

The Water Issue From Past To Present In Turkey-Syria Relations



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Turning Points of Turkey-Syria Relations



- The Hatay issue
- Cold war period,
- The Adana Agreement signed in 1998,
- Hafez Al-Assad's death in 2000 and Bashar Al-Assad's taking over,
- The U.S.' Iraq Intervention in 2003
- Arab Spring (since March 2011)

Water issue between Turkey and Syria



- In relations between Turkey and Syria, the water issue came to forefront by the two countries' carrying out projects of developing the usage of water resources in 1950's. While Syria was preparing for carrying out the Ghap project on the Asi (Orontes) river; in 1954 Turkey established the DSI (General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works) that is responsible for the planning, management, development and operation of the country's all of the water resources. While in 1965 Turkey started to build the Keban Dam to be completed in 1975; Syria started to build the Tabqa Dam in 1968



- In the filling processes of the Keban and Taqba dams, a crisis period took place between Turkey, Iraq, and Syria, which are the Euphrates-Tigris basin riparian countries. Especially Iraq was faced with a major crisis with Syria upon the fact the amount of arriving water in the Iraqi territories declined.

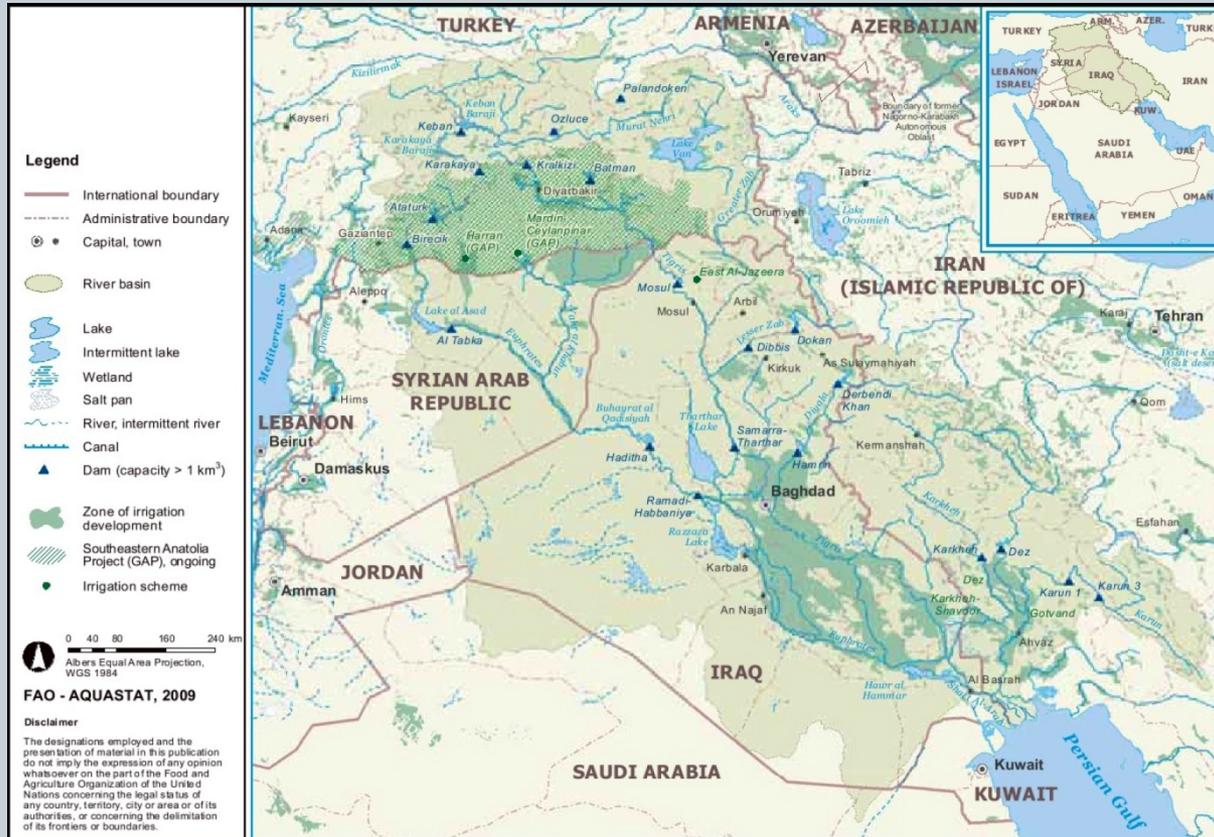


- During this process, when the basin countries carried on their water projects, the Joint Technical Committee was created between Turkey and Iraq in 1980 with the purpose of a better usage of basin waters. In 1983, Syria joined in the joint technical committee as well. Launching the construction of the Atatürk dam in 1983, Turkey was faced with the strong reaction of the riparians.



- In 1987, Turkey signed two protocol agreements with Syria. One of these protocols is related to security, and it is about Syria's putting an end to her support for PKK. By signing the other protocol, Turkey accepted to give yearly average of 500 cubic meters/sec of Euphrates water through the Turkey-Syria borderline. Later on in 1990, Syria let Iraq use the 58 % of the yearly average 500 cubic meters/sec of water that was let by Iraq and Turkey. Following the protocol, which was signed in 1987, within the 10-year-period Syria did not withdraw her support for PKK.

Euphrates-Tigris Basin



Asi River Basin





- And until the Adana Security Protocol was signed 1998, the tense situation related to the usage of water resources continued. The agreement between Turkey and Syria under the new security arrangements by the 1998 Adana Protocol, paved the way of a large-scale cooperation from trade to tourism. Related to the water resources; GAP Regional Development Administration and Syria-GOLD (General Organization for Land Resources) cooperation protocol was signed in 2001.



- As a result of the changed Middle East balances caused by the 2003 Iraq intervention of the U.S., Syria established closer relations with Turkey. Due to the cooperations, the relations between the two countries further improved up until March 2011

Conclusion



- Turkey, who wants the waters to be provided always within the cooperation especially with her Euphrates-Tigris basin riparians Iraq and Syria on the transboundary waters, has been carrying on her policy that is open to cooperation such as the protocol related to the Euphrates waters signed in 1987; Joint Technical Committees; Three-Stage Plan; Peace pipeline project, for many years. This attitude of Turkey, who has not used water a political instrument, will continue in the new period as well. Syria's attitude of keeping on her cooperation with Turkey about water will become clear when Syria gets her internal balances back.