

# **TURKEY-SYRIA- IRAQ RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS**

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## **EXPERTISE THESIS ABSTRACT**

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the impact of the Tigris-Euphrates Rivers and the Orontes River on the relations between Turkey and Syria and Iraq, examine the steps taken to date following the Franco-Turkish Agreement signed on October 20th, 1921, analyze the causes of the ongoing disputes, and evaluate various claims put forward by bordering countries.

The main starting point of the present study was the need to analyze the extent to which the “water wars” scenarios, particularly regarding Middle Eastern countries, that have been dwelt on and articulated in the recent past by Western authorities and authors alike, actually reflect the reality. Another point of departure was the aim to scrutinize the steps taken by the Republic of Turkey towards a resolution and to assess the country’s water policy and proposals for resolution within the framework of International Water Law.

To analyze the issue at hand, firstly information regarding water resources in the world and the Turkish Republic is presented. Then, basic concepts in Water Law are dwelt upon and the various meanings attached to these by different countries are discussed. Within the framework of these concepts, different views and doctrines established during the foundation and development stages of Water Law are scrutinized and the approaches taken by Syria and Iraq are presented.

To clarify the matter and present a holistic view of the emerging picture, the water-related problems in the Middle East, and the Turkish Republic’s transboundary waters and relations with bordering countries are described in general terms. This is followed by a more specific discussion of the water-related problems among the Turkish Republic, Syria and Iraq; within this scope, the practices that the three countries implement on the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and the Orontes River, their attitudes and political relations are described. Furthermore, benchmark agreements and protocols on the way to resolution are presented and analyzed from a legal perspective.

Finally, the plans and projects presented by the Turkish Republic for the resolution of the issue are assessed with respect to the claims, rights and interests of the countries and within the scope of the general principles of International Law and International Agreements in effect. As a result, based on the view that water is not a means of war but a means of reconciliation, it is set forth that despite the internal conflicts and the insecure environments in Syria and Iraq, relations need to be maintained due to the vital importance of water.

**Keywords:** Turkish Republic, Syria, Iraq, Transboundary Waters, Middle East, Tigris, Euphrates.