

1. Please provide a summary of your project and methodology (500 words):

Project Abstract

The Southern Anatolian region of Turkey has witnessed increased investment in the construction of dams along the Euphrates-Tigris river basin for the past fifteen years as a part of its GAP project. These dams have significantly impacted Turkey's downstream neighbor, Iraq, and in particular, Iraq's southern province of Basra. One of the most recent dam expansions of the GAP project, the Ilisu dam, has caused significant international concern over transboundary relations in the basin. Most of the literature on the GAP project and the Euphrates-Tigris basin, like that of the hydro-hegemony framework, has thus far focused on Turkey's role in the basin as the dominant political actor, and its power relationship to the Iraqi state. As such, the creation and implementation of the Ilisu dam, within the means of Turkey's GAP project, is hypothesized to limit Iraq's access to much-needed water resources. However, this master's thesis problematizes the approach of hydro-hegemony, in the fact that it does not take the actions of local non-state actors into account. On the contrary, patronage and local distribution networks within Iraq also have a significant impact on the issue, further aiding in creating situations that are contributing to limited water access.

The principal objective of this research will be to better understand how the Ilisu dam, and Turkey's Southern Anatolia Project, have affected water allocation in the Euphrates-Tigris basin, primarily in Iraq and the Kurdish autonomous region in Iraq. There are two main facets of the study. The first is to analyze how the Ilisu dam impacts hydropolitics in the basin, and inversely, how the Southern Anatolia Project has impacted patrimonial water politics in southern Turkey and Iraq. The second goal of the study is to further develop how the framework of hydro-hegemony can be applied, expanding the concept to more thoroughly account for sub-national actors. By overlooking these actors, the hydro-hegemony framework neglects to recognize how patronage and local distribution networks, within Iraq, have also significantly contributed to issues of limited water access.

Research Approach

For this piece there is a systematic on-the-ground fieldwork component to take place in Ankara, Turkey, and in Erbil, Iraq. This element will consist of gathering key-informant interviews from academics and water-related experts who can qualitatively delineate the recent developments in the Euphrates-Tigris basin resulting from the Ilisu dam with the sole purpose of obtaining information. These interview subjects have been identified as impartial water distribution or regional experts and have been identified from professional contacts, primarily provided by the advisory professor. These contacts have subsequently provided additional contacts of the same merit. Most of the interviews will be conducted with individuals who are associated with non-governmental organizations, journalism outlets, research institutions, or international organizations. This fieldwork is designed to contribute to the general knowledge of the basin and will be restricted to include interactions using survey or interview procedures only.

2. Please explain your project's connection to contemporary issues in media or current affairs related to the Arab region (250 words):

There is no more a contemporary issue in the Arab region than that of food security and access to water resources. The additional caveat of climate change and its effects on these issues are ever-the-more sophisticated, creating a unique set of multidisciplinary problems. The topic and the argument of this piece would also address the notion that events such as the economic demonstrations that have recently taken place in Iraq or the shifting power dynamics and military advances in Southern Turkey, that have happened over the last few months, are derived from a lack of understanding of resource management and the water. This piece argues that these events are intrinsically tied to climatic events and profoundly influenced political actors' ambitions for resource capture. The most foundational question that exists in the region today is that of regional climate change, and more so the in what ways increasing limited water resources will change political landscapes.

Nonetheless, most of the current scholarship and journalism that has examined the relationship between water and policy has focused on the analysis the transboundary relations between the governments of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and, more recently, the Kurdish autonomous

region of Iraq. To this end, this thesis argues that there is both an international and a patrimonial 'game' played in the Euphrates-Tigris basin, which mirrors the opinions of prominent environmental journalists, such as Peter Schwartzstein. Therefore, the project has relevance both in current events and in recent media.

3. Please provide an explanation and justification of your budget (250 words):

A budgetary worksheet has been attached to justify the request for the funds. There are three flights, the first to Ankara, a second to Erbil, and the third return flight. Additionally, the extent of the fieldwork will take place over roughly four weeks. This period will require modest accommodations and some money for food and necessary supplies. The budget also would allow travel within both countries to the interview sites such as taxis and buses. Though the project is quite straightforward, it requires interaction with many stakeholders, and the project can only be completed adequately by visiting each one individually and interviewing them. Therefore, the budget of two thousand dollars that have been requested will allow for the project to be completed thoroughly and completely, which can yield beneficial conclusions.

4. How will this grant help you complete your research project or thesis? (250 words):

In the simplest of terms, this thesis cannot be completed without this research grant. As mentioned before, the only possible way to complete the project effectively is to visit the river basin and talk with experts on the ground (an initial list of contacts has been attached). That being said, this project is unique in the fact that the basin is relatively understudied from a patrimonial perspective. Due to the unique place in time and scope of prior research, this project, with the help of this funding, will produce a publishable article in a quality academic journal. Additionally, as a current intern at the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, it has become apparent that an association with the institution will provide further intellectual support. This dual benefit, as well as the unique and relevant nature of the project, will surely yield a publishable article.