

# Turkey's Water Diplomacy: A Theoretical Discussion

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## 1 Introduction

The term 'water diplomacy' connotes explicit and purposeful communication between representatives of different states charged with negotiating a resolution to contentious issues related to the mutual use of common rivers. In fact, though, communication is seldom confined to the formal exchange of official views, as these issues often encourage harder forms of bargaining. As the entrenchment of opposing legal positions tends to prevail at the formal diplomatic level, states are inclined to employ more tacit exercises of influence using means ranging from positive inducements to coercion.

It is unsurprising that upstream-downstream constellations protract riverine disputes. Indeed, Realist International Relations theory, depicting international politics as an anarchic realm that compels states, the main actors, to be rationally preoccupied with survival (i.e., territorial sovereignty and integrity), to mistrust each other, to minimize interdependence, and to maximize relative gains in a zero-sum setting, all of which make relations competitive and war-prone, aptly applies to riverine conflicts. Basin states in geographically asymmetrical positions tend to advance legal principles that correspondingly oppose each other, with upstreamers espousing territorial sovereignty and equitable utilization, and downstreamers advocating territorial integrity and no appreciable harm to (their) prior uses. Moreover, because upstream developments often instil fear of material losses in downstream states, the latter employ coercive linkage strategies to forestall these events, exacerbating conflict.

Despite their conflictive tendency, however, upstream-downstream interactions rarely, if ever, end in 'water war'. Basin states also negotiate solutions, even if environmental and human-rights concerns are rarely incorporated, to problems of water scarcity associated with flow-altering hydrological installations. Most of

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Turkey's (trans-)boundary rivers feature agreements, albeit generally bilateral and sometimes informal, to divide water volumes, convene joint technical organs, establish joint construction projects and exchange data. According to Liberal International Relations theory, trade ties and regimes can shift state preferences in a more peaceful direction. That is, states may choose to address scarcity issues, and the uncertainty that surrounds them, by demanding new information necessary to craft solutions, and negotiations based on data exchange may reinforce cooperative behaviour. Furthermore, positive linkage strategies, employed especially by outside parties who can supply material inducements or enmesh disputants into integrative relationships that lessen the saliency of the zero-sum quality of the immediate conflict, can also play a valuable role.

Realism and Liberalism are rationalist approaches, assuming interests to be fixed in interactions, with variation only in strategies states use to attain their preferences. These theories suggest that cooperation is conditioned to different extents by objective material parameters, discounting the potential for change residing in social aspects of international relations. The Constructivist approach to International Relations inverts this rationalist-materialist logic, suggesting that it is the broader social context of relations that imbues material objects with their most essential meaning, the one that informs actors in a relationship how they should act towards the objects in question. Participants in an interaction engage in non-verbal as well as discursive actions, which are guided by shared understandings of identities, interests and appropriate behavioural norms and in turn either reproduce these understandings or change them in ways that improve cooperation or exacerbate conflict. For instance, while the issuance of *fait accomplis* reflects its relatively advantageous material position, even a salient upstream country like Turkey (i.e., vis-à-vis the Tigris-Euphrates system) has exhibited concern over its 'water rich' image, while implicitly accepting that its preferred legal principle of 'equitable and reasonable utilization' might be transformed from an instrumental negotiating stance into a more principled mode of reaching a flexible multilateral solution. Moreover, crucial shifts in the larger social context of basin-state relations have also influenced the probability of resolving specific water disputes.

The three aforementioned theoretical frameworks pertaining to international conflict and cooperation are surveyed below. Each successive section delineates the main assumptions and arguments of the respective approaches—Realism, Liberalism and Constructivism—before turning to discuss how each paradigm accounts for different aspects of Turkey's transboundary water relations.

## 2 Realism

Realism is highly applicable to analysis of transboundary water relations. This theory of International Relations depicts international politics as an anarchic realm where the main actors, i.e. states, assumed to be strategically rational, pursue the essential goal of survival, specifically territorial sovereignty and

integrity. Because states can never fully ascertain whether others are defensively motivated—that is, attempting to maximize their respective levels of security to protect what they have already attained, or offensively driven to attain more than what they have, they inherently mistrust each other and prefer to be as self-sufficient as possible (Waltz 1979). States in this 'self-help' system thus experience irremediable degrees of insecurity that compel them to maximize relative gains and capabilities (Grieco 1993), thereby transforming most of their mutual interactions into zero-sum games. Consequently, international politics is competitive and war-prone.

Realism is not monolithic. One controversy within this school of thought centres on whether states are security seekers or power maximizers. Defensive Realists hold that states generally require only a certain minimum level of capability to be secure, with pursuit of additional increments signalling aggressive motives and consequently triggering counter-balancing behaviour by others. This presupposes that defensive capabilities have an advantage over, and can be differentiated from, offensive ones, making it possible for a state to obtain security without threatening others. Conversely, Offensive Realists argue not only that the difficulty of ascertaining motives is compounded by a fundamental similarity between defensive and offensive means, but also that anarchy and uncertainty about intentions compel states to ensure their survival by maximizing power, thereby fuelling the 'security dilemma' (Mearsheimer 2001, 20-21, 35-36). For example, upstream-downstream disputes have the potential to escalate because, in an atmosphere of mistrust featuring a perceived lack of full disclosure of plans and data (typical of competition between rival powers), the same hydrological installations that relevant upstream-state authorities explicitly support, as designed to enhance an array of national socio-economic goals tend, to be criticized in downstream states as threatening to their own economic security. Therefore, downstream-state officials typically try to deter or slow the completion of upstream projects and may in turn incur greater hostility, and heighten the resolve to finish the projects, on the part of upstream-state actors.

Another issue revolves around whether unipolar orders are more stabilizing for the international political system than multipolar (or bipolar) ones. Defensive Realism embodies 'balance-of-threat' theory, which holds that counter-balanced states have to possess aggressive *intentions* in addition to aggregate power, offensive capabilities and geographical proximity (Walt 1987, 21-26). Consequently, even hegemons can choose *not* to adopt capabilities, postures and strategies that make others insecure. Hegemonic Stability Theory goes so far as to assert that unipolar distributions of power even favour the provision of cooperative regimes and public goods. Arising out of a different intellectual tradition, but reaching a somewhat analogous conclusion to that of Hegemonic Stability Theory, the neo-Gramscian concept of 'hydrohegemony' suggests that an upstream state can achieve a type of 'positive hegemony' (Warner 2008, 280) combining the power inherent in its geographically dominant position with some degree of legitimate authority vis-à-vis the downstream countries. Offensive Realism assumes that all states seek hegemony to guarantee their survival, even as the quest for hegemony

*per se* suffices to threaten others (Layne 2004, 109-115). This would imply that risks of war increase more when one state is ascending to hegemony than after it has indisputably established itself in that position. Analogously, efforts to build upstream projects may be more destabilizing to upstream-downstream relations than the successful operation of finished projects, as those downstream opponents who view these projects as conferring additional power upon others to curtail their access to a crucial flow of economic benefits also see the construction stage as the critical window of opportunity to prevent this power imbalance from materializing; afterwards, operational projects become key sources of leverage for upstream actors.

A third division among Realists concerns whether the anarchic structure of the international system suffices to explain balancing and war in the absence of other substantive goals. While Waltz (1959, 230-238) argued that anarchy was merely a 'permissive' cause of war, not an 'efficient' motive, as a Neorealist, Waltz (1979) argued that anarchy, assumed to be a constant 'ordering principle,' and the variable distribution of material capabilities (primarily military), were enough to account for the general conflictive quality of inter-state relations. In criticizing Waltz (1979) for having an under-determined theory of war, Mearsheimer (2001, 20) addresses this perceived lacuna by arguing that the structural properties of the system itself create pressures for balancing and war by inducing states to seek both hegemony and the overwhelming offensive capabilities that accompany it.

Others question Waltz's (1979) suggestion that precise motives for *specific* conflicts, which Neorealism relegates to the domain of foreign policy, are less important because they originate at the *unit* (domestic or intra-state) level of analysis. Neoclassical Realists, by contrast, directly address 'efficient' motives for state action stemming from domestic political and economic systems (Layne 2006, 7-11). Thayer (2000) even revives Morgenthau's argument that human nature causes war, but rests it on the findings of evolutionary biology. Lying at the core of this thesis is the impetus of material scarcity. Postulation of a causal nexus between scarcity and conflict extends from Thomas Malthus to more recent arguments attributing war to 'environmental scarcity' (Homer-Dixon 1999, Matthew 1999, Klare 2002). Indeed, any discussion of transboundary water relations would seem patently deficient without recognition of the role of scarcity as a key motivation behind conflict and its escalation.

## ***2.1 Realism in transboundary water relations***

Realist thought, developed to explain great-power politics, does not map precisely onto the contours of river basin relations revolving around available supplies of a localized natural resource. Interestingly, though, the symmetrical array of littoral states ringing a common lake or flanking a boundary river exemplify 'common pool resources'. For these natural goods, relevant consumers cannot be excluded, or at least at high cost, from enjoying the available benefits,

but consumption is rival, in the sense that each state's use subtracts from the total benefits available to everyone else (LeMarquand 1977, 9). Thus, common pool resources' politics bear some analogical resemblance to great powers' zero-sum security competition. The substantive distinction between the two domains lies in the fact that, unless rivals can agree on an optimal assignment of usage rights, restraints and responsibilities, they are more likely to destroy the *resource* than each other, thus illustrating the renowned 'tragedy of the commons' (United Nations 2006, 209).

In contrast to common pool resources' configurations, private goods are both rivalrous and excludable. Common pool resources might even be 'privatized' through legal or technological means of exclusion. While Waterbury (2002, 10) asserts that upstream storage does not obliterate the commons' dimensions of a transboundary watercourse, as water must eventually be released, salient upstream actions asymmetrically and unreciprocally diminish the quantity and quality of water available downriver, to the practical extent of excluding downstreamers from access (LeMarquand 1977, 10, Matthew 1999, Williams 2003). Indeed, Homer-Dixon (1999, 137-141) describes 'simple scarcity conflicts' as those occurring over scarce, vital and physically capturable resources, such as water.

Thus, salient upstream-downstream constellations unsurprisingly lend themselves to protracted riverine rivalry. It is not infrequently remarked upon that the 'English word *rival* comes from the Latin *rivalis*, meaning one using the same river as another' (United Nations 2006, 215). This rivalry should intensify to block unilateral construction of upstream hydrological installations, which pose the potential for excluding downstreamers from enjoying the myriad benefits stemming from the freer flow of water (Naff and Matson 1984, 193). Therefore, users in downstream areas, where historically prior development tends to occur (McCaffrey 1990, 235), have obvious incentives to try to forestall upstream actions via linkage strategies that draw on power resources from outside the water-related issue-area (Keohane and Nye 2001). Moreover, political leaders also harbour fears of losing social prestige and power at home lest their traditional reputations for delivering water to citizenries come under the sort of serious challenge posed by another state's hydrological developments (Allan 2002, 215-217).

As noted above, Offensive Realism underscores that antagonism between great-power rivals is likely to resemble a 'security dilemma' that escalates to war because the two sides cannot necessarily differentiate between defensive and offensive capabilities, let alone motives for using these instruments. Apart from the obvious fact that upstream-downstream antagonism is based on more pronounced geographical asymmetries of position and interest, which tends to reinforce extant degrees of inter-state mistrust, especially in situations where shared hydrological data is in scarce supply, downstream-state actors are correspondingly ill-equipped to distinguish key intrinsic economic operations of upstream installations, especially where the latter permit substantial water diversions, from potential instrumental uses of these mechanisms to accomplish larger political goals (as suggested in Naff and Matson 1984, 184, Gleick 1993, 86-89).

## 2.2 *Realism in Turkey's water diplomacy*

Turkey's water diplomacy fits the Realist paradigm in a number of respects. Disputes over the Euphrates and Tigris rivers occupy a prominent position on Turkey's water-related foreign-policy agenda because of these rivers' national prominence. While Turkey's total mean annual run-off amounts to 186 billion cubic meters (BCM), only 112 BCM is estimated to be cost effective to develop, and the Euphrates-Tigris accounts for nearly 47 percent of this latter figure. The country's water-use demands are also rising. The supply being utilized is expected to increase due to: population growth, which could lower Turkey's annual per-capita water supply from 1,500 cubic meters to 1,000 cubic meters between 2000 and 2030; the need to improve upon respective 55 and 36 percent municipal access rates to sewage and wastewater treatment services; and efforts to augment domestic hydropower to meet more of Turkey's increasing energy needs, estimated to reach 285 billion kilowatt hours (kWh) in 2010. By then, the Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP) is projected to harness Euphrates-Tigris rivers' water to supply nearly 10 percent of Turkey's energy and one-fifth of its irrigable land (Kibaroglu et al. 2005, 5-9).

At the same time, Turkey's upstream position on both branches of this river basin offers commensurably advantageous access. While Turkish territory comprises small percentages of the Euphrates and Tigris basin areas, it supplies 90 and 40 percent of respective stream flows (according to Kolars 1994, 46, tributary flows affected by Turkey's groundwater use boost respective percentages to 98 and 49). Syrian and Iraq users had been exploiting the flow of water prior to Turkey's 1974 construction of the Keban Dam on the Euphrates River, with Iraqi withdrawals of Euphrates water reaching an estimated 45 percent of average annual flow in the 1960s (Naff and Matson 1984, 90). Even though Turkish officials could cite drought as a cause of lower volume, the concurrent filling of both Keban Dam, a hydropower-only installation, and Syria's Tabqa Dam, compounded crucial short-term shortages in Iraq, which, in the context of hostile relations, nearly went to war with Syria ostensibly for curtailing water releases (Naff and Matson 1984, 93-95, Kibaroglu et al. 2005, 59), instead of joining Syria, as in 1990, to protest Turkey's dam filling.

Downstream concerns stem from the capacity of Turkey's five Euphrates dams to impound nearly three years' worth of annual average water supply. Fear surrounded even the filling of reservoirs behind the four facilities permitting only non-consumptive uses, one (Keban) constructed separately and the other three (Karakaya, Birecik and Karkamis) built within the GAP framework, but intensified as work proceeded in the 1980s on the multi-purpose Ataturk Dam, the largest of the five, and its affiliated Urfa (diversion) tunnels. The Turkish government ran into increasing difficulty securing foreign financing for dam construction even before initiation of work on the Ataturk Dam in 1983, and outside funds came only after Turkey's assurance of 350 cubic meters per second for Iraq in 1966 vis-à-vis the Keban and 500 cubic meters per second for Syria in 1980 vis-à-vis the

Karakaya (Bilen 1997, 114-115). Following Ataturk Dam's completion, downstream-state objections dissuaded all but private consortia from funding the Birecik and Karkamis dams, and objections from non-governmental organizations caused the withdrawal by 2001 of all potential external financiers of the Ilisu Dam on the Tigris (Kibaroglu et al. 2005, 63).

Though lacking in sufficient military capabilities, downstream-state linkage strategies were not restricted to formal protests and moves to block external channels of monetary support, but included backing of terrorist activities. Syria began permitting PKK incursions into Southeast Turkey in 1984, one year after the Ataturk Dam underwent construction, and in 1987, agreed, in close proximity to another security accord, on a temporary protocol again committing Turkey to provide 500 cubic meters per second on average, measured over bimonthly periods, at the Syrian border (see Kibaroglu and Scheumann in this volume). This rough sequence of events reinforced perceptions of the politicized nature of the water allocation (Beschoner 1992, 37).

The filling of Ataturk Dam in 1990 actually increased Turkey's potential capacity to condition its willingness to accommodate downstream water needs on reciprocal security assurances. The probable impact of then President Turgut Ozal's pre-1990 threats to cut off water and private UN discussions on using Turkey's Euphrates dams to deprive Iraq of water during the first Gulf War (Gleick 1993, 89) increased after Ataturk Dam's completion. As expressed by former Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel in 1991, 'I do not believe in worrying about threats of war resulting from development projects in Turkey... Turkey has deterrence. It will have more deterrence in the coming period. Turkey will build more such works. The more it builds, the fewer threats it will be faced with' (quoted in Beschoner 1992, 42). Nonetheless, Ankara eventually resorted to the actual threat of massive use of force in late 1998 to obtain Syria's expulsion of now-imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan and the related Adana Accord. Moreover, while terrorist activity, which could affect dispersed irrigation-related works more easily from a logistical standpoint than spatially concentrated storage installations, may have directly retarded GAP's overall progress, especially in meeting irrigation and Tigris development goals, the security situation probably had greater indirect effects by slowing land reform and on-farm training (Kolars 1994, 67-68, 70-75).

The slowing of the GAP does not imply Turkey's concession of sovereignty over Euphrates-Tigris water. While Turkish governments abjure the principle of 'absolute territorial sovereignty' in favour of 'limited sovereignty', calling the Euphrates a 'transboundary' river imputes an exclusive right to exploit it until it flows into Syria. Former Prime Minister Demirel even stated that 'water is an upstream resource and downstream users cannot tell us how to use our resources', with others in authoritative positions echoing that the 'rivers concerned are not subject to international rules' (quoted in Bagis 1997, 577). The prevailing position is usually articulated more subtly. Since 1984, Turkish experts have consistently advocated the 'Three-Stage Plan for Optimal, Equitable and Reasonable Utilization of the Transboundary Watercourses of the Euphrates-Tigris Basin', which proposes to inventory all riparians' water and land resources before evaluating both sets jointly

in order to determine actual water needs and to convene a joint body to assemble and exchange data on temporal fluctuations in the level of these needs (Kibaroglu et al. 2005, 61). While founded on principles of scientific rationality, the likely result of this plan's acceptance as a basis for tripartite negotiations would be to reveal the lesser viability of Syrian and Iraqi irrigation expansion plans (Scheumann 1998, 128). Moreover, adamant upstream adherence to this preferred mode of resolving water-allocation issues could be perceived as another *fait accompli* to gain more time in which to complete projects, the adverse effects of which cannot be ascertained until construction finishes. This is also an issue that has complicated Turkish-Georgian relations on the Coruh River (Kibaroglu et al. 2005, 52-53, 89).

### 3 Liberalism

Despite their predominant propensity towards conflict, upstream-downstream interactions virtually never escalate to the point of inter-state 'water war' and cooperation is prevalent to varying degrees (Deudney 1999, Homer-Dixon 1999, Allan 2002, Williams 2003, Kibaroglu et al. 2005, Selby 2005, Conca 2006, United Nations 2006). Liberal International Relations theory, especially Neoliberal Institutionalism, which encompasses regime theory, argues that anarchy makes cooperation difficult but not impossible where states stand to obtain larger absolute gains than each could otherwise get from unilateral action (Keohane 1989, Baldwin 1993). In the prisoner's dilemma game that exemplifies the cooperation-under-anarchy problematique, uncertainty centres on whether potential partners will honour an agreement. Cooperation is allowed by the fact that most states interact over an indefinite time period and can thereby respond to each other's behaviour in tit-for-tat fashion if they can also agree on how to define, detect and punish cheating and other forms of non-compliant behaviour (Axelrod and Keohane 1993).

Liberalism variously emphasizes the role of democracy, trade and institutions in strengthening cooperation. Indeed, Immanuel Kant's notion of 'perpetual peace' roots cooperative trends in transboundary flows of ideas, goods and people (Doyle 1986). Based on Krasner's (1983, 1) famous definition of international regimes as 'principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue area', Neoliberal Institutionalism (Keohane 1989) views institutions as essential for reaching both primary agreements on substantive issues and secondary cooperation on enforcing commitments. The fact that regimes are products of state cooperation in the first instance begs the question of whether regimes can independently impel more cooperation (Hasenclever et al. 1997, 43-44). While not necessarily rejecting the 'hegemonic stability thesis' that only a powerful actor expecting commensurable gains can surmount collective action dilemmas by supplying the public goods of regime creation and enforcement itself, Liberals nonetheless hold that regimes can outlast



hegemonic decline because they are costly to replace and may continue to yield greater benefits than unilateral action (Keohane 1984).

Neoliberal Institutionalists expect regime effectiveness to be higher in certain issue-areas. To the extent that they feature relative symmetry of interests and power, lesser proximity to vital national interests and a smaller probability of generating absolute gains from cooperation that can be converted into military power (Keohane and Nye 2001, Powell 1993), economic issue-areas are often more conducive to cooperation than military security (Jervis 1983). Otherwise, interactions over economic issues that impinge on vital security matters may exhibit the escalatory dynamics of these more highly competitive matters. Then, engaged third-party leadership may play a crucial role in catalyzing regimes (Young 1991) by providing opportunities for integrative linkages or package deals at higher levels of interaction (Benvenisti 1996, 401), thus altering the strategic calculi of actors in a positive direction.

### ***3.1 Liberalism in transboundary water relations***

Certain problems related to international watercourses lend themselves more easily to cooperative resolution than others. Salient geographical and hydrological characteristics facilitate, to a greater or lesser extent, the formation of cooperative international regimes to manage economic uses of different multi-state systems of freshwater (LeMarquand 1977, 7-11). Situations where the relevant actors enjoy a relatively more symmetrical relationship to a common supply of water and non-consumptive uses of water (i.e., those, such as flood control or hydropower, that return withdrawn water, in the same quantity and quality, to the river channel) prevail should be the most conducive to cooperative arrangements, as indicated by numerous agreements regulating joint uses of 'international rivers' that demarcate boundaries. Cooperation confronts slightly more formidable obstacles when upstream and downstream states are negotiating to apportion the costs of 'integrated development opportunities' involving the production of new public goods, such as flood control or hydropower, but becomes even more difficult in relation to the question of how to induce individual and collective restraint on the part of symmetrically arrayed consumptive users of a common pool resource before it is depleted. However, the hardest test for Liberal IR theory involves the resolution of 'upstream-downstream conflicts', where asymmetry of territorial position is compounded by the predominance of consumptive uses of water. In these cases, incentives for cooperation, assuming that upstream states possess a preponderance of military deterrence capabilities, may come from the upstream states' countervailing cooperative interests, for instance, in protecting economic and social values attached to occupation of downstream position in other disputed river basins or in bolstering a 'good neighbourly' image for the purposes of promoting larger economic and political goals (Ibid, pp 10-12).

Territorial proximity raises the potential value of positive relations with downstream states. Upstream states now espouse ‘limited sovereignty’, which entails liability for ‘significant’ harm to downstream uses (Wapner 1998, 280), rather than ‘absolute territorial sovereignty’, and often engage in prior notification and consultation related to project construction. Embrace of the ‘equitable and reasonable utilization’ principle, reflecting recognition of the historically laggard pattern of development upstream, may also imply the need for ancillary data gathering and exchange efforts, which can mitigate the severity of competition and nurture habits of cooperation (Benvenuti 1996, 401). Indeed, Neoliberal Institutionalism, the direct successor to Regime theory, identifies the need for information as a core part of regime demand (Hasenclever et al., 33-34). In the larger context of trade ties and institutional integration, which lessen the economic and political exigencies of the perceived need for self-sufficiency or territorial conquest (Deudney 1999, 205-207), upstream states may be more predisposed to limit their own allocatively inefficient consumption of water in agriculture. ‘Win-win’ forms of cooperation identify opportunities for assembling ‘baskets of benefits’ that enhance each party’s absolute welfare gains by transcending issues of volumetric allocation to encompass financial flows, hydropower trade, data sharing and peace agreements, all of which nonetheless require institutional capacity-building with the assistance of such key outside actors as the EU, World Bank and the UN Development Program (United Nations 2006, 224-231).

### ***3.2 Liberalism in Turkey’s water diplomacy***

Despite the high profile of its riverine water controversies, Turkey has signed accords to allocate streamflow in common watercourses, establish joint technical bodies, fund construction projects, exchange data and provide prior notification and consultation in relation to its infrastructure. As expected, Turkey faces stronger issue-specific incentives to cooperate on freshwater usage in shared river basins where it is downstream, but has also committed itself to joint action with respect to the use of river water that originates on Turkish territory but later demarcates one of its international boundaries. Conversely, arrangements where Turkey occupies a purely upstream position seem less committal, but bear some similarity in certain substantive terms to other agreements. Moreover, as in similar cases elsewhere in the world, Turkey’s water-related interactions with various neighbours in particular basins are influenced not only by the territorial configuration of the watercourse in question but also by the quality of its overall bilateral relations with those neighbours (Brunée and Toope 1997, 47; United Nations 2006, 220).

Downstream position provides a logical incentive to collaborate. In the Meric river basin, Turkey has worked with upstream Bulgaria, with which it shares a 15-km boundary section of the Tundja tributary, to alleviate flooding and drought. Their 1968 agreement committed them to ‘good neighbourly’ limits on mutual harm, data exchange and dispute settlement by a joint commission, and after the

Cold War, Bulgarian economic decline even bolstered the prospects for further cooperation by reducing negative externalities (e.g., upstream pollution) and paving the way for Turkey to purchase water and commit to building infrastructure on Bulgaria's stretch of the Arda tributary and to importing the generated hydropower, thus enmeshing water cooperation in complementary trade ties. Sharing the 187-km downstream boundary section of the Meric that reaches the Aegean Sea, Turkey and Greece have agreed on permitted infrastructure, data exchange, prior notification and dispute settlement. Poor environmental and water-quality protections have opened political space for institution-building by outside parties, especially the European Union, the German government, the IUCN and UNESCO (Kibaroglu et al. 2005, 26–37). Conversely, Turkey's downstream vulnerability on the smaller Orontes River, which also demarcates a 31-km section of the international boundary via a 1939 Franco-Turkish treaty, was until recently aggravated by tense relations with Syria and a long-standing dispute over Hatay province. However, the 1998 Adana Accord gave a new impetus to cooperation, manifested in a 2004 trade agreement implying Syrian recognition of Turkey's possession of Hatay and an accord creating a bilateral technical commission to study building a joint dam on the Orontes (see Scheumann / Tereci / Sagsen in this volume; Kibaroglu et al. 2005, 71). An important part of efforts to build this 'friendship dam' involves positive potential linkages to this area of energy cooperation (Turkish Daily News 2007).

Turkey has engaged in cooperation even where it enjoys upstream status. In the Kura-Aras basin, upstream Turkey has numerous agreements with Georgia, Armenia and Iran. Water relations feature border delimitation, technical cooperation and joint dam construction, but, unlike the Meric and Orontes basins, Turkey has agreed to allocate various streamflows to these fellow riparians on a 50-50 basis and even to provide Iran a minimum flow of Aras (Sarisu tributary) water. Because the Arpacay tributary (Aras) delineates a long Turco-Armenian boundary, a natural locus for cooperation prior to rising Turco-Armenian tensions, the two countries had created a bilateral commission, divided water equally and agreed on joint diversion-dam construction (Kibaroglu et al. 2005, 38-46). Turkey's 1927 agreements with Georgia also cover the Coruh Basin, but, while these could not anticipate post-Cold War concerns over coastal erosion in downstream Georgia, Turkey, which values the energy transit trade with its neighbour (i.e., flow of crude oil and gas via the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines), has demonstrated an interest in assisting the study of its planned dams' ecological impact (Kibaroglu et al. 2005, 47-54).

Even the highly competitive Tigris-Euphrates rivers feature tenuous cooperation. While signed in close proximity to a security accord, the 1987 Turco-Syrian Protocol nonetheless informally committed Ankara to a 50-50 allocation of Euphrates water to Syria. Moreover, before Ataturk Dam's 1990 filling, Turkish authorities engaged, though not to downstreamers' satisfaction, in prior notification, consultation and streamflow releases from other dams (Gleick 1993, 107-108). Some contend that Turkey's dams even provide the public good of flow regulation (Bilen 1997, 68-73, Allan 2002, 255-266). Information sharing has taken place, and, while it cannot overcome larger political tensions, the 1983-1993 Joint

Technical Committee (JTC) meetings, where Turkey advocated its Three-Stage Plan, expressed commitment to finding a cooperative solution. In low-profile settings, water scarcity may propel conservation and innovation efforts, such as those to reduce the three-quarters share of Turkey's water use in irrigated agriculture (Kibaroglu et al. 2005, 8).

## 4 Constructivism

The previous rationalist approaches assume that state goals are relatively fixed, with variation only on strategies selected to maximize given values in an interaction (Hasenclever et al. 1997, 23-24, 136). States act rationally in pursuit of material interests. International conflict represents the initial default outcome, although the liberal argument that absolute gains from continued cooperation should diminish problems of cheating opposes the Realists' scepticism that states can surmount relative-gains concerns (Grieco 1993). Conflict and cooperation basically follow from the structure of material incentives, but even scholars who emphasize rationality of state action sometimes concede that outcomes are influenced by the social context of international relations (Wendt 1995).

The Constructivist approach to International Relations opposes rationalist-materialist accounts. It places more emphasis on the independent influence of ideas, including identities and the constituent elements of Krasner's (1983) seminal definition of regimes, than material forces, which are argued to be significant only within larger social structures, which also consist of shared knowledge and agent or actor practices that (re)produce these structures (Wendt 1995, 73). More importantly, not only the interests, but also the very identities, of actors can change as a result of social interchange. In processes of interaction, actors can learn new identities, but one actor may also be teaching another to adopt preferred roles (e.g., enemy, rival or friend) by symbolizing the latter 'as if it already had that identity' (Wendt 1992, 421). However, Wendt (1999, 346-347) also recognizes that humans engage in 'ideological labour', discursive activity that generates social knowledge of interdependence and builds the necessary trust to avoid collective action dilemmas. Others explicitly emphasize linguistic practices. Habermas's theory of 'communicative action' stresses the capacity of practical reasoning, centred on speech acts and reasoned argumentation (Muller 2001). This can even lead to the 'argumentative self-entrapment' of those who find themselves accountable for fulfilling the normative implications of statements initially put forward to advance instrumental bargaining positions (Risse 2000, 23). Simply put, actors can find their own words unintentionally moving them towards cooperation.

International Relation's theoretical Constructivism tends to reveal an underlying substantive concern for how social interaction shifts actors' identity conceptions and interests in a cooperative direction, as implied in the phrase 'Anarchy is what states make of it' (Wendt 1992). Constructivist accounts imply that anarchy and states are co-constituted, as states enjoy sovereign rights and responsibilities,

including respect for the meta-principle of *pacta sunt servanda* ('agreements shall be served'), upon which issue-specific regimes can be founded (Hasenclever et al., 169-175). Yet, Constructivism is not a theory of cooperation, as interaction can exacerbate hostilities, and it posits that change is possible, not certain (Wendt 1995), as anarchy and states' predominantly rivalrous identities are shaped by powerful logics of reproduction (Wendt 1999).

### ***4.1 Constructivism in transboundary water relations***

Perhaps innately aware of the aforementioned risk of rhetorical entrapment, the representatives even of powerful upstream states purposefully and carefully craft discourse suiting their interests in regime formation and collaborative action. As international water law presents a logical and salient discursive template by which regimes may be shaped in certain directions, and not others, for specific river basins, reaching a consensus agreement on the textual content of this law becomes as politicized a task as that of negotiating particular basin accords. The 1997 UN (framework) Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses passed only after arduous negotiation and never obtained enough ratifications to become effective. The document provided no practical guidelines on reconciling its competing master principles, 'equitable and reasonable utilization' (Article 5) and the 'obligation not to cause significant harm' (Article 7), or on resolving competing claims, and fewer basin accords embody either or both of these principles, as well as that of prior notification (Conca 2006, 110-118; United Nations 2006, 218).

In its earliest gestation, international water law barely transcended crude codification of asymmetrical positions, with upstream states favouring 'absolute territorial sovereignty' and downstream states embracing 'absolute territorial integrity'. The current prevailing theory of 'limited territorial sovereignty' (Kibaroglu et al 2005, 20) signals progressive movement towards reasoned compromise, since it entails that the predominantly upstream development of 'equitable uses', which does not mean equal divisions of water (Gleick 1993, 106-107), needs to take downstream 'acquired rights' into account (Waterbury 2002, 28). The implied limitation on states' rights to exploit transboundary resources signals emergence of a shared understanding that individual states may be held liable for 'damaging other states ecosystems' (Wapner 1998, 280). Moreover, the fact that the Convention even contains an 'obligation not to cause significant harm' puts downstream interests on a level legal footing (Conca 2006, 100-101). Watercourse agreements that proscribe 'significant harm' also tend to provide for prior notification, data exchange, and peaceful dispute resolution, the latter two appearing more frequently in general, while accords enshrining 'equitable use' often include corollary water allocations (Conca 2006, 114-118).

Providing a weak foundation for articulating shared conceptions of a 'common' resource, international legal developments offer an even more precarious basis for

substantively more complex collaboration within the holistic framework of 'integrated watershed management'. Most agreements are dyadic, even for multi-riparian basins. Fulfilling an 'obligation not to cause significant harm' can be consistent with preserving ecological values and human needs (Waterbury 2002, 29), but most of the few basin accords upholding this principle have not 'created significant entry points for environmental protection' (Conca 2006, 118). Some even argue that, precisely by enticing disputants to advance flexible negotiating positions, contrary to fixed rules that create deadlock, the vague standard of 'equitable use' may allow for periodic water reallocations that respond to newly emergent needs (Benvenisti 1996). Others similarly emphasize the value of non-binding 'contextual regimes' as the basis for 'international ecosystem law', which emphasizes 'future-oriented, flexible and adaptable frameworks that nonetheless allow for the elaboration of specific norms on individual issues' (Brunée and Toope 1997, 42). Here, third parties might supply not only material assistance, but also shared knowledge of 'best practices' and non-state-centric modes of discourse.

## 4.2 *Constructivism in Turkey's water diplomacy*

Understood in an International Relations Constructivist mode, Turkey has exerted itself in two key ways vis-à-vis its transboundary waters. In relation to the Tigris-Euphrates rivers, it has tried to eschew a 'water rich' image, while implicitly accepting the risk, albeit low, that its advocacy of 'equitable and reasonable utilization', if accepted by Syria and Iraq as a basis for negotiating a permanent tripartite treaty, could transform an instrumental negotiating stance into a principled basis for committing Turkey to provide a certain flow of water downstream. In this vein of logic, Turkey's ongoing EU accession process may entail outside introduction of 'green' discourse at the expense of the technocratic language that constitutes the dominant frame within which its transboundary water uses have been developed and negotiated.

Several factors fostered Turkey's politicized 'water rich' profile. In proximity to announcement of the Three-Stage Plan, a 1984 government study overestimated excess runoff in Turkey's 26 drainage basins at two thirds of the total (Kolars and Mitchell 1991, 291, 294-295). Ozal's 'Peace Pipeline' proposal, a component part of the 1987 Protocol that also pledged to deliver 500 cubic meters per second of Euphrates water at Syria's border, also implied that Turkey could compensate for any permanent shortage there by supplying water from its wholly domestic Seyhan and Ceyhan rivers. Moreover, the 1989 GAP Master Plan underestimated future maximum Euphrates water consumption at 10.4 BCM, equivalent to 335 cubic meters per second (Kolars 1994, 75), thus dovetailing with the 1990 Syro-Iraqi demand of 700 cubic meters per second (Gruen 1993, 103-104). Finally, in 1991, eminent hydrologist Malin Falkenmark placed Turkish per capita water supply at 4,600 cubic meters per year, much higher than Syria's 1,300 (Gruen 2000, 3). Ankara later moved to undermine the language of plenty, as when the foreign

minister stated in 1992 that, 'We are ready to cooperate in this respect [water], but I must point out that. ... Turkey is not a country which has abundant water resources. We may soon face problems in meeting our own needs' (quoted in Beschoner 1992, 44). This discursive turn suggests that even powerful upstream states remain conscious of the need to attend to the normative legitimacy of their bargaining positions. While Turkey represents one of three states that voted against the 1997 UN Convention, its complaints about what it claims to be the undue importance attached to the 'obligation not to cause significant harm' and inclusion of mandatory dispute settlement have some broader intellectual resonance (Benvenisti 1996, Brunée and Toope 1997, Waterbury 2002).

Conversely, discourse may also impel Turkey towards more intensive cooperation. Turkish experts' consistent advocacy of the Three-Stage Plan, embodying their preferred technocratic language, is premised on a basic understanding that water scarcity is non-negligible and requires curtailing those downstream claims, based on non-scientifically formulated mathematical quotas, that Turkey can 'reasonably' expect to fulfil within the spirit of 'equitable utilization' (Kibaroglu et al. 2005, 61-62). If multilateral relations improve and basin societies become more receptive to freer and more transparent exchanges of ideas and data, downstream actors may become willing to invoke the principle of 'equitable and reasonable utilization' to defend values associated with environmental restoration of endangered ecosystems, like the Mesopotamian Marshlands in southern Iraq and their inhabitants' unique traditions, to the extent that an argument can be credibly made for how and which upstream activities are as damaging now as actions by Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime were in pre-2003 history. The Meric River, where two riparians belong to the EU and the third, Turkey, is a candidate member, indicates how concerted external involvement may deepen local actors' cooperative attitudes by directing them to take on 'win-win' tasks of environmental protection (Kibaroglu et al. 2005, 32-36, 86-90). Cooperative tendencies are additionally supported by the language of the European Water Framework Directive of 2000, which stipulates that EU members should coordinate with non-members (United Nations 2006, 221).

## 5 Conclusions

At first glance, Realist theories provide a useful analytical framework for understanding Turkey's water diplomacy, the tenor of which predominantly reflects the mixture of material incentives for competition suggested by its respective geographical positions on various transboundary watercourse systems. For instance, the country's governments have displayed their greatest reluctance to relax their bargaining stance on the Tigris-Euphrates system, both because of the nature of issues specific to that basin and to compensate for a weaker position on the Orontes River. While Turkey's greater desire for basin-centric collaboration in the Meric and Orontes might reflect its downstream position, and its partial boundary position

considerably mitigates incentives for competitive unilateralism on the Kura-Aras tributaries, these factors do not explain the existence, albeit highly imperfect and tenuous, of cooperative actions vis-à-vis the Coruh and Tigris-Euphrates rivers. As Liberalism would anticipate, in the latter cases, extraneous economic inducements, especially in the form of trade ties, exist to some degree.

However, the overall quality of Turkish cooperation on this issue remains sub-optimal. As Constructivist analysis might suggest, this is in part the result of implicit discursive efforts to avoid having to play a role of basin-wide provider of Tigris-Euphrates water, which would be more normatively appropriate for a country with a 'water rich' identity. On the other hand, the discourse of 'equitable and reasonable utilization' could, albeit with low probability at present due to downstream-state actors' reluctance to embrace it (reflecting what seems to be a gaping deficit of shared social knowledge of the problem at hand), form a principled basis for conducting ongoing dialogue leading to agreement on more favourable apportionments of Euphrates-Tigris water to downstream states, but in explicit service of inchoate ecosystem values, the benefits of which might diffuse more widely to current and future populations at large.

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