seminal work, Menga [18] shows how Tajik ruling elites portrayed the giant Rogun Dam project as a symbol to enhance state ideology and nation-making. On looking at the Rogun Dam case, Emomali Rahmon, the president of Tajikistan, claims the dam will enable “our beloved Tajikistan to take its rightful place among developed countries of the world” [18] (p. 485). Likewise, considering the construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam (GERD) in the Nile, the Ethiopian ruling elites consider the project as a matter of self-determination despite the criticisms from the downstream Egypt [12]. In a similar vein, the prominent leaders of the post-colonial world such as Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana launched large-scale dams in the context of their hydraulic mission, and they portrayed these projects as symbols “shedding the colonial past” [47] (p. 11). Therefore, it emerges in many empirical contexts that the hydraulic mission is portrayed as a symbol of nations’ self-determination that feeds nation-making and securitizes water resource development.

Moreover, drawing upon the Securitization Theory developed by the Copenhagen School [48], Warner argues that the perception of an existential threat and the defence mechanisms to overcome such a threat is not the only driver for state elites to securitize a certain issue [49]. This can be labelled as “the First-Order goals” [50] (p. 215). Warner contends that if an actor sees an opportunity to achieve higher goals, the opportunity logic becomes a governing behaviour. Therefore, “security risk is not just a ‘threat’ (inspired by fear) but also an ‘opportunity’ (inspired by desire)” [51] (p. 10). Warner labels it as “opportunitisation”. As actors seek to realize the first-order of security goals including protection, physical integrity, political legitimacy, self-sufficiency via securitization, the power asymmetry, and the political context might enable them to realize the “Second-order of Security goals” such as military expansion, power influence, further wealth and development via opportunitisation. As in the case of securitization, an actor may employ extraordinary measures in the context of opportunitisation. Therefore, securitization and opportunitisation are the flip side of the same coin [50]. The concept of

*opportunitisation* has explanatory power in understanding the rationale behind the behaviour of the upstream riparian states that introduce extensive hydraulic development projects in transboundary water settings. It can be argued that if the geographical and hydrological advantage of the upstream riparian state is supported by its material capacity (having technical expertise and economic strength, having military ability to repel possible military threats from the other actors), the upstream state might consider such an advantage as a useful tool to increase its capacity to influence at the regional level. However, this does not necessarily mean that the logic of securitization is not at work at all in such cases. While the logic of securitization can be identified within the hydraulic mission at home, the logic of *opportunitisation* is at work within the hydraulic mission abroad.

Finally, states having the high-level technical expertise, economic strength and regional and global political influence might consider their extensive hydraulic development projects as strategic tools to enhance their influential capacity. In such cases, the hydraulic mission becomes a foreign policy tool for those states to strengthen their capacity to influence at the regional or even global levels. For instance, during the Cold War the US actively exported its TVA to developing countries across the world [52]. During this period, the US Bureau of Reclamation became the primary agency which built dams across the world during the 20th century. The bureau conducted active missions in more than 50 countries, and it provided technical expertise in more than 100 countries across the world [53]. Sneddon argues that two main factors drive the US hydraulic aid towards “developing” nation states. First, exporting the hydraulic development in “developing” the world was considered as an effective strategy to curb the Soviet expansionism. Second, exporting the hydraulic development via the Bureau was regarded as an essential tool to extend US global economic and political hegemony [53].

In addition, large-scale hydraulic works were also popular in the Soviet Union. According to this view, scarce resources could be efficiently utilized via large-scale technologies that help enhance the political and cultural progress of the working class. Developing these large-scale technologies is driven by two main concerns: growing interests in mass production and *gigantomania* (*obsession to build large-scale infrastructures*) that displays Soviet technological advances [54]. Therefore, during the initial period of the Soviet Union, developing large-scale hydraulic infrastructures, such as giant dams in great rivers (the Don, Volga, Dnieper), extensive irrigation systems in arid and semi-arid regions located in Central Asia, were the significant features of this large-scale technological development [55]. After the Khrushchev period, the Soviet-style hydraulic mission became a foreign policy tool for the “peaceful transition” to socialism. Therefore, it became a strategic tool to enhance Soviet influence in newly founded states primarily in Africa and the Middle East [56]. For instance, the Soviet Union became the donor country in building the High Aswan Dam during this period [57]. Likewise, the Soviet-style of water resource development including giant dams and irrigation systems were adopted in Syria [58]. Considering global water policies informed by the hydraulic mission both in the US and the Soviet Union, those policies in security terms, discussed above, include both patterns of securitization and *opportunitisation*. Whereas dynamics of securitization is at work to curb the socio-political influence of the other party in the context of the Cold War, the dynamics of *opportunitisation* and what Zeitoun labels “the third order goals” (imposing the hydraulic mission at the global level) are also at work [50] (p. 216).

However, there is a difference between portraying a particular international water initiative as a symbol of peace and stability, and successfully implementing it. As shown in the next sections by the empirical cases, the following factors play a key role in determining success or failure of implementation of international water initiatives. First, power plays an important role. In fact, as the extensive body of the literature concerning hydro-hegemony demonstrates, it is the power relations that largely determines “who gets what” in hydropolitics [59]. Second, as Hussein and Grandi [14] show, political dynamics and the broader political context should also be taken into consideration to understand why certain water initiatives failed whereas others were successfully implemented. Finally, there might be certain technical and economic hurdles, which might prevent implementation of those international water initiatives.

To sum up, the hydraulic mission does not only support and call for extensive hydraulic development to ensure states' authority and influence at the domestic level, but it can also be considered as a tool to increase states' influence at the international level. While dynamics of securitization are at work in the former case, the dynamics of opportunitisation are at work in the latter one. As the case studies examined in the next sections will show, the Turkish context provides a rich empirical example.

### 3. Understanding Turkey's Hydraulic Mission Abroad

This section deploys the concepts of hydraulic mission at home and hydraulic mission abroad—which were discussed in Section 2 to analyse three empirical case studies to understand Turkey's hydraulic mission abroad. These three case studies were either proposed, but failed, or successfully conducted water initiatives since the 1980s. However, it is necessary to contextualize them within the broader geopolitical context.

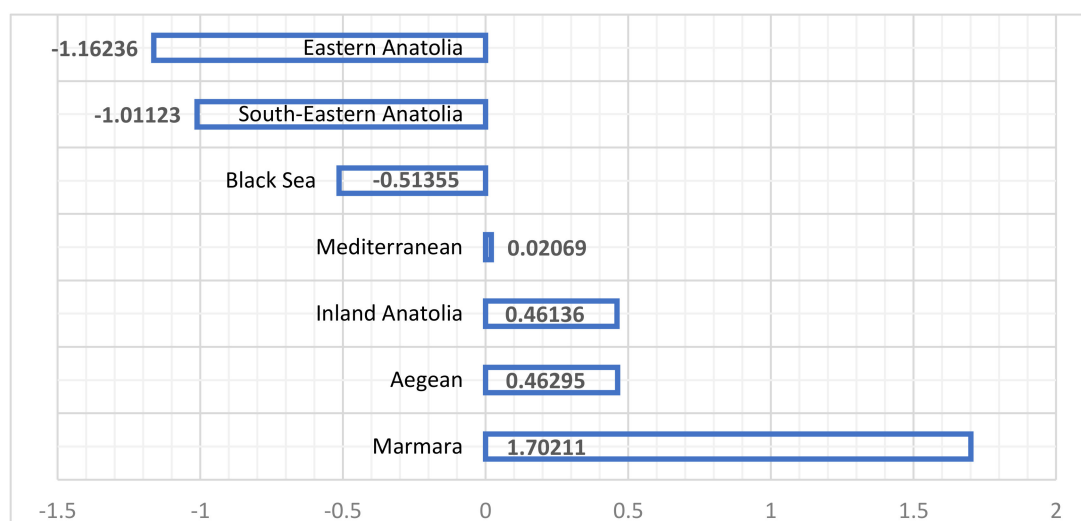
Throughout most of the Cold War period, the dynamics of the Cold War and Turkey's avoidance from being part of the Middle East politics has shaped Turkey's foreign policy towards the Middle East [60]. Neutrality in inter-Arab disputes and Arab-Israeli conflict avoidance from being part of unstable dynamics of the Middle East politics, maintaining the status-quo and avoiding from connecting its Middle East policy with its Western alliances (in order not be viewed as a "Trojan Horse of the western states" in the region) have constituted the central tenets of Turkey's Middle East policy [61]. Even though deviations from this policy approach can be identified in the particular time periods, this low-profile approach constituted the main essence of Turkey's Middle East policy.

In the context of the geopolitical transformations in the 1980s, the Turkish ruling elites had to reassess Turkey's security needs, which led to adopting a more assertive approach in Turkey's Middle East politics. Turkey's more assertive stance in Middle East affairs was not only driven by its changing threat perceptions, but it is also driven by the new opportunities. During his two-term tenure as Prime Minister between 1983 and 1989 and president until his death in 1993, Turgut Ozal was the architect of this view. Ozal argued that Turkey must depart from its low-profile foreign policy and it must establish good relations with its neighbouring countries in the Middle East. Turkey's active engagement with these countries, Ozal argues, would also transform Turkey as a bridge between the West and the Middle East [61]. In the context of this policy change, several water initiatives, including attempts to ease the tense relations with Syria concerning the Euphrates and Tigris Dispute, water pipeline initiatives were proposed by Turkey. By the end of the Cold War and onwards, the political development in the Middle East forced Turkey to prioritize the Middle East in its external relations. It is evident that after the Justice and Development Party (AKP, Turkish acronym) came to power, Ozal's legacy is carried by the AKP. In the similar line with Ozal's foreign policy doctrine, Turkey's Middle East policy in the AKP era is based upon two main pillars; strengthening political relations with the neighbouring countries, also labelled as zero-problem policy formulated by Ahmet Davutoglu, the former Turkish foreign then prime minister and acting as a mediator to resolve the existing conflicts [62]. Therefore, it is evident that Turkey's water initiatives have been considered as a foreign policy tool to enhance cooperation and Turkey's influential capacity in the region since the 1980s.

#### 3.1. Opportunitizing the GAP: Understanding its International Dimension

The GAP is one of the largest regional development projects of its kind in the world based on extensive hydraulic development. The project consists of building 22 dams and 19 hydropower plants on the Euphrates and Tigris basin and it seeks to irrigate 1.693027 ha of land. The GAP is the greatest public investment initiative ever conducted by the Turkish governments in the history of Turkey. The project area corresponds to approximately 10% of Turkey's total surface area, as well as its population [63,64]. Concerning the international dimension of the GAP, the project provided Turkey a strategic advantage in the region owing to following reasons. First, Turkey, by being an upstream riparian state of the Euphrates and Tigris basin, enjoys a pivotal position, since approximately 75% of the entire watershed originates within the Turkish territory [65]. These geographical and hydrological

facts provide Turkey a strategic advantage in the basin. Second, Turkey has a considerable economic capacity and technical expertise regarding the hydraulic development, enabling her to finance and built large-scale hydraulic infrastructures. Apart from its resources, the Turkish government was able to secure international funds by using its political alliances in the past [66]. Recently, privatisation has become another attractive model for Turkey to finance the hydraulic development projects [67]. Third, Turkey has considerable military power along with its strategic alliance with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Therefore, downstream riparian states were unable to deter Turkey from building, carrying on the GAP. As Ahmet Davutoglu, the former Turkish Prime Minister argues in his prominent book, *Strategic Depth* [68], Turkey has a supreme geopolitical and military advantage vis-a-vis Syria. Therefore, Syria cannot risk an armed conflict in the Euphrates and Tigris basin. Similar assessment can be made between Turkey and Iraq. Given Turkey's great military might along with its strategic alliance with the NATO, risking a war for water or using bellicose statements are not viable options for Iraq either. Finally, Turkey's bargaining position has also increased due to the de-stabilization in Iraq, and thereafter in Syria, since the 1980s. Since Iraq was preoccupied with a series of armed conflicts (Iran-Iraq War, Invasion of Kuwait followed by the UN intervention, the US invasion), it was only Syria that sought to balance Turkey's water development attempts in the Euphrates and Tigris basin. While Iraq never returned to political stability after the US invasion, Syria also descended into chaos in the Arab Spring process [69,70]. Apart from geopolitical and strategic advantages, the GAP would also provide Turkey a strategic position in the region. Dursun Yildiz, a former high-ranking DSI official and the head of the Hydropolitics Academy, emphasizes the enormous reservoir capacity which Turkey would reach upon the completion of the GAP [71]. According to Yildiz the GAP would provide Turkey a strategic advantage in the region as Turkey can control the pivotal waters of the Euphrates and Tigris basin. He further argues that economic benefits gained through the GAP would enhance Turkey's influence in the Middle East, since Turkey would gain significant socio-economic benefits via the GAP [72]. Likewise, the official report, the Survey on Socio-Economic Development Levels of Provinces and Regions (2003), published by the State Planning Agency, shows that the Southeastern Anatolian region continues to be one of the least developed regions in terms of socio-economic development indices, as the Figure 1, below, illustrates in the report below.



**Figure 1.** The Socio-economic development indexes in Turkey according to region [73].

In this regard, the report also argues that socio-economic backwardness of the region is the main reason behind the immigration from the region. The report also states that the GAP would reverse this population movement by expanding irrigated agricultural fields, and by galvanizing agro-based industrial development in the region [73].



It is also worth noting that the progress of the GAP has entered a new stage by 2000 and onwards owing to changes both internally and externally. Internally, after the AKP came to power in 2002, infrastructural development, such as building motorways, bridges, and dams have become a main strategy to retain the popular support to the ruling party. Turkey's good economic performance in this period would enable the government to allocate more financial resources to revitalize the GAP, which had slowed down during the 1990s. As the AKP government further accelerated the privatisation in water resource development, which started by the 1980s and continued onwards [74]. The growing involvement of the private sector and international capital in dam building in the world also provided an ample opportunity to the government for financing large hydraulic works in the GAP without draining its public resources. Externally, Turkey has faced no considerable challenges from the downstream riparian states due to the following reasons. As stated above Iraq and Syria had to deal with political struggles at the domestic level. Furthermore, Turkey has been able to continue the GAP in spite of the downstream activities to curb the project during the 1980s and 1990s. Therefore, some of the large-scale hydraulic infrastructures had already been realized in this period. The completed infrastructures have enabled further leverage to the Turkish government, and they have significantly increased their capacity to influence in the Euphrates and Tigris basin. For instance, considering the recent memoranda of understanding (MoU) signed between Turkey and Syria on water issues, it is safe to say that the Turkish government was able to impose its official position in these documents [10]. Therefore, the opportunitisation logic is at work at the international level along with the securitisation logic at the domestic level in the GAP project.

However, Turkey's hydraulic mission in the Euphrates and Tigris basin has certain limits.

The Turkish government regards water as a catalyst for cooperation rather than a source of conflict" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018). However, Turkey's hydraulic endeavours in the Euphrates and Tigris basin were considered as a significant threat by the downstream riparian states. Here, perceived identities played a vital role. For instance, according Baathist elites in Syria, Turkey does not pursue its policies but the policies of the foreign powers, primarily Israel and the US. In other words, Turkey is acting as a proxy agent of the West and using water to deprive its Arab neighbours [75]. Therefore, the downstream riparian states, Syria and Iraq, adopted variety of counter bargaining power strategies, given that military solution is not an option for the downstream riparian countries. These strategies include curbing the international financing for the project, making indirect alliances with armed groups such as the PKK in Turkey, formal protests and official notes during bilateral and trilateral negotiations concerning water issues [76]. In such a political context, the Turkish proposals, such as the Three-Stage Plan, which prospected inventory studies on land and water for each riparian state, were rejected by the downstream riparian states [77]. Therefore, the GAP is regarded as an existential threat by the downstream riparian states, which would enable Turkey to establish a regional hegemony in spite of Turkey's attempts to portray the project as a source of prosperity for the region.

### 3.2. *Water Exports Initiatives to the Middle East: Using Water as a Foreign Policy Tool*

As discussed in Section 2.1, the dynamics of opportunitisation are not only at work at the transboundary water settings. In fact, when states acquire more technical expertise, political influence, and economic strengths, they might begin to introduce international water initiatives to extend their influence regionally and globally. In this regard, the Turkish governments have introduced several regional water initiatives in the Middle East during the 1980s and 1990s. These water initiatives, aiming at exporting large amounts of water from Turkey to the Middle East, were in line with Turkey's Middle East policy of the 1980s. This article argues that as Turkey has adopted a more proactive involvement in the Middle East political affairs since the 1980s, these proposed water transfer projects were considered by the Turkish governments as effective strategic tools to increase its influence at the regional level.

One of the overarching rationales behind Turkey's great hydraulic mission stems from the geographical, hydrological and climatic necessities. Eroglu, the minister of the Forestry and Water

Affairs, has stated that since there are high-level seasonal fluctuations in Turkey's rivers, it is imperative for Turkey to increase its reservoir capacity [78]. Furthermore, Turkey's water resources are also unevenly distributed. In other words, while there is water abundance in particular regions, there are water shortages in others. Water transfer projects are the primary solutions for this problem, which were applied in particularly highly populated areas, such as Istanbul and Ankara [79]. In this regard, Turkey's Mediterranean region located in the southern part of the country enjoys relatively abundant water. To utilize this water potential in the region, The Turkish government has introduced extensive water transfer projects both at the regional level.

Water transfer projects via pipelines from Turkey's southern regions to the Middle East is the first international water initiatives proposed by the Turkish government. Utilizing water surplus in the southern part of Turkey to abroad has a longer past, which can be traced back to late 1980s. The Turkish government introduced numbers of water transfer projects to use water as a strategic tool in its diplomacy in the Middle East. The first water transfer project proposed by the Turkish government in 1986 was the Peace Pipeline Project. The project prospected transferring a significant amount of water resources from the Seyhan and Ceyhan rivers located in Southern Turkey to the Middle East [80]. According to the plan, approximately 10 million cubic meters of water per day would be transferred from the Seyhan and Ceyhan rivers to the Middle East via two pipelines. While the route of the first pipeline (the Western Pipeline) would supply water to major cities including Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Amman, Medina, and Jeddah, the second pipeline (the Gulf Pipeline) would have used the same route with the Trans-Arab Oil Pipeline. It would have provided water to Gulf countries [81]. The total cost of the Western and the Gulf Pipelines were estimated to be \$8 billion USD and \$12 billion USD, respectively [82]. The peace pipeline project can be seen as a strategic tool which would enable Turkey to play a more active role in the Middle East.

However, while the domestic initiatives were completed successfully, the international water initiatives to the Middle East were failed. Turkish proposal was rejected by the oil-rich Gulf States. Both economic and political factors played a role in the rejection of the Turkish plan. About financial matters, the recipient countries argued that the total cost of the projects is too much considering the benefits. They also argued installing desalination plants rather than a pipeline is a much cheaper option for the oil-rich Gulf States since they do not have to be worried about the energy costs for these plants. As Gruen [83] points out the pipeline would create another Upstream vs. Downstream situations in the region thereby those states located in the downstream reaches of the pipeline will be much more vulnerable in the case of possible water disruptions of the upstream water flow. Given that Turkey already enjoys a pivotal position in the Euphrates and Tigris basin, the pipeline would provide further leverage to Turkey. Thus, public campaigns were waged that claimed to curb the plan. Bilen [82] states that those against the pipeline project claimed that Turkey seeks to revive the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East, and it aims to establish hegemony by using water. Finally, Gruen [83] also showed that some experts also questioned the seriousness of the Turkish proposal in the first place. They argue that the project seeks to deflect the criticisms levelled at Turkey regarding its extensive upstream development in the Euphrates and Tigris basin.

Therefore, the project was never materialized. After the first project was rejected, the Turkish government proposed a more modest pipeline plan. The new plan was basically proposing a shorter pipeline which would end in Jordan by passing through Syria. The annual amount of water being transferred from Turkey to Jordan estimated to be 2.19 billion cubic meters per year. The Turkish experts argue that the project would significantly remedy water shortages of Jordan and Palestine, thereby contributing to the peace and stability in the region [82]. However, this project was also never materialized due to the similar economic and political concerns stated above. These failed attempts show that in spite of the persistent labelling of these projects as catalyst for peace in the Middle East by the Turkish ruling elites, there are political, economic, and technical limitations of Turkey's hydraulic mission abroad. To understand why these projects never materialized, it is necessary to draw from theories of power and broader political context. As shown by Hussein and Grandi [13,14]. It is

necessary to consider power asymmetries within the broader political context in order to understand why certain regional projects are successful and others fail. If a country, for instance Turkey, aims at having these initiatives to be successful, it would need power and the relevant political context combined together. Only in that case such projects can result to be successful. Powerful countries would use water to get more power and non-powerful ones use power to get more water, which may allow them to gain more economic power. Countries also need the power to be able to use such initiatives; hence, it is necessary to consider the broader political context to understand when and how countries can use water to further enhance their power. The empirical cases in this article confirm this.

Even though Turkey's water plans regarding the Middle East failed in the 1980s and the early 1990s, the Turkish ruling elites continued to consider the water surplus in its Mediterranean region as a foreign policy tool in its relations with Middle Eastern countries. In the second half of the 1990s, Turkey's relations with Arab countries, primarily with Syria, deteriorated mainly owing to water disputes in the Euphrates and Tigris and Syria's active support to the separatist movements in Turkey. Particularly, the Syrian government was the primary supporter of the PKK during the 1980s and 1990s [84]. The worsening relations between Turkey and Syria brought the two states on the verge of war in Ocalan Crisis in 1998 [85]. In this political environment, Turkey sought to strengthen political ties with Israel and the two countries realized cooperation in the military field [86]. The Israeli government also showed its interests in purchasing water from the Manavgat River, located in the southern part of Turkey. After a round of talks between 2002 and 2004, the Turkish and Israeli government signed a deal on water purchase from the Manavgat River. According to the agreement, Israel would purchase 50 billion cubic meters of water annually from the Manavgat River. Ugur Ziyal, the deputy minister of Foreign Affairs who signed the deal, stated that the agreement has particular importance in the Turkish-Israeli relations and it may also be a cooperation model for other countries in the region. His Israeli counterpart, Yoav Biran, also emphasized the strategic, political and diplomatic importance of the deal [87]. Namık Tan, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the time stated the Turkish-Israeli deal would contribute to promoting peace and stability in the Middle East [88]. In the same vein, Mithat Rende, the retired Turkish diplomat who served as the deputy head of Environment and Water division in the ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that "Turkey's unused waters flowing into the Mediterranean" would de-escalate tense relations on water in the region, and the deal will help creation of comprehensive and durable cooperation in the region [81] (p. 170).

However, even though an agreement was signed this time, once again political and economic matters did not allow the implementation of the Turkish-Israeli water deal. Concerning economic reasons, the rise of oil prices significantly increased the transportation costs. Moreover, it became also clear that the water cannot be carried via oil tanks since it will decrease the water quality. Building specific tanks for carrying water meant further costs. In the press release published by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is stated that even though the deal was suspended, Turkish government would continue to negotiate with the potential new buyers from the Middle East for possible water transfer projects after the privatization of the water facilities in the Manavgat River [89]. Furthermore, Turkey's reliability as a water exporter was also put on a question in the Israeli side. These concerns further increased after the AKP came to power in Turkey, which vehemently criticizes policies of Israel. Thus, the relations between the two countries have notably worsened in the following periods. After the flotilla crisis in 2010, the Turkish government decided to suspend all the ongoing joint projects with Israel. Diplomatic ties were almost broken between the two parties. Therefore, the Turkish government declared that it has no intention re-vitalize a similar water deal with Israel soon [90].

This section shows that since Turkey's involvement in Middle Eastern affairs have gradually increased by the 1980s and onwards, the Turkish ruling elites have considered Turkey's strategic hydraulic advantage in the region accompanied by growing economic and engineering capacity as a tool to enhance Turkey's influential capacity in the region. Therefore, a variety of water initiatives have been adopted since the 1980s. However, these initiatives were failed as the recipient countries have rejected Turkey's proposals due to the political, economic and technical reasons. Concerning

political factors, the mutual distrust between the countries in the Middle East created a big obstacle. Therefore, even though these initiatives were promoted as a catalyst for peace by the Turkish elites, it was perceived as an attempt to establish a regional hegemony by using water.

Furthermore, the proposed pipeline was supposed to pass through a number of countries, which creates other upstream-downstream dichotomies among the states as in the case of transboundary watersheds. Finally, as it can be seen in the context of Turkish-Syrian and Turkish-Israeli relations in the different time periods, the bilateral relations rapidly change in the region. In other words, the political relations are also as erratic as the watersheds in the Middle East. Such an unstable political context also created another obstacle for realization of these initiatives. Concerning the economic factors, large sums of money had to be allocated to realize such an extensive water transfer project. Notably, the Gulf States having enormous energy resources found constructing desalinization plants as more feasible and less politically risky. Therefore, they preferred to increase their desalinization capacity to remedy their water shortages. Finally, the project has not been found technically feasible, which can never be realized by the recipient countries. Turkey's water export initiatives since the 1980s show that in the line Turkey's changing perception to the Middle East in its foreign policy, the Turkish ruling elites began to consider Turkey's hydraulic mission as a useful tool to increase its political influence at the regional level. However, as indicated at the beginning, the failed attempts also show limits of Turkey's hydraulic mission as a foreign policy tool.

### *3.3. The Peace Water Project: An Attempt to Establish a Pax Aquarum*

As stated above, after the AKP came to power in 2002, it has pursued Ozal's foreign policy doctrine in the regional affairs. Thus, despite the failures of the previous water initiatives, the Turkish government continued to develop similar water transfer projects. In this vein, the most recent, and perhaps the most ambitious, water transfer project conducted by the Turkish government is the Water Transfer Project from Turkey to Cyprus, also known as the Peace Water Project.

Unlike the previous water initiatives, the recipient state of the Peace Water Project is Cyprus not the countries in the Middle East. As the following empirical evidence suggests, the similar logic of enhancing Turkey's regional influence constitutes the main political rationale in the Peace Water Project. Moreover, looking at the empirical evidence, it is safe to argue that the Turkish ruling elites considered the Peace Water Project as the first phase of the upcoming water transfer projects that would extend the pipeline beyond Cyprus, primarily to the Middle East. When we examine the bilateral framework agreement between Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) concerning the project, it is stated that "the Turkish government—without abandoning its responsibilities derived from this agreement—retains its right to sell water to the third-party country or countries" [91] (Article 2). In the same vein with Article 2 of the Framework Agreement signed between Turkey and the TRNC, the Turkish officials already revealed that "the Peace Water Project" can be extended to the Middle East. For instance, in his recent visit to Jordan, it was reported that President Erdogan has already offered to his Jordanian counterpart, King Abdullah, to extend "the Peace Water Project" by building a second pipeline from Cyprus to Jordan [92]. Likewise, Tugrul Turkes, the former deputy prime minister, stated that "Hopefully, we can give this water to the Greek side afterwards. Israel also needs water. We can give it there too" [93]. These statements show that the Turkish elites do not only consider the Peace Water Project as a unique water transfer project on its own to remedy the chronic water problem of the TRNC, but they also view it as a part of the broader political agenda; in other words, the perspective of using water as a strategic instrument to increase regional influence persists.

To tackle the problem of water scarcity in the TRNC, the Turkish government introduced the Peace Water Project, which would transfer water from Turkey's south to Cyprus. The project consists of three elements; the construction of the Alakopru dam in the Turkish part and the canal transferring water from the dam to the Mediterranean Sea, the construction of the 80-km long pipelines from Turkey to Cyprus, and construction of the Gecitkoy dam in Northern Cyprus [94]. The project commenced on

7 March 2011 with the construction of the Alakopru Dam in Southern Turkey. Despite the magnitude of the project, it was completed swiftly by 2015 and inaugurated on 17 October 2015.

In the inauguration ceremony of the project, Mustafa Akinçi, the president of the TRNC stated that “Water has become more important than oil as the world experiences global warming. This water will increase the production of Cyprus. Our yellow color [referring to the island’s landscape] will return green. This type of project means building the TRNC which can stand on its own [Emphasize added, author’s translation]” [95]. In the inauguration, Ahmet Davutoğlu, the PM at the time, stressed that the project would strengthen the ties between Turkey and Cyprus. He stated that “We are building a water bridge between Turkey and Cyprus, the like of which has not been done before in the world . . . Here we declare the world that Turkey and Cyprus have been intertwined together, which cannot be separated anymore. [Author’s translation]” [95].

After the completion of the water transfer infrastructures both in Turkey and Cyprus, the DSI has also swiftly completed the canals and water networks in the island which would bring the transferred water to the different corners of the island. The project prospects are moving 75 million cubic meters of water from Turkey to Cyprus per year. Roughly half of the water will be used for domestic use to meet growing water demand in Northern Cyprus, and the other half would be allocated to irrigation [96]. With these features, the project is a unique water transfer project, the likes of which have not been built before [97].

However, it would be misleading to consider the Peace Water Project as purely a hydraulic infrastructure construction. It is a continuation of Turkey’s hydraulic mission beyond its borders. As Hofmann [98] (p. 281) highlights the both unilateral water initiatives conducted in the Northern and Southern Cyprus with the strong third party involvements cannot be understood without considering the geopolitical context. Since the project is inherently linked with the long-standing Cyprus conflict, it could make the resolution of the conflict even more complicated than it currently is [98]. Therefore, the Peace Water Project does carry strong geopolitical and symbolic considerations.

According to Huseyin Gokcekus, a Turkish-Cypriot academic and the coordinator of the project states that the project shows Turkey’s power and its progress. For Gokcekus, the project will give Turkey a “leadership role” in future in similar projects in the region, while it will also play a vital role in resolving acute water shortages that Cyprus experiences [99]. The project is portrayed as the “project of the century”. Furthermore, both scholars and policy-makers emphasized the possible political outcomes of the project. In this regard, Mehmet Hasguler, a Turkish-Cypriot academic and member of TRNC higher education council, argues that the Peace Water Project would provide an upper hand to the Turkish-Cypriots in negotiations for the resolution of the long-standing Cyprus conflict [100]. Hasguler [101] also argues that, as in the case of the European Coal and Steel Community experience, the Turkish and Greek sides can realize resource-based cooperation based upon the recently discovered hydrocarbons and water. Thus, an offer was already made to the Greek Cypriots. In the inaugural ceremony, President Erdogan stated that “ . . . I hope entire Cyprus would benefit from this water, which can meet the water demands of the Island, as a result of permanent and just resettlement of the Cyprus issue [Author’s translation]” [102].

However, as in the previous water initiatives, this Turkish initiative also created problems, and even resentment, among the recipients of the project. Unsurprisingly, the Greek Cypriots strongly opposed to the project. The day after the project was inaugurated, Yiannakis Omirou, the former president of the Greek-Cypriot Parliament, described the project as “a flagrant violation of international law”. Omirou argued that the project seeks integration of the “occupied territories” to the Turkish heartland. Therefore, the project must be condemned strongly, and the European Union and the United Nations must condemn such actions [103]. Likewise, Michalis Lytas, the head of Greek Cypriot Farmer’s union, states even though there is an urgent need for water, he does not trust the Turkish motives. By referring to the old saying, he argues, “it may start as a gift . . . but eventually, they will take your whole house” [104].

The opposition to the project did not only come from the other side of the island but also came from within Northern Cyprus. The political parties and non-state entities located in the far-left in the political spectrum, environmental groups, labour unions declared their opposition to the project. For instance, an activist from the Baraka Cultural Centre, the radical left-wing NGO, describes the project as a “provincialisation of Cyprus” rather than integration. He opposes the idea of selling water and the very marketisation and privatization process [105]. In a similar vein, the left-wing New Cyprus Party (YKP, Turkish acronym) argues that just like the 1974 operation was dressed up as a peace operation, the privatisation and marketisation of water is dressed up as “peace water” via this project. The YKP also emphasizes environmental (the environmental impact of the whole infrastructure built both in Turkey and Cyprus) and societal (displacement of local population in Turkey due to the construction of the Alakopru Dam) adverse impacts of the project [106]. Thus, these groups of actors organized a rally in Nicosia in the same day the project was inaugurated to show their opposition and resentment for the project. These concerns and opposition from within Northern Cyprus support the claim that the project will likely to render Northern Cyprus even more dependent on Turkey [107]

Finally, the issue of governing water resources that are brought to the island created another issue area. After the project was completed, the issue of “who will govern water?” was disputed between the Turkish government and the TRNC. While the provincial municipalities backed by the Republican Turkish Party demanded administration of water that would be transferred via the project, the Turkish government insisted that the municipalities do not have the institutional capacity to administer the project. Therefore, the administration should be conducted by the private sector [108]. The disagreement led to tension between the Turkish government and the TRNC government [109]. Regarding the issue, the coalition government in the TRNC was also divided. Whereas the right-wing National Union Party agreed with the Turkish government, the left-wing Republican Turkish Party supported to municipalities. As a result, the political crisis constituted one of the core reasons behind the collapse of the coalition government in Northern Cyprus [110]. It appears that the issue continues to be a disputed issue area in the political agenda of Cyprus, considering the importance of water for the Island.

#### 4. Discussion

As discussed above, the Turkish case provides a rich empirical case study concerning the deployment of the hydraulic mission both at home and abroad. Looking at Turkey’s both domestic (as in the case of the GAP Project) international water initiatives in general, the paper finds that as Turkey’s foreign policy has shifted to a more assertive stance in its regional affairs since the 1980s, these water initiatives have also been considered as a means to enhance Turkey’s influence in the region. Therefore, from this aspect just like the Turkish government securitized its extensive hydraulic development program in the context of the hydraulic mission to enhance its authority at the domestic level since the foundation of the Republic, the similar political rationale can also be found in Turkey’s international water initiatives.

However, as the empirical evidence illustrated above shows, while some of these initiatives were politically contested but successfully implemented, others politically contested and failed. The GAP and the Peace Water Project to Cyprus are the water initiatives that are successfully implemented. However, this does not necessarily mean that these projects were not politically contested. In both cases, the projects were politically contested. In the context of the GAP, the downstream riparian states have opposed the project from the very beginning. They have exerted certain power tactics to be able to curb the implementation of the project during the 1980s and the 1990s. In the context of the Peace Water Project, the issue of how to govern the water coming from Turkey was disputed between Turkey and the TRNC government.

Furthermore, environmental and anti-privatization groups also opposed the project. Greek Cypriots also opposed the project. However, the Turkish governments were able to implement these two water initiatives despite these oppositions. Here, it is worth noting that both projects were

implemented either domestically (as the case of the GAP) or quasi-domestically (as in the case of the Peace Water Project) contexts. Therefore, the Turkish government, having political authority and influence, economic power, and technical expertise, were able to implement these projects.

Unlike the GAP and the Peace Water Project, Turkey's water export initiatives to the Middle East failed. Considering the empirical evidence derived from the cases, those water initiatives were failed due to the following reasons. First and foremost, Turkey's political influence and authority, economic power and technical expertise enabled her to implement these projects successfully despite the criticisms and oppositions at the domestic and quasi-domestic structures. However, implementing these projects that require the approval of the neighbouring states was beyond Turkey's power grip. Therefore, the Turkish government has been unable to impose its political agenda.

Second, ideational factors also played an important role that resulted in rejection from the recipient states. In the eyes of Turkey's Arab neighbours, Turkey seeks to implement its regional hegemony by using water. Furthermore, it is also argued that Turkey does not conduct these projects on its own. Instead, it acts as the proxy agent of western imperialism. These perceptions, whose roots can be found in the Ottoman Empire period and the Cold War, constituted an obstacle for cooperation. Third, the unstable political environment of the Middle East also constituted another obstacle. Just like the water resources regimes in the Middle East, the political relationships between Turkey and its neighbours are erratic. For instance, while the political rapprochement between Turkey and Israel made inter-state water transfer negotiations possible between the two countries in the 1990s, as the bilateral relations have gradually worsened in the 2000s, the deal also has never returned to their political agenda. Fourth, the distinctive character of Middle East political dynamics also constituted an obstacle. In the Middle East political context, it was almost impossible for Turkey to propose a water transfer project to the Arab World and Israel at the same time. Concerning the Middle East political context, it is also worth noting that implementation of the water pipeline from Turkey to the Middle East means the creation of new upstream vs. downstream situations in the region. In other words, apart from the "natural" upstream vs. downstream transboundary water settings, it would mean the creation of artificial upstream vs. downstream conditions that often leads to conflict in the Middle East. Fifth, economic factors also constituted an obstacle for implementation. For example, considering the oil-rich Gulf States, desalinization is found economically more viable and politically less risky due to the above-stated reasons. Finally, there are technical obstacles that prevent implementation of Turkey's proposals. For example, carrying large sums of water via tanks was found to be neither cost-effective nor technically viable. After the Turkish-Israeli deal, it became clear that carrying fresh water via oil tanks would significantly decrease the quality of water. Building specific tanks for water transfer meant further costs.

Finally, the article concludes by suggesting appropriate areas for future research on the Cyprus case. Even though the study looked at the case of the Peace Water Project as Turkey's most recent water initiative abroad, more in-depth studies are needed to understand the social, economic, political, and environmental impact of the Peace Water Project in Cyprus.

## 5. Conclusions

This study analysed the hydraulic mission of the Turkish state both at home and abroad. This article provided a conceptual framework that shows states having the geographical advantage, economic power, technical capacity, and political influence may regard their extensive hydraulic development program as a foreign policy tool. Here, the study integrated Warner's concept of opportunitisation into a conceptual framework concerning the hydraulic mission abroad. The study argued that, in the context those states having more power capabilities than others, the water resource development projects are securitized internally and opportunitised externally, which are informed by the hydraulic mission. Therefore, these states consider their international water initiatives as foreign policy tools to enhance their regional, or even global, influence.

The analysis of the hydraulic mission abroad in the case of Turkey investigated the following three cases: The Southeastern Anatolian Project (GAP), the Water Export Initiatives to the Middle East, and the Water Transfer Project to Cyprus, namely the Peace Water Project. Being informed by an in-depth investigation of those three case studies, this study showed that ambitious hydraulic development projects conducted by the Turkish government do not only serve to keep peace and stability at the domestic level, but they are also strategic tools to enhance Turkey's influence abroad. However, this study also showed the necessity to consider power asymmetries and the role of the broader political context to understand why such initiatives abroad are successful or fail.

**Author Contributions:** Both co-authors contributed to a different extent to conceiving and designing the research, analysing the data, and writing up the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Acknowledgments:** The authors are grateful to Mark Zeitoun for his comments and feedback on previous drafts of this manuscript.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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