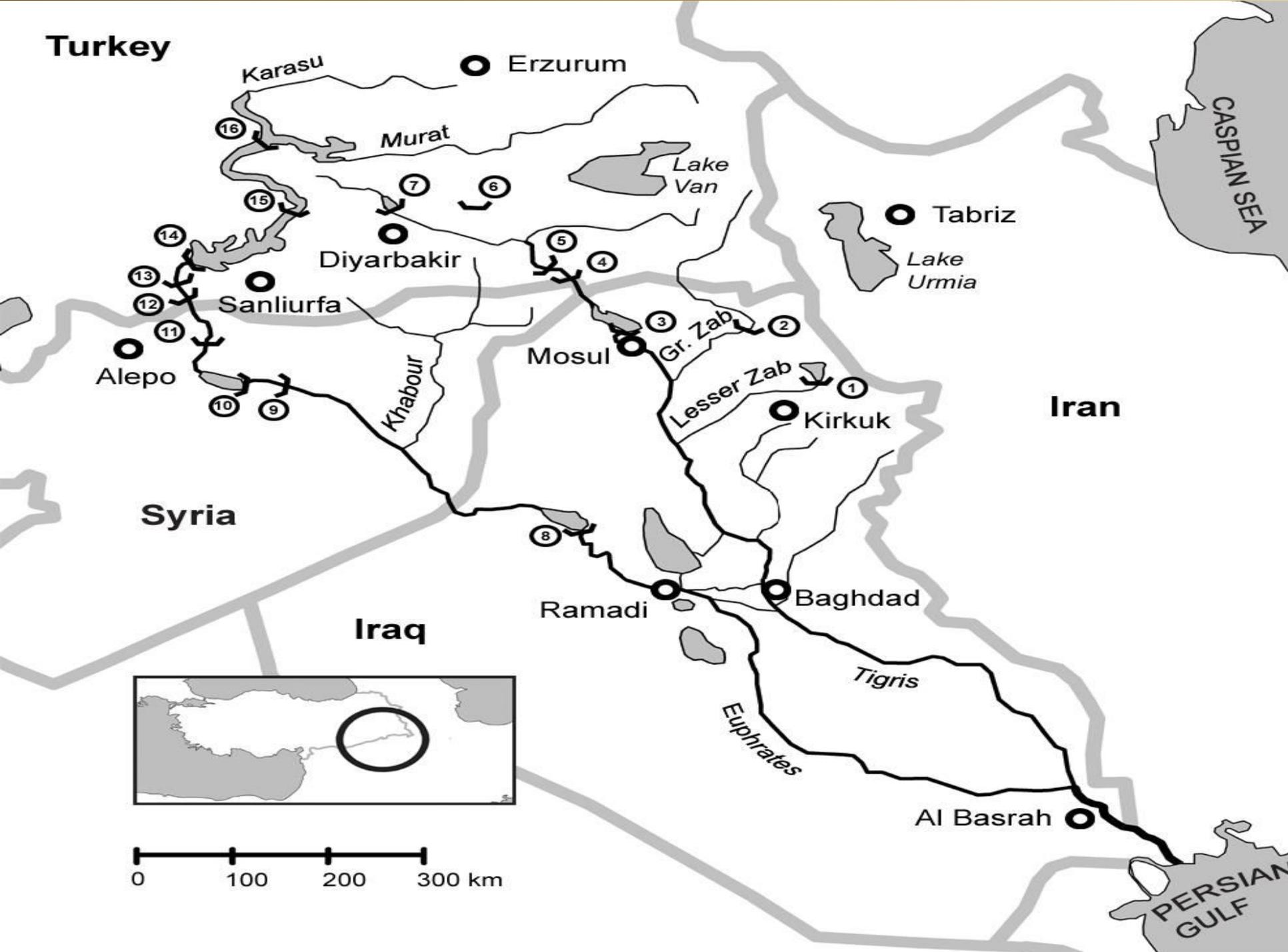


# **Politics of Hydropower Development in the Euphrates Tigris Basin**

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Turkey

Karasu

Erzurum

Murat

Lake Van

Tabriz

Lake Urmia

Diyarbakir

Sanliurfa

Mosul

Gr. Zab

Lesser Zab

Kirkuk

Iran

Alepo

Khabour

Syria

Ramadi

Baghdad

Iraq

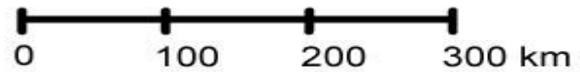
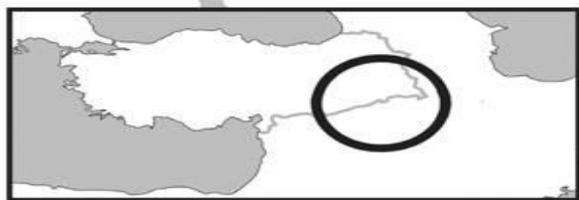
Tigris

Euphrates

Al Basrah

PERSIAN GULF

CASPIAN SEA



## The era of *hydraulic mission* (1960s-onwards)

- Large-scale dam development, mainly for hydropower generation and irrigation development.
- In total, there are 32 existing major dams on the Euphrates and Tigris. Eight dams are reportedly under construction and at least 13 more are planned
- The total hydropower installed capacity on both rivers: 11 350 MW.

# Political economy of water in Turkey, Syria and Iraq

**Turkey** had long been dependent on oil imports. Having been hard hit by the oil crises of the 1970s, the government embarked on a programme of indigenous resource development, with particular emphasis on hydropower.

The **Syrian** economy has traditionally been dominated by agriculture. Exploration for oil did not begin until the early 1980s. Even though oil made a significant contribution to export earnings in the following decades as world oil prices fluctuated, Syria focused on agricultural and hydropower development

Since 1958, **Iraq** has changed from being mainly an agricultural country exporting wheat and other crops to an oil-producing, semi-industrial nation forced to import most of its own food. Yet after the Iraqi government nationalised the oil companies in 1972 and began to receive more income from oil, the focus also turned to agricultural production and hydropower development.

## **Politics of hydropower occur at various levels:**

- *National level:* Turkey, Syria and Iraq
- *Global level* (World Bank Operational Policies, WCD, OECD Common Approaches, Equator Principles, IHA)
- *Transboundary river basin (regional) level:* Euphrates-Tigris (ET) river basin

## At national level

- All three riparians emphasize the strategic role of hydropower in the economic development plans and renewable energy policy.
- They all pursue ambitious programs to construct a large of number of dams and hydroelectric power plants to satisfy ever increasing energy demands.

- Evolution of hydropower politics at national level:
  - centralized policies for promoting hydropower development since the 1950s in all riparian states
  - liberalization of the hydropower sector (but still centralized decision-making) in Turkey since mid-1980s; in Iraq since 2003
  - exclusion / weak status of public and environment: emergence of social movements since late 1990s in Turkey; in Iraq ? (NGOs since 2003); in Syria ?

# How do we evaluate the interaction between global norms and national discourse and practice?

- Poor practice in terms of transferring the global norms into domestic practice:
  - Negative environmental harm continues to increase
  - Public participation at planning stage is not at all achieved
- Global norms (even the World Bank guidelines) have been ineffective in bringing better practices of hydropower development.

## Transboundary river basin (regional) level

- Water disputes evolved from flow regulation initially to large scale projects including hydro.
- Global and regional politics have not been conducive for cooperation. Mutual mistrust and lack of confidence stood as obstacles for joint (HEP) development and coordination.

- Disagreed about filling (impoundment) and operation programs of the hydropower dams
  - The three notable political crises in the ET basin emanated mainly from construction, filling and operation of the dams in 1974, 1990 and 1996.
- Definetly disagreed about the impacts (benefits and risks) of the hydropower dams:
  - Upstream riparian claimed that the dams regulated the flow; reduced the build-up of sediment in downstream dams. Also asserted that dams (such as Keban) sould be less problematic (compared to multipurpose dams) since hydro is accepted to fall in the category of non-consumptive usage.
  - While downstream riparians complained about reduced flow, degradation of quality, loss of ecosystems and livelihoods.

- Is there a chance to jointly develop river basin (regional) level norms and rules?
  - Once «benefit-sharing» approach became popular at bureaucratic and political levels, particularly within the cooperation atmosphere which existed between Turkey and Syria (2000-2011).
  - Sharing baskets of benefits: energy resources (hydropower, electricity cooperation, joint grids) was one of main areas of cooperation within the framework of High Level Strategic Cooperation (HSCC) Councils.

- Internal conflict in Syria since 2011.
- Interestingly, however, even under these unfavourable political conditions middle-level layers of both bureaucracies are still keen to maintain the contacts. To illustrate: «dam safety» became an area for transboundary cooperation particularly in the joint training programs.

- On December 23 and 24, 2009 Turkey and Syria signed at the first meeting of the HSCC in Damascus, four MoUs related to water:
  1. Syrian water withdrawals from the Tigris
  2. Coping with the Drought
  3. Remediation of the Water Quality

## **4. The Joint (Friendship) Dam on the Asi/Orontes river**

- concrete product of the benefit sharing policy
- both countries would benefit from it in terms of flood prevention, recreation, fishing, electricity generation and irrigation.

- All in all, if a dam becomes a regional project with joint management and ownership, overall benefits would increase.
- In the ET basin, in the 1980s, Turkish engineers offered to build a joint dam on the Euphrates on the border between Turkey and Syria.
- Never accomplished. Instead, two dams were constructed: Karkamis (Turkey) and Tishrin (Syria).