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Explaining the dimensions of the security components of the Turkish Gap plan from the perspective of the Copenhagen school

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Abstract

The initiator of the politicization of water in most of the previously mentioned and the most profound findings is that water has become one of the important and influential factors in a region. It has been a key factor contributing to tension and conflicts between countries in the past and present, and it will continue to impact grazing policies in the future.

One of the characteristics of arid and semi-arid regions is the problem of water, its fragile ecosystems. That is, the pressures caused by dam construction, along with factors such as climate change and global warming, have increased this fragility.

Previously, some experts in the field of geopolitics claimed that in the future, water will replace oil as a rare and expensive commodity and will be the main focus

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of disputes and compromises in the coming decade. This claim has now been demonstrated following the large-scale implementation of the Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP) in Turkey. We see this trend in the Middle East, especially in the countries that are along the path of the aforementioned water flow.

Today, the Middle East is witnessing a relative shift in the source of power from oil to water on one hand and mismanagement of its inter-basin governance on the other hand. This shift, coupled with the scarcity of this resource and global climate changes, has led Turkey to cede control over its water resources due to the implementation of the GAP megaproject. Turkey uses this as a bargaining chip to advance its developmental policies in the region, particularly in countries that rely on the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates, while simultaneously disregarding the repeated pleas of its neighbors (Iran, Syria, and Iraq) concerning water rights.

In addition, this plan has diminished the water resources flowing out of Turkey, resulting in detrimental consequences for the ecosystems of countries along the path of these water resources. It has led to environmental, economic, and social damages.

Therefore, according to the assertion of the Turkish government, which is grounded in the implementation of the GAP plan for sustainable economic development, this matter has been analyzed within the framework of the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. The conclusion is reached that while Turkey's hydraulic initiatives seem to offer water security across various sectors, the downside, from Copenhagen's perspective, is the creation of new security challenges for other stakeholders. The continued pursuit of Turkey's hydraulic strategy, regardless of the dimensions and the political, social, economic, and environmental impacts of this plan, is poised to have far-reaching and irreversible consequences.

And this vital resource has been turned into a means to gain political power and influence in Turkey. The reverse of the claim has been proven: the GAP project is in line with human-centered development and sustainable economic growth. However, it has been aimed at creating economic power, advancing political goals, and achieving blue hegemony. This process leads to multilateral damages with wide consequences in the countries affected by this project.

It is attempting to leverage its water resources against the oil resources of the Persian Gulf countries by defining and implementing numerous water projects through a hydraulic mission strategy. However, this approach disregards the environmental, social, economic, and political dimensions and consequences.

In such a way that the hydrological system of the two rivers, Tigris and Euphrates, which constitutes the vital artery of West Asia, has been disturbed. This process, from Copenhagen's point of view, has created a potential basis and capacity for conflict and threats in the region. By reducing the amount of water input in the downstream section, it has caused environmental crises. Meanwhile, the effects of the environmental assessment reveal that the GAP project does not align with the internal governance of the countries and has extra-regional effects.

Therefore, on the one hand, making water security dependent on water resources outside the country effectively ties a part of national security to the region. The absence of management structures for joint exploitation and water governance has transformed it into a factor that contributes to crises between countries. In this context, it is possible to highlight the connection between the Turkish GAP project's ideological understanding of politics and economy and the concept of security and sustainable development within the framework of the Copenhagen school.

In other words, considering that the ideological understanding of the principle of excellence and its reproduction prioritizes it over other factors. Elements such as the environment, economic growth, and social welfare, which define the concept of security and sustainable development in the Copenhagen school, become victims of this principle of project excellence. The GAP in Turkey, when security standards are reduced in various aspects, increases its structural ideological function in the public domain.

Concepts such as security, in all its aspects, undergo a fundamental transformation. This evolutionary change of the GAP project is related to the instability of the development space and the discourse of development and sustainable development worldwide. The GAP plan is largely a product of concepts, norms, and criteria borrowed from other places, without considering its compatibility with Turkey's own internal conditions, sensitivities, concerns, and internal demands. As a result, many concepts, goals, and activities are in conflict with each other.

Using the descriptive-analytical method and library and media sources, this research seeks to answer the question: How will Turkey's GAP project cause a crisis in the Middle East, especially in the downstream countries of this project? According to the Copenhagen school, the findings indicate that the implementation of the GAP project will result in the political dependence of downstream countries on Turkey. Additionally, it will lead to extensive damage and consequences in these countries, encompassing five security threats: environmental, social, economic, political, and military. These destructive consequences align with Turkey's ideology, as it treats water as a source of power similar to oil.

In the meantime, Iran, together with the countries affected by the GAP plan, can form a regional confederation at two levels: "regional diplomacy" and "joint management of transboundary waters" to manage the environmental risks of the Turkish GAP plan. If regional diplomacy fails, Iran can pursue this issue legally through international organizations and The Hague Court.

Key words: Iran, transboundary waters, Gap plan, Turkey, environmental threats, Copenhagen school, and regional diplomacy.