Keys to neo-Ottomanism
Hydropolitics, conflict, and migration in the Middle East

Nicolas Parent, MSc Risk, Crisis and Disaster Management
A. Background
   a. Ottoman Empire
   b. the fall of the Ottoman Empire
   c. neo-Ottomanism
   d. keys to neo-Ottomanism

B. Hydropolitics
   a. hydrology of the region
   b. fertile conflict
   c. water scarcity
   d. Ataturk Dam
   e. losing water

C. Conflict
   a. Arab Spring
   b. the Kurdish situation
   c. Turkish invasion and occupation

D. Migration
   a. basic facts
   b. the Turkish response
   c. conflicting paradigms

E. Concluding remarks
The Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria) were defeated by the Allied Powers (British Empire, French Republic, Italy and Japan) in 1918, marking the end of World War I.

Shortly thereafter, in 1920, the Traité de Sèvres was signed, partitioning the remaining parts of the now defeated Ottoman Empire.

This sparked a wave of Turkish nationalism, leading to the Turkish War of Independence (ending in 1923).
Neo-Ottomanism is “a political project aimed at reviving the Ottoman past in a variety of domains, including the urban fabric, anniversary celebrations, and foreign policy.” (Ergin and Karakaya, 2017: 34)

It embraces the ideal of a unified Middle East, based on shared histories and heritage under imperial Ottoman rule.

hydropolitics
conflict
migration
HYDROPOLITICS
The Tigris and Euphrates rivers are some of the most important river systems in the Middle East, making up the Tigris-Euphrates hydrological basin (dark green, right).

Both rivers originate in Turkey.


“City-states often clashed over the diversion of water supplies to support irrigation systems between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. According to Sumerian legend, from 2500 to 2400 B.C., Mesopotamian city-states clashed over fertile soil, irrigation systems and water diversion. Lying upstream, Umma interrupted the Euphrates River water supply to Lagash. In response, the King of Lagash dug canals to divert water from the Tigris River at the boundary between Lagash and Umma. The King of Lagash and his successors systematically cut off the water supply to cities in Umma.” (Brockley, 2004)
Physical water scarcity “occurs when there is not enough water to meet all demands. Arid regions are most often associated with physical water scarcity, but an alarming new trend is an artificially created physical water scarcity due to over allocation and overdevelopment of water resources. Symptoms of physical water scarcity include, among other factors, severe environmental degradation and increasing occurrence of conflicts.”

Economic water scarcity “is caused by a lack of investment in water or a lack of human capacity to satisfy the demand for water, even in places where water is abundant. Symptoms of economic water scarcity include inadequate infrastructure development: people have trouble getting enough water for domestic and other purposes; high vulnerability to seasonal fluctuations: floods and drought; and inequitable distribution of water, even when infrastructure exists.”

“Neither Syria or Iraq can lay claim to Turkey’s rivers any more than Ankara could claim their oil. This is a matter of sovereignty. We have a right to do anything we like. The water resources are Turkey’s, the oil resources are theirs. We don’t say we share their oil resources, and they can’t say they share our water resources.”

Süleyman Demirel, ex-president of Turkey, at 1992 opening ceremonies of the Atatürk Dam on the Euphrates

(Reed, 2005)
In the last few years, Turkey's new water supply projects have been the focus of new political concerns in the basin. Tensions arose in January 1990 when Turkey completed construction of the Ataturk Dam and closed the dam to begin filling the reservoir, interrupting the flow of the Euphrates for a month. Despite advance warning from Turkey of the temporary cutoff, Syria and Iraq both protested that Turkey now had a water weapon that could be used against them. Indeed, in October 1989, Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal had threatened to restrict water flow to Syria to force it to withdraw support for Kurdish rebels operating in southern Turkey. Thus, Turkish politicians' claims that the shutoff to fill the Ataturk's reservoir was entirely for technical, not political, reasons failed to appease Syrian and Iraqi officials, who argued that Turkey had already used its power over the headwaters of the Euphrates for political goals and could do so again.

The ability of Turkey to shut off the flow of the Euphrates, even temporarily, was noted by political and military strategists at the beginning of the Persian Gulf conflict. In the early days of the war, there were behind-the-scenes discussions at the United Nations about using Turkish dams on the Euphrates River to cut off water to Iraq in response to its invasion of Kuwait. Although no such action was taken, the threat of the "water weapon" was again made clear.

(Gleick, 2010)
Since 1975, Turkey’s dam and hydro-power construction has cut water flow to Iraq by 80 percent and to Syria by 40 percent. (Hammer, 2013)

The US/German led Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (GRACE) project determined that “between 2003 and 2009 (...) the Tigris-Euphrates Basin—comprising Turkey, Syria, Iraq and western Iran—is losing water faster than any other place in the world except northern India” (Hammer, 2013)

A study on drought over the last 900 years found that the recent 15 year drought (1998–2012) in the Levant region of the Middle East was the driest on record. (Cook et al., 2016)

“The drought caused 75 percent of Syria’s farms to fail and 85 percent of livestock to die between 2006 and 2011, according to the United Nations.” (Stokes, 2016)
CONFLICT
“The time has come for us, who with all our different languages share the same conceptual geography and destiny, to take charge of our shared future”

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, speaking about the Arab Spring to regional leaders in Cairo (2011, 13 September)

“The third wave of democracy is very important for Turkey...We have been in a phase of retreat since 1699 [when the Treaty of Karlowitz marked the onset of Ottoman territorial decline]...[A]fter 300 years we are rising once again. There is now a Turkey that can lay claim to the lands which we dominated in the past”

AK Party Deputy General-Secretary Süleyman Soylu (Milliyet Newspaper, 2013, March 21).

*Blue dots show countries where Turkey verbally supported uprisings. (Mufti, 2014)
A century ago borders were drawn on this land with rulers, but they cannot draw borders on our affection. They cannot draw borders on our shared history, our shared civilization, our shared future.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, speaking in Diyarbakır during his meeting with Kurdish leader Barzani, following the March 2013 ceasefire (CNN Türk, 2013, November 16)

2014
Post-IS invasion of Kobane protests in Turkey


2015
Suruç bombing


● Military raids in eastern provinces of Turkey
● Air strikes on PYD positions in northern Syria and PKK positions in northern Iraq (Operations: Martyr Yalçın, Arslan Kulaksız and Hamza Yıldırım)

2016
Arrests of MPs from the pro-Kurdish HDP party, including leader Selahattin Demirtaş.

[ Turkish invasion and occupation ]

2016 Operation Euphrates Shield

2018 Operation Olive Branch

Source: Syrian Civil War Map. 2016. 'Western al-Bab offensive'. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Western_al-Bab_offensive_(2016)_within_Northern_Syria.svg

MIGRATION
## Basic Facts

### Total Persons of Concern

5,652,335

Source: UNHCR, Government of Turkey

Last updated 26 Apr 2018

### Total Persons of Concern by Country of Asylum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location name</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Data date</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Government of Turkey, UNHCR</td>
<td>26 Apr 2018</td>
<td>3,588,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>31 Mar 2018</td>
<td>991,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>7 Apr 2018</td>
<td>661,859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>31 Mar 2018</td>
<td>248,382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>31 Mar 2018</td>
<td>128,507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (North Africa)</td>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>15 Mar 2018</td>
<td>33,545</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
[the Turkish response]


6% camp-based


---

June 2011: Military siege of Jisr al-Shughour in Northern Syria (2,500 Syrians flee to Turkey)


Mar. 2016: EU-Turkey Action Plan

Jul. 2015-Apr. 2016 EU Migration Crisis

Apr. 2013: Law on Foreigners and International Protection [adopted]

Sep. 2017: Interior Ministry announces processing of 50,000 Syrians for citizenship*

Jan. 2016: Regulation on the Work Permits for Foreigners under Temporary Protection

Jul. 2016: Recep Tayyip Erdogan announces possible citizenship for Syrians

Timeline adapted from Parent, N. (2016)
The ‘Durable Solutions’ paradigm

- Mostly held by those working in forced migration studies and migration policy
- Giving citizenship and right to vote for Syrians is a sign that Turkey wishes to enable this group to establish themselves permanently and join the collective Turkish national identity.
- Rights of citizens extends rights of refugees

The ‘geopolitical’ paradigm

- Mostly held by those working in political science, international relations and diplomacy
- Giving citizenship and right to vote for Syrians potentially points to a larger goal of establishing normative power in the region, making way for the legitimization of territorial expansion by Turkish armed forces.
CONCLUDING REMARKS
[ references ]

- Parent, N. 'Legitimization of uncertainty: The shaky fate of Syrian migrants in Turkey and Europe.' Presentation given at the Center for Refugee Studies (CRS), York University, September 24, 2016 (Toronto, Canada).
- Stokes, E. 2016. 'The Drought That Preceded Syria's Civil War Was Likely the Most Severe in 900 Years.' Vice News. https://news.vice.com/article/the-drought-that-preceded-syrias-civil-war-was-likely-the-worst-in-900-years
- Syrian Civil War Map. 2016. 'Western al-Bab offensive'. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Western_al-Bab_offensive_(2016)_within_Northern_Syria.svg