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# Tool for peace or tool for power? Interrogating Turkish 'water diplomacy' in the case of Northern Cyprus.

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# Abstract

As the perceived risk of 'water wars' grows in the context of climate change-induced environmental stress, 'water diplomacy' is receiving increased policy attention. As a policy approach, this seeks to leverage peace and cooperation between riparian stakeholders via joint technical and diplomatic mechanisms. It is now an established approach across multilateral and national strategies. This paper seeks to interrogate water diplomacy using the case study of the Turkish-built Water Pipeline Project, which currently supplies water to Turkey's client state: the internationally unrecognised Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. It does so by employing a Foucauldian discourse analysis to unpack the major discursive formations around the pipeline and explore them in context. The findings suggest that, counter to the Turkish state's public justification of the pipeline under a water diplomacy discourse, as "Peace Water" seeking to alleviate the island's longstanding conflict, water diplomacy today functions as a strategic tool of the Turkish state, used to mask the pipeline's reproduction of island power asymmetries. Hence, the paper suggests that ultimately, water diplomacy is not always a 'tool for peace' but also functions as a 'tool for power'. This must be recognised as water diplomacy receives growing policy attention.

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## List of Abbreviations

**AKP -** *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party)

**DSI** - *Devlet Su İşleri* (Turkish Waterworks Department)

**ECHR** - European Court of Human Rights

**EEZ** – Exclusive Economic Zone

**EU** - European Union

**FAO** – Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations

**FDA** – Foucauldian discourse analysis

**RoC** – Republic of Cyprus

**TRNC** – Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

**UN** – United Nations

**UNHLPW** – United Nations High Level Panel on Water

**WFD** - Water Framework Directive

# 1. Introduction

Today's unfolding 'drama of water' sees increasing emphasis fall on water scarcity as shaping the 21st-century distribution of conflict by triggering new 'water wars' (*A Matter of Survival,* 2017). These will overwhelmingly be centred, the literature suggests, at the world's transboundary water zones: those that include the political boundaries of two or more countries, and which connect 150 countries and 52% of the world's population at 310 transboundary river basins (McCracken & Wolf, 2019).

In this context, one policy approach rapidly gaining attention is water diplomacy: that which seeks to "catalyse technical water cooperation and, at the same time, use water as a means to develop good neighbourly relations in politically sensitive areas" (Molnar et al, 2017:5). This drastically reframes the water scarcity argument by depicting water, if diplomatically managed, as a key tool for *peace*, rather than a weapon or catalyst of war, and is increasingly central in multilateral and national environmental security strategies (Grech-Madin et al, 2018). It thereby extends the existing governance architecture for water cooperation established under the 1966 Helsinki Rules and 1997 United Nations (UN) Watercourses Convention (McCaffrey, 2001).

This dissertation seeks to interrogate water diplomacy's growing policy emphasis by asking whether (always, everywhere) water diplomacy does indeed form a tool for peace (as the rhetoric suggests), or whether it can also function as a tool for *power*. It does so based on a particular case study: the Water Supply Project pipeline, completed in 2015 and built and funded entirely by Turkey, which travels 80km across the Mediterranean Sea from Turkey to supply its client state, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), with drinking and agricultural water. This case has been chosen as it presents a clear anomaly to water diplomacy's underpinning assumption that diplomatically-managed water will achieve peaceful and sustainable relations: while publicly justified under a 'water diplomacy' discourse as the "Peace Water" designed to end the island's longstanding conflict (Bryant, 2015), Cyprus' peace process remains at a standstill six years after the pipeline's completion, with negotiations this year ending prematurely due to a 'lack of common ground' (Greenwood, 2021).

Evidently, therefore, the pipeline's "peace water" potential is yet to be realised. This dissertation thus seeks to unpack this anomaly, with two key objectives: (1) to better understand why it occurs; and (2) to use this understanding to reflect upon water diplomacy more broadly. Ultimately, I suggest that exploring the anomaly's imbuing with *power* offers a productive way to achieve both objectives. This is based on three literatures (the hydro-hegemony literature, the critical policy literature, and the critical infrastructure literature) which, combined, illustrate how water diplomacy's unseen power may be experienced through the infrastructures built in its name – a perspective so far unconsidered. This is pertinent at a time when water diplomacy is receiving unprecedented policy attention.

The dissertation's structure is as follows. First, I outline the case study in more detail, bringing attention to its embedding within a unique water-management context (Section 2). This hints at the need to interrogate the Turkish 'water diplomacy' discourse for the power asymmetries it may mask. Section 3 outlines the literatures and research question I use to do so. Having briefly outlined the dissertation's methodological basis in a Foucauldian discourse analysis of the pipeline's justifying water diplomacy discourse (Section 4), Section 5 applies this methodology and outlines initial findings. Section 6 contextualises these findings by exploring water diplomacy's power-rich context. Section 7 concludes by considering, in relation to the outlined objectives, how this power-rich context shapes future prospects for water diplomacy in Cyprus and more broadly.

## 2. Cyprus as a Case Study

### 2.1. The conflict

Cyprus has a long history of foreign rule and intervention (Zikos & Roggero, 2013). Under Ottoman rule since the 16th century, it remained a British colony from 1878-1960, when an independent Cypriot state was finally formed. Despite peaceful coexistence for centuries (Bryant, 2004), Cyprus' postcolonial period saw rising tension between its (minority) Muslim and (majority) Orthodox Christian populations. Each drew support from Turkey and Greece respectively, who had maintained increasing diplomatic influence during the late colonial period (Faustmann & Peristianis, 2006). These early nationalist sentiments subsequently fuelled full-blown violence based on conflicting nationalist ideals of *enosis* (the Greek-Cypriot desire to unify Cyprus with Greece) and *taksim* (the Turkish-Cypriot desire for the island's partition), culminating in 1974 as a Greek Cypriot coup d'état allegedly supported by Greece sparked Turkish invasion (Hughes-Wilson, 2011).

The brief conflict that ensued forced Greek and Turkish Cypriots into separate, ethnically defined halves of the island. Today, despite longstanding international efforts to resolve the conflict (most notably, the 2004 Annan Plan referendum – see Kyris, 2012) this division remains, separating the (Orthodox Christian, Greek-speaking) Republic of Cyprus (RoC) in the south and (Muslim, Turkish-speaking) Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in the north (Figure 1).



*Figure 1. Map of Cyprus' modern territorial demarcation. Source: BBC (2017).*

This creates complex political-legal dynamics. On the one hand, under Protocol 10 of the 2003 European Union (EU) Accession Treaty which rendered the RoC an EU member state, the island is *de jure* recognised as one unified whole. Yet on the other, while the north remains under direct administration of the TRNC (self-declared as independent in 1983 but internationally unrecognised by any administration other than Turkey), EU law (the *acquis communautaire*) remains *de facto* suspended in the north, pending reunification (Kyris, 2016). With Turkey itself deemed illegal occupant of the

island due to the TRNC's heavy reliance on its military and financial backing (e.g., European Court of Human Rights [ECHR], 2001), it remains illegal for Greek Cypriots to engage with the north for fear of 'recognition by implication' (Mason & Bryant, 2017).

## 2.2. The conflict and water management

However, this dissertation's focus is not the conflict itself, but rather, how its dynamics are reflected and reproduced in and through the island's water management. This draws from critical political ecologists' understanding of power asymmetries as enacted and maintained through non-human elements, including water (e.g., see Mason & Khawlie, 2016, on 'fluid sovereignty'), and, I argue, is the context within which the pipeline's purported attempt at water diplomacy must be understood and interrogated. Essentially, exploring the conflict through a water management lens allows us to interrogate the island's power dynamics and more importantly, the pipeline's role in reproducing and challenging them.

Water is a scarce resource in Cyprus - the EU's most water-stressed country (Figure 2). In the TRNC specifically, where annual demand of $110 \, mm^3$ exceeds supply by up to a third (Mason & Bryant, 2017), future water projections indicate a supply gap of 32 million $m^3$ by 2035 (Gozen & Turkman, 2008).
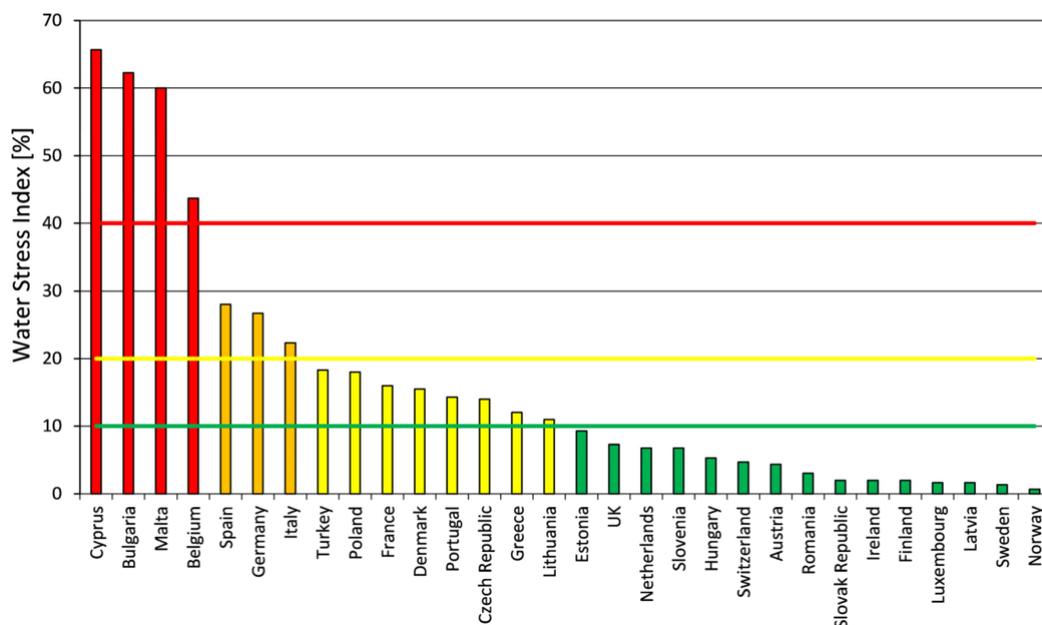


Figure 2. Water Stress index for European countries. Source: Bixio (2008.)

This makes water conservation a top priority – yet continually, the island's political-legal context precludes sustainable water conservation practices. As Zikos and Roggero (2013:25) suggest, while the infrastructure needed to sustainably conserve Cyprus' meagre precipitation must be large-scale and island-integrated, the island's *de facto* separation and the two communities' mutual non-recognition continues to "impede and outlaw the joint management of… shared water". Instead, we face two opposing hydrosocial scalings. On the one hand, the EU, viewing Cyprus as *de jure* one unified whole and therefore one river basin district, overlooks its *de facto* political division in its cross-island implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) (Birol, Koundouri & Remoundou, 2011). Yet on the other, the *de facto* suspension of EU law in the TRNC means that, despite shared groundwater

resources (Figure 3), Turkish Cypriot water remains managed by an antagonistic administration, operating outside EU or other regulatory structures (Mason, 2020).
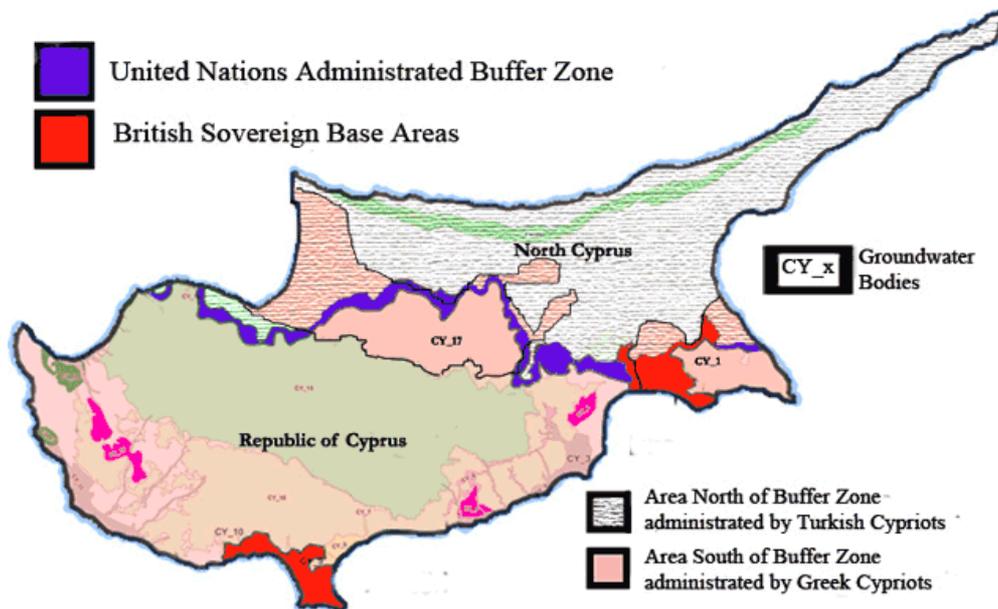


*Figure 3. Map of Cyprus' shared groundwater resources at Mesaoria (CY_17) and Kokkinochoria (CY_1) groundwater basins. Source: Zikos and Roggero (2013).*

Importantly, the possibility of reconciling these scalings remains limited. Formally, the RoC's EU accession dictates that EU technical assistance be provided in the north in anticipation of a settlement, including water practices consistent with the WFD (Kyris, 2016). Yet in reality, the EU's recognition of exclusive RoC sovereignty renders it unable to engage in water assistance that might be perceived as illegal TRNC recognition, while its hydro-social scaling of the island as one unified whole limits any reason to do so (Mason & Bryant, 2017). This leaves each management system operating independently, with limited scope for cooperation over an issue that desperately requires it.

## 2.3. The water pipeline

It is within this context that the water pipeline must be seen. Hailed by Erdoğan as the 'project of the century', since 2015 this 107km-long pipeline, funded by a $537m grant from the Turkish Aid Commission and managed by the Turkish State Hydraulic Works (*Devlet Su İşleri* – DSI), has brought water 80km across the Mediterranean via undersea pipeline from Turkey's Alaköprü dam, to the TRNC's Geçitköy Dam (Figure 4). The DSI also maintains control over the pipeline's volumetric flows, distributing water from Güzelyali Station (near Gecitköy) across the TRNC via the 480 miles of piping also funded by the DSI grant.

*Figure 4. Map of the Water Supply Project (pipeline and distribution network). Source: DSI.*

Viewed within the context outlined, the pipeline arguably represents two key possibilities. On the one hand, as an unprecedented means for cooperation, it forms a possible way to reconcile the island's opposing hydrosocial scalings. This is persistently emphasised by Turkish state officials, who have publicly justified the pipeline under an explicit water diplomacy rhetoric as "Peace Water" (*Barış Suyu*): a liquid catalyst to cooperation with the equally water-stressed Greek Cypriots.

Yet on the other, we must also recall that under international consensus, the TRNC remains under illegal Turkish occupation. This subjects Turkey to humanitarian laws of state responsibility: particularly, the law of occupation and its provisions on the management of the occupied territory's natural resources, which prohibit the occupant from appropriating resources for personal gain (Pabian, 2021). As a Turkish hydro-territorialisation at odds with the RoC's sovereign claims, which arguably solidifies Turkish presence in the TRNC, the "Peace Water" pipeline must therefore also be interrogated for its potential contribution to power asymmetries.

# 3. Literature Review

Our analytical intention therefore becomes to assess the pipeline and its justifying water diplomacy discourse through a lens of *power*: water diplomacy's power-imbuing, I suggest, could operate here as a key limiting factor upon its assumed peacebuilding outcomes. Importantly, recognising power itself as an essentially contested concept despite its ubiquity in the social sciences (Lukes, 1974; Clegg & Haugaard, 2009), this observation is based on three critical literatures which I use as theoretical 'tools' to approach power, illuminating potential avenues for water diplomacy's power-imbuing. Following a brief overview of water diplomacy itself, this section outlines these tools and shows how each informs an interrogation of water diplomacy's unseen power.

## *3.1. Water Diplomacy: An Emerging Policy Approach*

First and foremost, this dissertation is grounded in current debates around *water diplomacy:* an emergent approach to the management of shared water resources which seeks to mobilise joint technical and diplomatic mechanisms in order to leverage cooperation between riparian stakeholders, and ultimately, facilitate broader stability and peacebuilding (Klimes et al, 2019).

Importantly, water diplomacy as a policy approach is emerging in a specific conjecture. As water-scarce populations grow in a context of climate change-induced environmental stress, a corresponding sense of urgency surrounds water resources and their management (FAO, 2020): particularly, over concerns that "water wars" will become more frequent (Serageldin, 2009). This has gained prominence in recent years in association with major conflicts in the Middle East - notably, in Syria, Iraq and Yemen (Klimes & Yaari, 2019). Despite the lack of evidence to support water scarcity as a direct cause of conflict in these cases (e.g., Selby et al, 2017), consensus thus remains that, as global populations grow, and water consumption increases, growing water scarcity will increasingly drive violent conflict (Wigham, 2018).

This has given rise to two contrasting approaches to confronting water scarcity and the resulting water wars. First, proposed solutions have often been technical, as a perceived "urgent need for modernised water supply technologies" legitimates a new paradigm of 'smart' hydraulic infrastructures (Li, Yang & Sitzenfrei, 2020:2). In parallel, however, it is increasingly recognised that 'smarter' systems are not enough: rather, "effective and sustainable solutions will require the strengthening of synergies across and between actors" (Klimes et al, 2019:1363). This places direct emphasis instead on water's *governance:* the political, institutional and administrative rules, practices and processes through which water is managed (OECD, 2018).

This governance-based approach to water management has attracted increasing attention in recent years, reflecting growing policy consensus that the global water crisis is primarily politically determined (Hukka, Castro & Pietila, 2010). However, in today's policy world, it has arguably translated into a more specific emphasis on *water diplomacy* (Woodhouse & Muller, 2017). Stemming from diplomacy more generally – the "managing of international relations through negotiations between representatives of states or agencies" - Zareie, Bozorg-Haddad & Loáiciga, 2021:2337) - this *shares* with water governance a basic recognition of the collective action challenges raised by water (Ostrom, 2010), which leaves prospective water wars driven more by institutional and political capacities than by physical drivers (i.e. scarcity), and therefore in need of management-based solutions (Yoffe, Wolf & Giordano, 2003). However, where it *differs* is in (1) its approach to *enacting* water governance, and (2) its ultimate goal. First, water diplomacy seeks to facilitate cooperation by bringing together technical water experts with policymakers and diplomats; combining technical and diplomatic tools (Molnar et

al, 2017). This extends water governance by explicitly seeking to enact policy from the intersect of science, policy and practice (Klimes et al, 2019). Second, water diplomacy ultimately seeks to mobilise the "high peace dividends" offered by transboundary waters *beyond the river* (Pohl & Swain, 2017:20). This reframes water governance by depicting water, if managed diplomatically, as a tool for peace both over shared water resources and political relations more generally.

### 3.2. Problematising Water Diplomacy

Thus, water diplomacy now forms an increasingly key policy approach at national and multilateral forums, as governments and political associations alike continue to associate conflict prevention with the resolution of water management issues (Zareie, Bozorg-Haddad & Loáciga, 2021). For example: the EU Council has stated intentions to use "EU diplomatic engagement on water as a tool for peace, security and stability" (EU Council, 2018:3); 2019 UN conclusions suggest that "hydro-diplomacy must be strengthened" in order to prevent water stress-related conflicts (UN High Level Panel on Water [UNHLPW], cited in Yaari, 2019); most recently, the 2021 UN World Water Development Report explicitly recognises the "value of water for peace" (UN, 2021:104).

In principle, this shifts our understanding of water scarcity beyond technical, apolitical interpretations, to recognise it as shaped by both environmental factors and social power (Bakker, 2012). The recognition that water wars will be solved not only through 'smarter' infrastructure but through greater cooperation thus creates opportunity for improved political engagement in shared water management (Grech-Madin et al, 2018). Nevertheless, recent academic literature has critiqued water diplomacy for its failure to interrogate the power relations inherent to water interactions: remaining "remarkably power-blind" to the asymmetries inherent to water interactions (Vij, Warner and Barua, 2020). This suggests that while water diplomacy *in theory* recognises water's political imbuing, *in reality*, power dynamics remain overlooked.

These current critiques thus provide a theoretical entry-point for me to interrogate water diplomacy's power-imbuing. However, in order to problematise water diplomacy in this case specifically, I use three critical literatures to orient attention to three potential avenues for water diplomacy's power-imbuing.

### 3.2.1. Hydro-Hegemony Literature

Originating with the London Water Research Group at the start of the millennium, the hydro-hegemony literature extends critical hydropolitics' understanding of river basins as 'waterscapes' where flows of water and power converge (Swyngedouw, 2004) to suggest that all transboundary water interactions are, to some extent, characterised by power asymmetries – crucially, including supposed dynamics of 'cooperation' (Zeitoun & Warner, 2006). Directly countering empirical literature which seeks to dispel the 'water wars myth' by demonstrating the relative infrequency of water conflict compared to cooperation (e.g., Yoffe, Wolf & Giordano, 2003), it suggests that "control over water resources is not achieved through water wars but through a suite of power-related tactics and strategies" (Zeitoun & Warner, 2006:436) adopted by the hydro-hegemon in contexts where conflict and cooperation always co-exist (Zeitoun & Mirumachi, 2008). Thus, a lack of explicitly violent hydraulic conflict by no means guarantees a lack of hydraulic asymmetry – rather, the 'hidden' nature of these arrangements requires explicit attention through analyses which place asymmetry at their core (Warner et al, 2017).

The hydro-hegemony literature informs this dissertation in two key ways. First, it forces us to consider assumed 'cooperative' relations as embedded in more complex 'domination/cooperation' dynamics. For example, Selby (2003:121) suggests that the much-lauded cooperative mechanisms established in Israel-Palestine via the Oslo 'peace process' did little more than "dress up" Israeli domination in a "new vocabulary" of 'cooperation'. This directly informs the dissertation's analytical stance by forcing us to consider how water diplomacy, as that which explicitly seeks cooperation, might itself be implicated in the construction and maintenance of hydro-hegemony. Second, it theories hydro-hegemony itself from a neo-Gramscian perspective as reliant on the 'manufacture of consent', thereby orienting attention to the construction of 'common-sense' hydraulic discourses as a key tool of the hydro-hegemon (Warner et al, 2017). This again informs the dissertation's analytical stance by suggesting that water diplomacy – an emerging 'common-sense' hydraulic discourse – requires closer interrogation.

However, through the case study, the dissertation also seeks to fill a gap currently identified in the hydro-hegemony literature. As Warner et al (2017) suggest, hydro-hegemony remains characterised by a "territorial trap" (Agnew, 1994): seeing power asymmetries as occurring only ever at river basins, and only ever between the relevant riparian states. It thus fails to consider hydro-hegemony's *extraterritorial* operation. What the Cypriot case therefore offers is an original contribution to the literature: diverging from the river basin as the assumed scalar unit to instead explore *extra-territorial* hydro-hegemonic relations (as the pipeline runs from one river basin in Turkey, to another in the TRNC). This allows me to apply hydro-hegemony's premises on power asymmetries in extra-territorial context – a dimension so far under-explored.

### 3.2.2. Critical Policy Literature

The critical policy literature subsequently builds on these initial insights from hydro-hegemony to orient particular attention to the imbuing of the water diplomacy *policy discourse* with power.

Building on the 1970s' academic revolution, which sought to problematise inherited Enlightenment discourses of objectivity and rationality and highlight instead social practices of knowledge-making (Fischer et al, 2015), today's critical policy literature views policy from a constructivist epistemological stance: seeing *knowledge* as actively 'constructed' by the cognising subject based on individual social-cultural experience (Willig, 2001). This supports a view of *policy* as constructed according to personal interests, values and normative assumptions - thereby diverging from the positivist view of policy as 'neutral', 'expert' knowledge (Fischer et al, 2015). This directly informs my interrogation of water diplomacy by problematising its assumed neutrality as a policy tool for peace. However, to foreground power specifically, I draw from the Foucauldian critical policy literature.

By approaching power as a *productive* and *relational* force rather than an entity to be possessed, critical policy scholars suggest that Foucault enables a shift from an abstract view of power, focusing instead on its operation through particular instruments, including, crucially, policy discourse (Luke, 2015). This is based on Foucault's (1972) notion of 'power/knowledge', which holds that power and knowledge are fundamentally integrated: "power produces knowledge, and knowledge produces power" (Flyvbjerg, 2001:132). Policy discourses – as that which seeks to produce particular 'regimes' of knowledge – thus form a crucial "situated practice" by which power operates (Lövbrand & Stripple, 2015:104).

This directly informs the dissertation by suggesting that policy discourses are not only *socially constructed,* but also *fundamentally power-imbued:* remaining central to power's operation in a way

that an "aura of objective rationality" serves to hide (Fischer et al, 2015:7). This premise has been widely applied: including to the 'development discourse' itself, which Ferguson (1994) suggests forms an 'anti-politics machine' working to de-politicise questions of resource allocation and strengthen bureaucratic power; and to hydraulic policy discourses, which the literature explores as operating under a façade of neutrality to directly support state political agendas (e.g., Alatout, 2008; Rusca et a, 2019).

What Foucault calls the "political task" is therefore to unmask the hidden violence of such apparently neutral institutions (Flyvbjerg, 2001). This dissertation seeks to do so: building on this problematisation of policy as a neutral vehicle of expert knowledge to consider how water diplomacy, as an emergent hydraulic policy discourse, may itself form a "situated practice" for power.

### 3.2.3. Infrastructural Politics Literature

Finally, the infrastructural politics literature illuminates a potential avenue for power in the case study by demonstrating infrastructures (such as the water pipeline) to be power-imbued.

Beginning with an earlier shift in the 1990s from a solely technical view of infrastructure to recognise it as fundamentally socio-political – becoming 'real' only through its social embedding (Star, 1999) – a recent 'infrastructural turn' in anthropology has seen an increasing literature exploring infrastructure as a productive ethnographic location to "examine the construction, maintenance and reproduction of political and economic life" (Anand, Gupta & Appel, 2017:3-4). This is based on the fundamental premise that infrastructure forms a key site for the enacting of state-citizen relations: originally outlined by Mann (1984), who depicted infrastructure as a crucial mechanism for the state to maintain territorial control by materially linking its institutions with the local communities it sought to penetrate. Taken up by today's anthropological literature, therefore, we see infrastructure used as a lens to explore the "myriad ways that the state comes into view" in local, everyday contexts (Corbridge et al, 2005:7). This is often framed using the 'infrastructural citizenship' heuristic (Lemanski, 2020): seeing infrastructure as the key everyday site where the *state* imagines and plans for citizens, and where *citizens* materially and discursively 'see' the state.

Two bodies of anthropological literature have emerged from this new analytical focus: one exploring infrastructure as a site for the everyday *contestation* of state power, as infrastructural access "beyond the network" (Coutard & Rutherford, 2015) allows citizens to challenge state authority via the "porosity of… infrastructural governance" (Truelove, 2020:1); the other exploring infrastructure as a site for the everyday *enacting* of state power. This suggests that infrastructures form "vehicles… of larger political goals and forms of power" (von Schnitzler, 2015:10); used by states as both *tools* to materially enact progress and modernity, and *symbols* of future developmental promise (Larkin, 2013).

This theorisation of infrastructure arguably allows us to rethink state power by considering it as a 'technopolitical terrain', manifest infrastructurally in individual homes and bodies (Anand, Gupta & Appel, 2017). It thus directly informs the dissertation by suggesting there could be a power-imbued profile to the water pipeline that currently remains overlooked.

### 3.3. Research Question

As theoretical tools, therefore, these literatures bring attention to the power potentially embedded in the case study: whether in the asymmetries hidden beneath its claims to 'cooperation', the water diplomacy policy discourse itself, or the infrastructure that discourse justifies. Their insights thus provide clear theoretical grounds on which to question whether water diplomacy in this case does indeed form a tool for *peace,* or whether it forms a tool for *power.*

With this in mind, this dissertation seeks to unpack the power dynamics of the water diplomacy discourse used to justify the water pipeline. It does so by asking the following research question(s):

***Why is a water diplomacy policy discourse being used in the case of the Water Supply Project pipeline in Northern Cyprus?***
  **i.     *What purpose does this policy discourse seek to fulfil?***
  **ii.    *In whose interest does it operate?***

Asking these research questions will ultimately allow me to fulfil my stated research intentions (Section 1). First, by considering the power dynamics embedded in the case study itself I will better understand why water diplomacy here may have so far failed to generate peacebuilding outcomes, and relatedly, what this suggests about future prospects for resolving the Cypriot conflict. Second, I will use this understanding to reflect upon the peacebuilding potential of water diplomacy policy more broadly, making this research transferable as water diplomacy becomes increasingly mainstreamed.

However, asking these research questions also allows me to expand the existing water diplomacy literature by developing a new angle for critique. Typically, water diplomacy's current critiques frame it as 'failing' due to an inability to shift beyond technical tools and recognise contextual politics (e.g., Rigi & Warner, 2020). They therefore overlook how water diplomacy may fail because it is *itself* active in the establishment and maintenance of power asymmetries. On the contrary, what these literatures have shown is that water diplomacy *itself* may well be power-imbued. Therefore, drawing from Venugopal's (2018) threefold typology of 'development failure', I suggest that our understanding of water diplomacy failure must shift, from the current view of 'design failure' (blaming *ignorance* of politics exterior to policy) to explore instead its 'hidden agenda' failure (*ibid*:244). This encourages instead deconstructing water diplomacy's "discursive veil" (*ibid:*243) of peace, to explore its hidden intentions and effects.

# 4. Methodology

Having established the *theoretical* tools used to illuminate the potential imbuing of this anomaly with power, this section turns to the *methodological* tools used to actually unpack these power dynamics.

To investigate the unseen power of water diplomacy, this dissertation utilises a Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) conducted on official communications and newspaper publications concerning the water pipeline. This section outlines (1) the justification for this approach and (2) the analytical steps taken, before subsequently presenting and discussing findings in Sections 5 and 6.

## 4.1. Justifying FDA

As Sumner and Tribe (2004) have suggested, the vast spectrum of epistemological and methodological options available to development studies scholars creates a heightened need for attention to rigour in our research designs. Understanding 'rigour' here as a close alignment of stages of the research process, where each stage explicitly informs the next, this necessitates demonstrating how FDA as an analytical approach is directly informed by the material covered so far.

Arguably, the literatures used to unpack the anomaly's power-imbuing incentivise a discourse-analytic approach: the hydro-hegemony literature pays particular attention to the hydro-hegemon's leveraging of power through 'common-sense' discourses (e.g., Menga, 2016); the critical policy literature explicitly depicts policy discourses as instruments for power (e.g., Luke, 2015); the infrastructural politics literature depicts infrastructures and the discourses around them as tools to construct material-discursive visions of developmental progress (e.g., Larkin, 2013). It follows, therefore, that a research question informed by these literatures, which seeks to bring attention to the imbuing of Cypriot water diplomacy with power, would also focus on how that power is constructed *discursively*. Thus, I focus methodologically on discourse: the "spoken or written practices or visual representations" which "dictate meaning" and whose analyses indicate "the individuals or groups whose views have dominated" (Grbich, 2013:245). While this differs from the standard approach to investigating infrastructural power, reliant mainly on ethnographic methods, discourse analysis, as "an approach for looking at what language does*"* (Braun & Clarke, 2013:187), is arguably better suited here to a research question exploring the construction of power through a water diplomacy policy discourse.

However, amidst a plethora of discourse-analytic approaches, I specifically employ a Foucauldian approach. This is due to its explicit attention to the role of discourse in wider social processes of legitimation and power (Willig, 2001): focusing on how discourses are "put to work" as part of networks of power relations seeking to regulate social conduct (Langdridge, 2004:337). FDA thus extends the action-orientation of discourse analysis more generally by seeking to "render the familiar strange" (Graham, 2004:5), asking specifically in whose interest discourse operates, and how it serves to increase the power of particular institutions and individuals. It is therefore a suitable approach for answering the research questions outlined.

## 4.2. Implementing FDA

### Data Selection

Discourse analysis involves "treating discourse as data" (Wood & Kroger, 2000:3). Specifically, I analyse (1) official speeches made by Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot authorities concerning the pipeline,

(2) responding statements made by Greek-Cypriot authorities, and (3) newspaper articles published by Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot media outlets. The first was chosen for two key reasons. First, speeches make explicit claims concerning the pipeline's water diplomacy justification. Second, they have a high degree of "productive power" (Foucault, 1972), setting the terms for the pipeline's management and influencing the thoughts and actions of relevant water management actors. The second and third were chosen because they allow me to track how the water diplomacy discourse has been dispersed, supported and challenged.

Importantly, data is restricted to that available in English translation. This is a practical necessity owing to personal language barriers, and to an extent, limits this study's ability to capture the full scope of water diplomacy's discursive development. However, seen in context, it also arguably provides analytical value. First, it is important to note that owing to the island's British colonial history and modern association with the EU, English language remains omnipresent in Cypriot life (Yazgin, 2007). Therefore, most Cypriot newspapers do offer English translations, mitigating against the association of English with elite discourses noted elsewhere (Phillipson, 1992). Further, as in other conflict settings, English arguably forms the language of peace and diplomacy in Cyprus (Hunter, 2020). State publications in English thus arguably form a state-sanctioned, public-facing narrative, in a setting where language remains embedded in fractious identity politics (Hadjioannou, Tsiplakou & Kappler, 2011). This warrants investigation for how it discursively constructs the state, its actions and its citizens.

To find relevant data, Turkish, Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot digital state archives were first searched for official communications on the pipeline. Second, digital archives of English-published or English-translated media outlets on the island were searched. Noting that news media often reflect elite or state-sanctioned discourses (van Dijk, 1996) - particularly in the TRNC, where anti-Turkish outlets have been forcibly shut down in recent years (Smith, 2018) - effort was made to include newspapers across the political spectrum. The short timeframe (post-2011, when the pipeline construction started) and clear subject matter (the pipeline) provided parameters for data selection.

### *Data Analysis*
Faced with (1) 'discourse analysis' as one of the most confusing terms in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2013), and (2) limited description of analytical procedure from Foucault himself (Hook, 2005), analysing these data relied on an established framework for analysis. Therefore, I followed Grbich's (2013) method for FDA. This takes Foucault's genealogical method, with particular attention to the development and dispersion of discourse (Hook, 2005), and outlines steps to enact it as follows:

1.  From 'inside the text': explore the dominant discourse under interrogation by identifying **constituents** (statements, themes, arguments).
2.  From 'outside the text': locate **challenges** to the dominant discourse and explore their context and constituents.
3.  From 'outside the text': explore the **power-rich context** under the dominant discourse was formed (including the players and social, economic and political climate of its development).

These steps were applied to the current investigation in two stages. First, steps 1 and 2 were applied by reading and summarising the data for thematic codes. This more direct analysis of water diplomacy's discursive development is outlined in Section 5 according to four key discursive formations. Second, wary of simply 'picking' which discourse is 'true', I take this evidence of water diplomacy's discursive discrepancy and apply step 3: exploring it in power-rich context. This is outlined in Section 6.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1. The water pipeline forms a tool for peace and cooperation in Cyprus and the region more broadly.

During its initial construction phase (2011-2015) and at completion (2015), the public-facing discourse surrounding the pipeline remained one of peace and cooperation. This was explicit in statements made by high-level politicians at the pipeline's inauguration ceremonies. For example:

> *"A dream has come true here. Not only Turkish Cypriots, but also [South] Cyprus can benefit from this dream. We will name this 'Peace Water' if they wish; we can give it to the South as well." (President Erdoğan, Geçitköy Dam opening ceremony, 2015)*

> *"Historians will divide time into 'before' and 'after' today... Solving this problem of water is a great contribution to the future of Cyprus and the peace process." (President Akıncı, Geçitköy Dam opening ceremony, 2015)*

Such excerpts reflect the persistent political emphasis in this period on the pipeline's potential, as "Peace Water", to catalyse resolution of the Cypriot conflict - particularly pertinent given the peace negotiations ongoing at the time (see Section 6). This emphasis relied on the simple assumption that, as Akıncı suggested:

> *"Both communities have problems with water. Therefore, they [South Cyprus] can also benefit from this water - it can turn into a peace project." (President Akıncı, press statement in Kıbrıs Postası, 2015)*

Significantly, this peace rhetoric also extended beyond the island itself. For example, Erdoğan states explicitly in relation to the pipeline that:

> *"A solution in Cyprus will have positive repercussions... It will contribute to the transformation of the entire Eastern Mediterranean region into an area of peace, stability and cooperation." (President Erdoğan, Geçitköy Dam opening ceremony, 2015)*

Thus, the pipeline and the Turkish water it carries were initially constructed as tools for peace on and beyond the island, in an explicit invocation of water diplomacy. This forms the dominant Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot state discourse which initially justified the pipeline and is the discursive foundation from which subsequent discourses have emerged.

Following Grbich's (2013) method, however, what interests us is the *development* of this dominant discourse: how it has dispersed, been contested, and evolved. This is now explored by outlining two counter-discourses to the water diplomacy discourse, and a more recent evolution.

### 5.2. The water pipeline is not a tool for peace – instead it seeks to tie Turkey and the TRNC closer together.

Initially, the diplomacy discourse was well-received by the South: in an Eastern Mediterranean resource context which sees Turkey water-rich but gas-poor, and the RoC gas-rich but water-poor, the pipeline was seen as catalysing a potential settlement by guaranteeing mutual resource benefits. As stated by the RoC's incumbent President:

> *"This water, and the fair Cyprus peace accord it promises, could give Turkey access to ample supplies of gas… contribut[ing] greatly to restoring relations between Cyprus and Turkey." (President Anastasiades, press statement, 2015)*

This was echoed by cross-island press coverage, including Turkish-Cypriot (*Kıbrıs Gazetesi; Haberdar*) and Greek-Cypriot newspapers (*Haravgi; Alithia*) which featured headlines highlighting how 'Peace Water' could benefit both communities.

However, the pipeline's inauguration also stimulated a rally of critique centring on its perceived ulterior motive: entrenching Turkish presence in the TRNC. This first counter-discourse responded directly to the Turkish rhetoric of Turkey-TRNC 'brotherhood' emphasised in relation to the pipeline. As seen in the final words of Erdoğan's inauguration speech:

> *"As Motherland Turkey, we will continue our spirit of solidarity with our brothers in Cyprus… My brothers and sisters… don't forget this: one nation, one flag, one homeland, one state." (President Erdoğan, Geçitköy Dam opening ceremony, 2015)*

This clearly alludes to Turkey's intentions to maintain its 'motherland-infantland' relationship with the TRNC, and taken in context, arguably points to the *pipeline* - referenced by former Turkish Forestry and Water Affairs minister Veysel Eroğlu as the "umbilical cord" linking Turkey to Cyprus - as the means by which this will be achieved. By making the TRNC dependent on Turkish water, Turkish influence is thus maintained.

The RoC subsequently responded to this by publicly counteracting the hegemonic water diplomacy discourse. For example, labelling the pipeline as an "act of aggression dressed as a well-intentioned gesture", the Cypriot Foreign Ministry's top civil servant argued that:

> *"In reality, the pipeline deepens the occupied areas' dependence on Turkey… Consequently, it will bolster prospects of full integration with Turkey." (Tasos Tzionis, Permanent Secretary of Cypriot Foreign Ministry, press statement, 2015)*

This was echoed both by further Foreign Ministry statements, which questioned Turkish faith in the pipeline's capacity to supply water for the island and emphasised instead its functioning to "augment Turkey's influence and control over Cyprus" and "cement Ankara's grip", and significantly, by Cypriot

media from both sides of the island, which depicted the pipeline as "yet another mark of Turkey's increasing presence on the island" (Simon Bahceli for *Cyprus Mail,* 2015); an "emblem of a sinister plan to turn Cyprus into a Turkish dependency" (*Daily Star*, 2015). This first counter-discourse thus directly challenged the pipeline's dominant water diplomacy discourse, constructing it instead as a tool for extended Turkish influence on the island.

## 5.3. The water pipeline is not a tool for peace – instead it is used to symbolise Turkish state strength.

Our second counter-discourse, in contrast, is less explicitly asserted by the RoC and draws instead inferentially from Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot statements to illustrate the pipeline's role in symbolising Turkish state strength.

Initially, the pipeline was imagined as a joint project of Turkey and the TRNC, as early political rhetoric emphasised their equal partnership. As illustrated by the following statements:

> *"We have always supported the TRNC's glorious cause and we will continue to do so… We will construct Alaköprü Dam, while the Turkish-Cypriots will construct Geçitköy Dam." (President Erdoğan, Alaköprü Dam foundation-laying ceremony, 2011)*

> *"Turkey and the Turkish-Cypriots are like flesh and nail - unity is needed in order for us to achieve our targets in the national cause." (President Eroğlu, Alaköprü Dam foundation-laying ceremony, 2011)*

This suggests the pipeline to be constructed and owned by Turkey and the TRNC as equally agentic actors. However, this discourse of partnership quickly evolved as the pipeline became instead symbolic of Turkish state strength and expertise. Take these parallel statements from Erdogan, for example:

> *"Our country has been manipulated through terrorism, coups, social turbulences… steered away from its national goals. But this state has the power to overcome such attacks… We have carried out major projects to solve these problems, exploited by those who target our freedom and future… We have realised the most fundamental reforms in the history of the Republic." (President Erdoğan, Alaköprü Dam opening ceremony, 2015)*

> *"I wish to commemorate the Mehmetçik who were martyred for the existence, law and freedom of the Turkish-Cypriots… May this 'project of the century', which cost 1.6 billion liras, be beneficial for the island." (President Erdoğan, Geçitköy Dam opening ceremony, 2015)*

In the first, Erdogan uses the pipeline - as a "major project" of the Turkish state and the self-proclaimed "project of the century" - to symbolise his administration's unprecedented power to overcome national obstacles. In the second, his reminder via the pipeline of Turkish-Cypriots' vital and financial debt to

Turkey and its Mehmetçik (the Turkish soldiers who invaded in 1974 in response to ethnic conflict) further supports Turkish superiority in what was formerly imagined as partnership. Correspondingly, the TRNC becomes constructed as weak: incapable of water governance. Significantly, this is achieved as much through *Turkish Cypriot* political rhetoric as through Turkish rhetoric, as seen in the following:

> *"I want us to use these resources, to do it all ourselves… But as the state, we are not in such a position right now. With my current system, staff capacity, technical infrastructure, we… cannot undertake management of this water. I do not want it to be wasted for the sake of an ideology." (Hamit Bakırcı, former TRNC Minister for Natural Resources and Environment, 2014)*

> *"Just like it shares its bread with 2.5 million refugees, the Republic of Turkey shares its water with us today. I wholeheartedly thank Turkey." (President Akıncı, Geçitköy Dam opening ceremony, 2015)*

These statements clearly depict a passive TRNC state which, like the refugees welcomed by Turkey, relies on Turkish strength, compassion and expertise for continued existence. Across Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot political rhetoric, therefore, the pipeline remains symbolic of Turkish state superiority.

This construction of the pipeline was subsequently taken up and critiqued by the Turkish-Cypriot media – albeit less explicitly than our first counter-discourse. Generally, this critique considered the pipeline as part of a Turkish bid for power in the context of upcoming Justice and Development Party (AKP) elections: Vedat Yoru, for example, writing for Yenidüzen (2011), questioned whether the pipeline's true function was "propaganda material"; Turkish-Cypriot leftist group Bağımsızlık Yolu described the Geçitköy Dam opening ceremony as "AKP propaganda of the century". This second counter-discourse thus directly challenged the pipeline's dominant construction under a benign water diplomacy discourse, to instead construct it as a tool for the expression of Turkish state strength.

## 5.4. The water pipeline forms a tool for Turkish development of the TRNC – supporting a new kind of peace.

Stimulated by its 2020 breaking, repair and re-inauguration, recent months have seen renewed interest in the pipeline - and arguably, the development of a new official discourse. This emphasises a new vision of the *pipeline* (now a tool for Turkish development of the TRNC); the *peace* it contributes to (now based in a two-state solution), and of *water diplomacy* itself (now conditional upon that two-state solution).

First, political rhetoric today emphasises the pipeline as first and foremost a tool for the TRNC's economic development. This is clearly articulated in the following statement made by the incumbent TRNC President, Ersin Tatar, when inaugurating a new irrigation tunnel which draws from the pipeline-supplied Geçitköy Dam to supply water to the citrus-rich agricultural region of Güzelyurt:

> *"I did not take action to impose restrictions in the citrus sector as part of measures against the pandemic… Our citrus sector is very important - going*

*forwards, it will remain an important economic attribute. And with this water*
*from the Gecitkoy Dam, a solution will be found to the salinization problem faced*
*by the sector in this region. This will pave the way for continued development of*
*the TRNC." (President Tatar, irrigation tunnel inauguration ceremony, 2021)*

Here, Tatar depicts the water pipeline, and the infrastructure that more recently extends it, as a crucial part of the TRNC's post-pandemic economic recovery – specifically, by resolving barriers to the citrus sector's full productivity. This reflects a broader shift in the pipeline's official discursive construction, from its initial water diplomacy justification (where cooperation would come first, and development would follow as "Peace Water" created mutual resource benefits across the two communities) with a new focus on achieving Turkish-Cypriot development above all else. This new emphasis on the pipeline's development potential over its peacebuilding potential can be seen in the following statement:

*"Our first aim is for the Turkish-Cypriot people to have a more prosperous future.*
*The TRNC territory, which has long been in need of water, will become fertile*
*with this new system… [it] will contribute to the rise of the sovereign TRNC that*
*can stand confidently on its own feet." (Turkish Vice-President Oktay, irrigation*
*tunnel inauguration ceremony, 2021)*

Second, this view of the pipeline as contributing to a developed, "sovereign" TRNC state also supports a radical new vision of peace. As President Erdoğan recently stated:

*"A sustainable solution in Cyprus must be built on reality rather than dreams. If a*
*new negotiation process is to be carried out, it should be between two states, not*
*two communities." (President Erdoğan, irrigation tunnel ceremony, 2021)*

This clearly suggests a shift in the Turkish vision of Cypriot peace, from a historical focus on reunifying the TRNC with the Greek-Cypriot side to form a single Cypriot Republic, to instead encourage a 'two-state solution': the proposed permanent division of the island into two sovereign states, one Turkish-Cypriot and the other Greek-Cypriot. The pipeline thus takes on a new role: contributing to the realisation of that two-state solution by developing an independent and strong TRNC state.

Correspondingly, the pipeline's persistent water diplomacy discourse also takes on a new role: explicitly supporting this new vision of peace. For example, President Tatar recently stated that:

*"Only if a lasting and sustainable agreement is reached in Cyprus, do we*
*envisage sharing the fresh water being piped to the country with the Greek-*
*Cypriot side." (President Tatar, Gecitköy Dam visit, 2021)*

This makes the sharing of water now conditional upon a "sustainable" agreement (which, from Erdogan's statement above, we can infer as being between two states). Today's water diplomacy discourse has thus clearly evolved from its initial rhetoric of "Peace Water" to be given *unconditionally* to the South – used now used to support an entirely different vision of peace to that initially imagined.

## 6. Discussion

Four key discursive formations therefore emerge around the water pipeline: seeing it as (1) an unconditional tool for peace in Cyprus and the region more broadly; (2) a tool for entrenched Turkish influence on the island; (3) a tool for discursive construction of Turkish state strength; and (4) more recently, a tool for Turkish development of the TRNC, seeking to facilitate a new form of peace.

Using these formations to track water diplomacy's discursive development, we thus clearly see evidence of *discursive discrepancy* between the initial unconditional water diplomacy discourse, its counter-discourses, and its later evolution. Crucially, what I wish to *do* with this evidence of discursive discrepancy is not simply assess which of the discourses outlined is 'true' or 'more accurate'. Rather, as informed by my research question and the critical literatures underpinning it (Section 3), I seek to implement Stage 3 of Grbich's (2013) FDA framework and investigate discursive discrepancy by exploring water diplomacy in power-rich context: interrogating *why* it has been employed, contested and evolved. This section does so by considering first, Turkey's *historical* use of water diplomacy to extend state influence, and second, factors which suggest its similar strategic use *today*.

### 6.1. Investigating Discrepancy

### 6.1.1. Water diplomacy in Turkey's hydraulic mission

Interrogating Turkish water diplomacy in power-rich context must arguably begin with understanding the strategic role it has historically played in Turkey's 'hydraulic mission'. Water diplomacy has formed part of Turkey's bilateral relations since the 1923 formation of the Republic - as evidenced by its signing of multiple historical treaties with neighbours including Syria and Iraq concerning the development and use of transboundary waters (Kibaroglu, 2021). However, the literature suggests that historically, Turkish water diplomacy has not sought peace and cooperation, but rather, has operated "essentially in accordance with Turkey's national interest" (*ibid*:11). For example, Kacziba (2020) uses the case studies of the Peace Pipeline (1986) and Manavgat (1994-2006) Projects, which sought respectively to transfer water from Turkey to Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and from Turkey to Israel, to offer a new historical interpretation of Turkish water diplomacy. Here, as the Eastern Mediterranean's 'hydro-hegemon', Turkey uses water diplomacy solely to promote Turkish-led water development projects, thereby expanding its strategic position and creating regional commercial and political advantages. This is made possible through its relatively rich water resources (Figure 5).
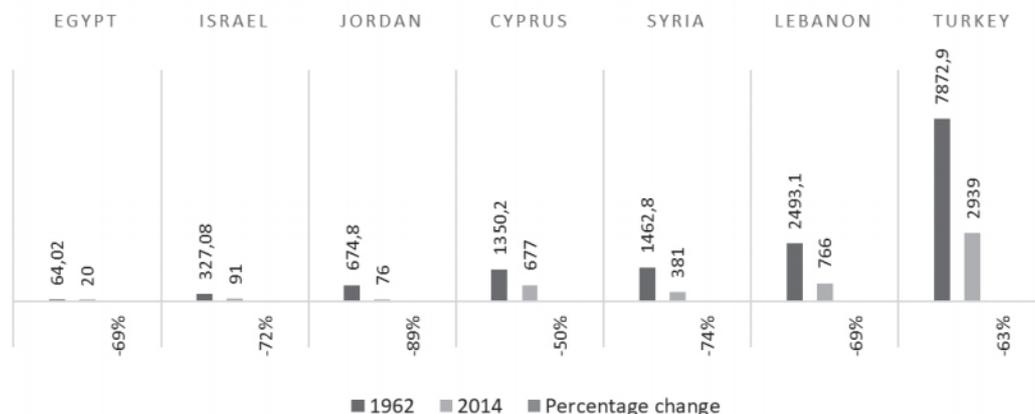


*Figure 5. Renewable internal freshwater resources per capita (m³) of Eastern Mediterranean countries. Source: World Bank (2014).*

This suggests that Turkish water diplomacy has historically functioned as part of its "hydraulic mission", whereby water policy forms a strategic tool used to enhance state authority at the domestic and international levels (Conker & Hussein, 2019). Supported by contemporary literature, which questions the extent of Turkey's adoption of EU water diplomacy emphasis despite the 'Europeanisation' of water policy apparently stimulated by its prospective EU accession (e.g., Demirbilek & Benson, 2019), this historical view thus forces us to reconsider modern instances of Turkish water diplomacy, such as the TRNC's "Peace Water" pipeline. Noting water diplomacy's historic role as part of Turkey's hydraulic mission, we must therefore ask: why might Turkish water diplomacy be used strategically *today*?

To answer this question, I draw from three contexts: (1) shifting peace negotiations on the island, (2) shifting Turkey-TRNC relations, and (3) regional resource developments. Taken together, I use these contexts (with a visual representation found in the Appendices) to argue that, while the water diplomacy discourse initially had potential to catalyse cooperation on the island, a fractious geopolitical context saw it become hijacked by a Turkish state seeking political and economic expansion. Water diplomacy, while initially a tool for peace, has thus ultimately become a tool for Turkish power maintenance.

### 6.1.2. Shifting peace negotiations

First, I argue that a context of shifting peace negotiations saw water diplomacy's purpose change, from an initially genuine peace orientation to one more geopolitically strategic.

As outlined in Section 2, since 1974 the Turkish-Cypriot community has remained moored between *de jure* recognition as EU members, and *de facto* non-recognition. After the collapse of the 2004 Annan Plan referendum, prospects of reunification were lost entirely, leaving the TRNC essentially dependent on RoC political whim for any chance of peace (Kyris, 2016). In this context, the 2015 landslide victory of Mustafa Akıncı over incumbent President Derviş Eroğlu was seen by many as the first concrete step towards reunification (Bryant, 2015). As a longstanding proponent of a new and reunified Cypriot Republic, whose campaign ran on the symbol of the olive branch (depicting EU integration as a remedy to the TRNC's international isolation) Akıncı's election arguably presented the best hope yet for a solution to the Cyprus problem (Kyris, 2015) - particularly considering the political stalemate that had characterised negotiations during the former Christofias-Eroğlu period (Morelli, 2019).

In this political context, I therefore suggest that initially, the water diplomacy discourse was genuine: used by a newly-elected administration seeking to fulfil their campaign promise of reunification.

Further, it is also important to recognise how the island's environmental context has shaped the political propensity for reunification via water. As Mason and Bryant (2017:vi) argue: "although the island is divided, its resources are not… climate change is a problem being faced equally and interrelatedly." Yet, as explored in Section 2, the island's political dynamics continue to impede the shared management of water resources. This is increasingly acknowledged as unsustainable as climate change continues to worsen Cyprus' water resource conditions (Lelieveld et al, 2012) - not least by the South, which experienced its worst drought in the 21st century in 2008 (Figure 6).
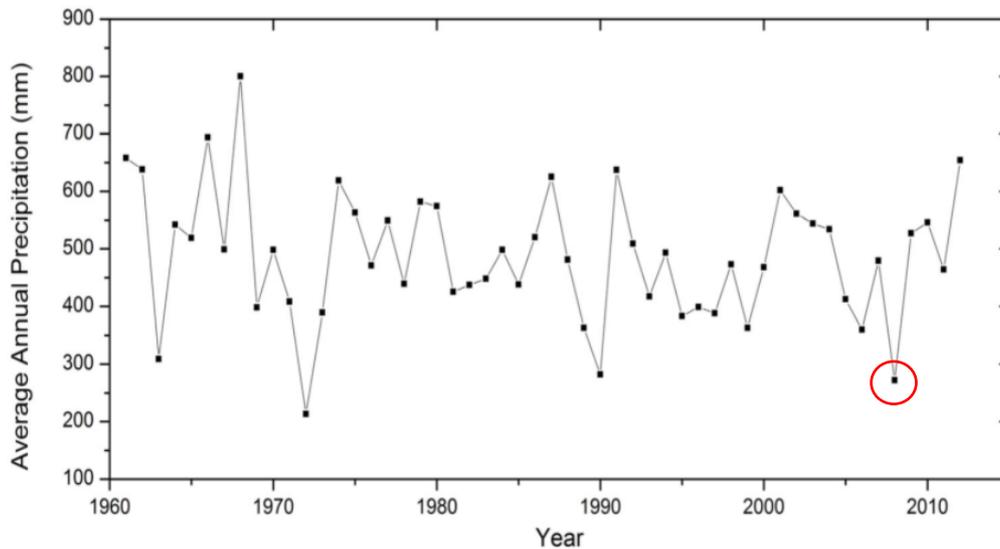
*Figure 6. Annual precipitation in Cyprus, 1960-2012. Source: Sofroniou & Bishop (2014).*

I would argue, therefore, that the water diplomacy discourse was also initially formed in response to this environmental context: seeking a political solution to an issue of unsustainable resource management gaining increased attention at the time (e.g., Sofroniou & Bishop, 2014). Thus, while undoubtedly a hydrosocial scaling at odds with the EU's vision of the Cypriot river basin (Mason, 2020), water diplomacy did initially seek cooperation, with the potential to produce positive change.

However, Akıncı's promised solution quickly crumbled as peace negotiations stalled at Crans-Montana in 2017. This was exacerbated further by the 2020 election victory of President Ersin Tatar, which crushed prospects of reunification (Scheindlin, 2021) - ultimately leading Turkish-Cypriot politicians to declare the peace process "dead" in June 2021 following the April failure of UN talks (Psaropoulos, 2021). In this context of shifting negotiations, I suggest that as the peace process crumbled, so too did the initially well-intended water diplomacy discourse. Based on two geopolitical contexts, it was subsequently manipulated to ultimately fulfil an entirely different purpose to that originally intended.

### 6.1.3. Shifting Turkey-TRNC relations

Second, I argue that in the context of shifting Turkey-TRNC relations, water diplomacy ultimately became a discursive façade for the consolidation of Turkish patronage.

While the TRNC has remained dependent (economically, politically and militarily) on its Turkish patron since 1974, Turkish-Cypriots have actually historically maintained considerable autonomy via former leader Rauf Denktaş - highly respected in Turkey and often able to manipulate the Turkish military towards the Turkish-Cypriot interest (Bryant, 2015). However, this changed dramatically with the 2002 arrival of the AKP and their pursuit, since 2004, of an explicit policy of 'developing' North Cyprus. This sees Turkey significantly increasing its presence across infrastructure, education, tourism and commercial centres: using Cypriot natural resources to facilitate flows of Turkish capital via hotels, casinos and shopping centres, but hiring few Cypriots, thereby enabling profits' return to Turkey (Bozkurt, 2014).

Occurring alongside Turkey's active promotion of Islam in Northern Cyprus (Latif, 2020), and of Turkish nationals' migration to the TRNC (Hatay, 2007), this has stimulated rising anti-Turkish sentiment among the Turkish-Cypriots, who fear the AKP's efforts to economically occupy, Islamise and demographically reshape their state (Lepeska, 2020). While arguably longstanding (Lacher & Kaymak, 2005, for example, explore the earlier implosion of Turkish nationalism in Northern Cyprus, triggered by 2000-2001 financial crises), this has become more pronounced in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, as Turkey assumed the role of the "IMF of Northern Cyprus": imposing harsh austerity measures in order to tame the 'cumbersome' TRNC state (Bozkurt, 2014). For example: 2011 trade union protests centred on perceived Turkish economic occupation, declaring that "our country is not for sale" (Aygın, 2019); even Akıncı's election campaign explicitly sought to challenge Ankara's role in North Cyprus (Kyris, 2015).

I would argue, therefore, that the pipeline and its justifying water diplomacy discourse were used by Turkey to respond to this context of declining Turkish nationalism.

First, by extending Turkish "hydraulic patronage" (Mason, 2020), the *pipeline* was employed quash nascent Turkish-Cypriot rebellion by conjoining hydraulic dependence to already-existing military and fiscal dependence. Second, this was primarily achieved through the pipeline's *water management terms,* which under three Turkey-TRNC treaties (2010; 2012; 2016), sought to privatise the pipeline water's management and distribution under Turkish ownership. More than simply making Turkish-Cypriots fee-paying customers, this arguably facilitated a broader re-imagining of Turkish/Turkish Cypriot subjectivities: constructing Turks as agentic 'experts' and Turkish-Cypriots as incapable 'recipients', and therefore entrenching patron-client relations (Özdemir, 2019). Finally, the *water diplomacy discourse* itself was thus employed by the Turkish state to mask this Turkish reproduction of power asymmetries via water management, beneath a benign façade of cooperation.

### 6.1.4. Regional resource developments

Finally, I argue that in the context of recent Eastern Mediterranean natural gas discoveries, the water diplomacy discourse has taken on a new purpose: used by Turkey to leverage access to said resources.

Cyprus' dynamics of mutual non-recognition have long created tension between Turkish and Greek-Cypriots and their respective 'motherlands' over the exploitation of maritime resources. While the RoC, as the island's only recognised administration, maintains sovereignty over the full scope of Cyprus' territorial waters and exclusive economic zone (EEZ), the TRNC and Turkey reject these claims and subsequently lay claim to maritime resources they deem themselves to own (Axt, 2021).

However, hostilities have culminated in the last decade over natural gas discoveries in Cyprus' EEZ: in 2011 (the Aphrodite field), 2018 (the Calypso field), and 2019 (the Glaucus field). By generating overlapping resource claims (Figure 7), these discoveries have renewed longstanding maritime tensions. For example, while a 2011 agreement between Turkey and the TRNC empowered Turkey to conduct exploration work in Cyprus' EEZ, this was rejected by RoC authorities, who critiqued Ankara for its "neo-Ottoman" programme of maritime expansion (*ibid*).
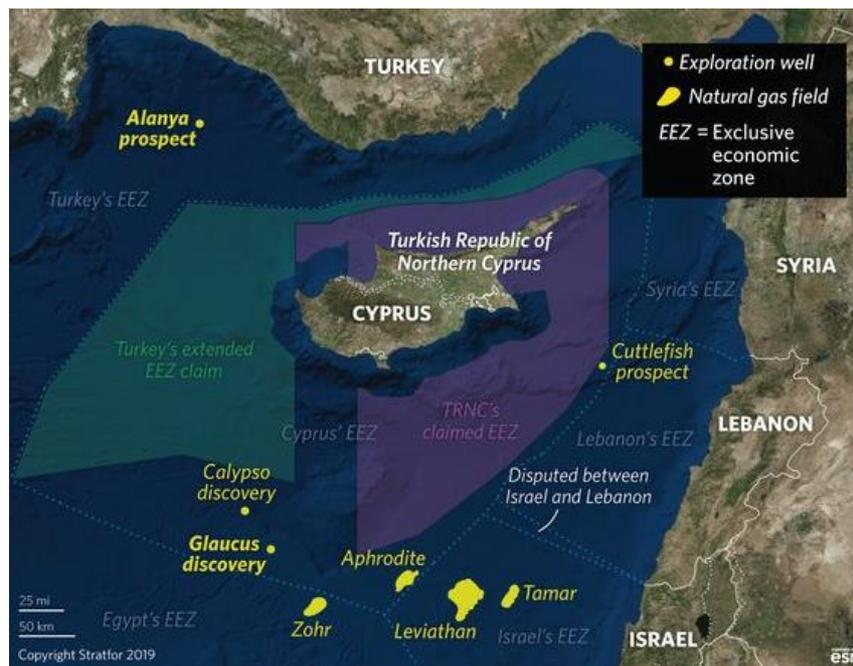
*Figure 7. Map of natural gas discoveries around Cyprus and disputes subsequently triggered.*
*Source: Stratfor (2019).*

Indeed, resource discoveries *have* stimulated a shift in Turkish naval strategy, towards one domestically referred to as "Mavi Vatan" or "blue homeland" (Gingeras, 2020). Conceived as a means to (1) end Turkey's near-total dependence on foreign energy sources and convert it into a net energy exporter, and (2) respond to its ongoing exclusion from regional energy policy discussions (Anthony & Sahlin, 2020), this naval offensive sees Turkey increasingly exercise its military might to pose an aggressive claim to Cypriot natural gas. Yet increasingly, this strategy falls under scrutiny: seen as failing to create a legitimate Turkish claim to Cypriot resources, and instead simply isolating Turkey further (Norris, 2020).

I would therefore argue that the recent evolution of Turkey's water diplomacy discourse reflects its recognition that the "Mavi Vatan" strategy is failing; subsequently shifting towards a new approach to leveraging resource access. As outlined in Section 5.4, the *pipeline* is today being constructed as primarily a tool for Turkish development of the TRNC: used to contribute to the realisation of a two-state solution. Correspondingly, the official *water diplomacy discourse* now frames water sharing as conditional upon that two-state solution.

What must be recognised here, however, is that, given the TRNC's longstanding dependence on Turkey and isolation from the international community, a two-state solution would by no means guarantee the TRNC's independence from Turkey itself – at least not immediately. Rather, a two-state solution in Cyprus allows Ankara to continue using Turkish 'aid' as a geopolitical instrument to maintain its TRNC influence (Ekici & Özdemir, 2021; Hegglin, 2021). By making shared water conditional upon a two-state solution, Turkey thus uses the water diplomacy discourse to capitalise upon the RoC's extreme water scarcity and force a resolution to the conflict that – being based in TRNC sovereignty, rather than reunification – will enable it to create a more legitimate claim to Cypriot gas resources than otherwise possible. This is significant considering the humanitarian laws outlined in Section 2.

# 7. Conclusion

As water diplomacy continues to receive unprecedented policy attention in the context of brooding 'water wars', this dissertation has sought to challenge its underpinning assumption that water, if diplomatically managed, will automatically form a tool for peace. Instead, it suggests that this emerging policy discourse must be interrogated for the power asymmetries it potentially conceals and reproduces.

This intervention was based on the case of the Cypriot Water Supply Project pipeline, built and funded by Turkey, which has supplied Turkey's client state, the TRNC, with agricultural and drinking water since 2015. Despite its explicit framing by Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot officials alike under a water diplomacy rhetoric, as "Peace Water" designed to catalyse reunification with the equally water-stressed Greek-Cypriots, I identified the failure of the pipeline so far to create peacebuilding outcomes as a clear water diplomacy anomaly. Subsequently, employing three critical literatures as theoretical tools to unpack this anomaly, I hypothesised that exploring the pipeline through the lens of *power* might help us understand its failure so far as a water diplomacy intervention. By bringing attention to power as a potential limiting factor upon peace, I therefore sought to (1) better understand why this anomaly occurs; and (2) use this understanding to reflect upon water diplomacy more broadly. This generates two related sets of conclusions.

## 7.1. Implications for the conflict

First, FDA allows me to demonstrate that this anomaly occurs because the water diplomacy discourse used to justify the pipeline is used by the Turkish state for fundamentally self-serving objectives, beyond peace and diplomacy. By using FDA to track water diplomacy's discursive development and subsequently place its major discursive formations in power-rich context, I thus suggest that water diplomacy's underpinning purpose in Cyprus has shifted. Initially, it presented a genuine opportunity for cooperation in a context where severe water scarcity calls for joint management of island water resources - as supported by a pro-reunification TRNC administration. However, as peace negotiations crumbled, the pipeline and its persistent water diplomacy discourse instead came to function as a means for Turkey to (1) quell nascent anti-Turkish sentiment in the TRNC by making it dependent on Turkish hydraulic expertise, and (2) to leverage access to gas resources under *de facto* Greek-Cypriot control.

Placing the pipeline within the context of Cyprus' "intractable conflict", reflected and reproduced in the island's water management via its opposing hydrosocial scalings, it is thus clear that water diplomacy as currently enacted will not contribute to either Cypriot reunification or a strong and independent TRNC state (as part of a two-state solution). Rather, its use as a vehicle to construct and maintain Turkish strength means it will simply maintain the TRNC's *de facto* state structure, with little hope for future peace.

## 7.2. Implications for water diplomacy

Subsequently, this understanding of the Cypriot anomaly allows me to make two key contributions to the water diplomacy literature more broadly. First, I suggest that in power-asymmetric contexts such as Cyprus, water diplomacy itself can be used to achieve fundamentally self-serving objectives and reproduce power asymmetries. This extends water diplomacy's current critiques: shifting from emphasis on its blindness to power *external to* the water diplomacy intervention, to instead explore water diplomacy *itself* as operating under a "discursive veil" of hidden intentions and effects

(Venugopal, 2018:243). Second, by evaluating water diplomacy in this specific case, informed by the infrastructural politics literature, I suggest a new avenue for water diplomacy's unseen power to be experienced: through the infrastructures built in its name. This provides a new angle to interrogate water diplomacy interventions that, to date, has been little considered.

As water diplomacy becomes increasingly centred across national and multilateral environmental security strategies, this dissertation has thus demonstrated that, despite seeking peace and cooperation on the surface, water diplomacy can actually function to reproduce power asymmetries. Essentially, water diplomacy is *not just a tool for peace, but also a tool for power.* While this should not be taken as a stand against water diplomacy everywhere, it clearly suggests that water diplomacy is itself power-imbued. More caution and reflexivity in designing and evaluating water diplomacy interventions will thus be key as it continues to receive increasing policy attention.

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# 9. Appendices

**Appendix 1.** Visual representation of water diplomacy's discursive development in power-rich context.



**Counter-discourse 2: the water pipeline is not a tool for peace – instead it is used to symbolise Turkish state strength**

**More recent evolution: the water pipeline forms a tool for Turkish development of the TRNC – supporting a new kind of peace**

**Dominant discourse: the water pipeline is a tool for peace, for Cyprus and the region more broadly**

**Counter-discourse 1: the water pipeline is not a tool for peace – instead it seeks to tie Turkey and the TRNC closer together**

2004   2008   2011   2015   2017   2020   2021

**AKP pursuit of explicit policy to 'develop' TRNC**

**Eroğlu elected (explicitly pro two-state solution)**

**Tatar elected (explicitly pro-two state solution)**

**June: Peace process pronounced "dead"**

**Aphrodite gas field discovery (first in Cyprus' EEZ)**

**Akinci elected (explicitly pro-reunification)**

**Peace negotiations stall at Crans Montana**

**April: UN peace talks end prematurely**

**Global financial crisis (triggers renewed anti-Turkish sentiment)**

**Worst droughts in the South in 21st century**

**Trade union protests: "our country is not for sale"**

**Pandemic (protectionist stance from TRNC)**

**Increasing calls for joint water resource management**

**Calypso gas field discovery**

**Collapse of Annan Plan referendum**

**Stalemate in Christofias-Eroğlu negotiations**

**Glaucus gas field discovery**

**Key**
**Factors shaping Cypriot peace process**
**TRNC administration in power**
**Domestic factors**
**Global factors**
**Regional factors**