

Strategic and Politic Effects of Water from Anatolia to Cyprus

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Abstract

Since December 21, 1963, after the planned armed attacks of Greek Cypriots to Turkish Cypriots, where both communities are the locals of Cyprus, the political situation in the island was always strained and time to time broken off. The political negotiations between the two communities aiming to find a sustainable solution to the Cyprus problem started in 1968 and still going on. The main dispute between the two communities is originating from the disagreement on the governance of the island. There is another problem in the island that concerns both communities deeply, based on the natural causes, the scarcity of water in drinking quality for humans, animals and agriculture. The water from Anatolia to Cyprus will overcome the millenniums long draught, scarcity of water and depressed agriculture and stock breeding in the island, together with a long-lasting solution based on equal partnership, causing to end the dispute between Turkish and Greek communities of the island. The water supply Project by pipes from Anatolia to the island of Cyprus 250 m. Below sea level through Mediterranean Sea is named “Peace Water” by the Republic of Turkey and TRNC governments. The political effects of the “Peace Water” are quite negative on the Greek side, believing that the water supply from Anatolia with strengthening the hands of the Turkish Cypriots on the negotiation table, and at the same time will cause Greek side to lose a considerable amount of political superiority. While the water from Anatolia gave a further push and zest for living and existing, to the human life, agriculture and stock breeding, it also will contribute to the promotion to the demands for existing of all kinds of plants, animals, insects and living creatures. This water project, connecting the island of Cyprus to Anatolia may also connect Israel to Anatolia through Cyprus and definitely will give birth to some strategic and geopolitics issues in the eastern Mediterranean region.

Keywords

Turkey, TRNC, Cyprus, Water, Pipe

1. Research Method

The Cypriot's most important challenges are access to fresh water supply; its quality, availability and its continuity.

The aim of this paper is to study and analyze the political effects and after effects of water supply to the island from overseas resources, mainly from the nearest continent, Turkey.

The answers to the following research questions will help to identify the short term and long term political and strategic effects of the water supply from Turkey, which is the mainland of one of the two communities living in Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriots. Although the population of the Turkish Cypriots is less than the population of the Greek Cypriots, the supply of fresh water, which longed for centuries, from Turkey may in long term built up a superiority of Turkish Cypriots over the Greek Cypriot community. In the long term, the supply of water from Turkish territories may affect the negotiations, which started in 1968, aiming to bring peace to the island and constitute a politically equally shared government with fair legislation.

- What will be the political effects of fresh water supply from Turkey on the peace negotiations in Cyprus?
- What challenges the Greek Cypriot community may face in the future?
- What lessons can be learnt from this experience?
- To identify the common and differing perspectives of water users, governments, non-governmental organizations, local industry and farmers.
- To draw lessons from the experiences and difficulties faced to sustain continuity of the water supply from overseas.
- The possible disputes that may originate from the governance of the supply system.
- Effects of global warming and possible droughts in the future.

2. Prologue

This paper is based mainly on the official documents, papers and articles authored by Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot and Turkish academics, politicians, technical persons and unbiased researcher and authors. The scarcity of water in the island of Cyprus and the growing of population forced Republic of Turkish government to search, develop and find a sustainable solution to the millennium long draught problem, which after five years of study and research a feasible project was developed. The report was prepared in the year 1999 (DSİ, 2011: p. 1) on the idea of supplying water by pipelines below the sea level from Anatolia to Cyprus. It turned about to be the biggest project in the world conveying water from a continent to an island under the sea by a pipe line. The cost to be estimated around 450 million US Dollars and the realization of the project around 20 years. The construction of the dams, power houses, pipes, cleaning, purifying units and other facilities completed in the year 2016 and the flow of water from the pipes realized in November 2016 (Teknokulis, 2013: p. 1).

While the water from Anatolia gave a further push and zest for living and existing, to the human life, agriculture and stock breeding, it also will contribute to the promotion to the demands for existing of all kinds of plants, animals, insects and living creatures. This water project, connecting the island of Cyprus to Anatolia may also connect Israel to Anatolia through Cyprus and definitely will give birth to some strategic and politics issues in the eastern Mediterranean region.

Arguably the importance of the topic lays hidden within the regional politics of the superior countries, their energy strategy and the role of the two communities living in the island of Cyprus on their political expectations. Israel, who has a strong influence on the foreign policy of USA, may change its attitude towards Turkey and enrich its political ties with Turkey if the fresh water pipeline is stretched to Israel from North parts of Cyprus to Israel under 250 m. From the sea level, as the continuation of proved and working pipe line technology developed by the Turkish engineers. The fresh water pipe line delivering water from Anatolia to Cyprus will definitely have an effect on the negotiation table.

The main target of this paper is to find answers whether the “Peace Water” is coherent with international laws, would it have some or strong effect on the negotiations to find a sustainable solution to the Cyprus issue and to the long term policy of the superior countries towards Eastern Mediterranean region. The research question is: “Would the fresh water pipe line from Anatolia to Cyprus have strategical and political effects on the global policies and strategies of the superior powers?”. Starting from these the main research question of this paper, the research question could be conceptualized as: “what are the origins, nature, reasons and policy and the strategy behind delivering fresh water from Anatolia to Cyprus”.

3. Historical Background of the Water Shortage

When the consecutive draughts lasted for more than 5 years in Cyprus in the mid-sixties, the than President of Republic of (Greek) Cyprus Archbishop Makarios III., after a through scientific research and advise from FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN) decided to pulverize the possible mist carrying clouds by Silver ioide, called cloud seeding (Levin, 2009: p. 1), to convert their mist to rain drops and cause precipitation, i.e. rain. The consecutive trials weren't satisfactory and the cloud seeding idea was terminated.

On the second phase of the draughts in late sixties and early seventies (Stephen, 2006: p. 1), this time FAO advised delivery of water from Anatolia by pipes laid on the sea bed in the region between Turkey and Cyprus, from Taşucu region of Turkey to Kokkina (Erenköy) in the Omorfo (Güzelyurt) region. The proposal found feasible by the World Bank and a loan of 55 million US Dollars under development scheme payable with a very low interest and no payment grant in the first 4 years was offered to Makarios government.

Although there was a severe need of fresh water in the island (Spilling & Spilling, 2009: p. 54) the than President of Republic of (Greek) Cyprus, Archbishop

Makarios III. declined the advice of FAO and the long term credit offer of World Bank, claiming that the island of Cyprus is Greek and the pipe as the umbilical cord (James, 2015: p. 1), stretching from Anatolia to Cyprus will physically connect the island to Anatolia and this situation is strictly against the political strategy of the Greek Community and Helen world.

As a result of this decision and policy of the President of Republic of (Greek) Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios III., the idea was dismissed and no pipe line built to deliver fresh water from Anatolia to Cyprus.

The project was realized after a mere and long 44 years by Turkey.

4. Water Shortage and Relevant Solutions

Academics, hydro experts and local Cypriots both Turkish and Greek concurred on overuse of aquifers and long-lasting consecutive years of draughts have decreased the amount and quality of water in the aquifers of the island (Sabater, 2010) and the island needs more water (USA IBP, 2006: p. 48) for a sustainable life for humans, animals and plants. The locals were complaining for years about seawater mixing with groundwater sources, disturbing daily life and agricultural irrigation (Steenhuis, 2012: p. 170). The salination problem was no longer limited to coastal areas but was dramatically spread to all over the island.

Greek Cypriot Administration installed saltwater desalination plants, first in Dhekelia, Larnaca with a capacity of 40,000 cubic meters per day and the second desalination plant west of Larnaca and the possibility of drinking demineralized water is 51,000 cubic meters per day (Ioanna, 2007: p. 1). The growing population and the scarcity of water in the island of Cyprus, forced the Republic of Turkey to find a solution to supply fresh water to the island from the rivers disposing their waters to the sea in the southern regions of Turkey. The Greek Cypriot Administration started negotiations with Lebanon to transfer water freed to sea by tankers (Medsos, 2008: p. 1). The very first solution was to supply fresh water to the island by huge floating bladders towed by tugs over the sea. This project started in 1998 and lasted till 2002. It was not feasible and efficient. The idea abandoned in the fall of 2002.

The feasibility studies concentrated on carrying water or conveying water by pipe lines started in 1999 and finally, after a dense research a feasibility report prepared and released in 2002. The report foresaw that the cost would be around 500 million US Dollars and the construction period will take as much as 10 years (Atun, 2016: p. 1). The construction started in 2005 by building a dam on the Dragon river at Alaköprü location in Anamur region (Boyut, 2015: p. 1). The Peace Water pipe line constructed is 80 kilometers long and runs 250 meters below the sea level. It has the delivering capacity about 75 million tons of water annually to Cyprus from Anatolia (Seibert, 2014) and fulfills all the fresh water demands for the next 30 years. Each additional pipe line built on the same substructure will have the capacity of delivering 75 million tons of water per year. The substructure has the capacity of carrying 5 pipelines at the same time, rising

the capacity from 75 million tons to 275 million tons one way and 550 million tons in both ends. This capacity opens the way for the export of the Peace Water from North Cyprus to South Cyprus and to Israel as well (Seibert, 2014: p. 1).

5. Strategic and Politic Aspects of Water Supply from Anatolia to Cyprus

Turkish government officials and the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan insisted that the project is one of the first steps towards peace and intercommunal cooperation between the two sides of Cyprus (PIO, 2015: p. 1). Some people from both sides objected to the project claiming the water from Anatolia will increase the island's water usage and drive away locals from learning methods on how to conserve water, minimize water usage and waste and to find alternative methods like desalination of sea water or converting mist or dew in the air to drinking water. As an alternative to opposing allegations, some people claiming any additional water from out of country would be beneficial to the country and it will refill the underground reserves, lift up the underground water table upwards and help the living conditions for humans, animals and plants to be more sustainable.

On the political front, there are some oppositions and supports from both sides of the island. The Greek Cypriots claim that the water project will deepen and solidify the status quo in the island in the long term. Although the project was titled as "Peace Water" Greek Cypriots had no contribution in the decision making and realizing of the project. Finally, the pipeline and the richness of water will increase the property values in TRNC and when the day comes to solve the property issue, by exchange, the issue will be on the favor of Turkish Cypriots (Bryant, 2015). Most of the Turkish Cypriots are quite happy and satisfied with the outcome of the "Peace Water". Some of the politicians, academics and people believe that the existence of an additional water in the TRNC territories, Geçitköy dam, underground water distribution system and waste water collecting and converting to usable water system will strengthen the hands of Turkish Cypriot side on the negotiation table (Tremblay, 2015) while there is a shortage of drinking, edible, hygienic, agricultural and usable water in the south Cyprus.

The "Peace Water" (Hürriyet, 2015: p. 1) has also the capacity to be exported to Israel from North Cyprus by the same technology, by pipelines 250 m below the sea level (Türkeş, 2016: p. 1). Israel since the settling of Jews to the Palestine soil as early as the second quarter of 20th Century, always felt the shortage of water for existence, better living conditions, agriculture and industrial living. The realization water supply from Turkey to Israel via North Cyprus, definitely will improve the humanitarian, economic and politic relations between Turkey, TRNC and Israel.

6. Conclusion

Since ancient times are known, water has been expressed in various ways as a

valuable and indispensable source of energy for human beings.

In the 4th century B.C., Empedokles (Kingsley, 2019) wanted to draw attention to the importance of water by saying “The world is made up of water and soil”. Later, the boundaries of this definition were further expanded and “Four element theory” was introduced. According to this theory: “All objects consist of water, soil, air and fire”. Under the light of modern science, various evaluations concerning water were made: “Life has begun in water”. “Life is not possible without water”, “Water means life, and lack of water means drought, poverty, ugliness and negativity”.

Another point that indicates the importance of water is that when the history is looked back on, especially the nomadic communities pay attention to whether there is a water source in or near the region before it is deployed to a region. If there is a water source, they settle in the region; otherwise, they are looking for different regions where there is a water source.

This situation cannot be limited only to societies living as nomads. The establishment of Egypt, Mesopotamia and China, which are the oldest civilizations of the world, on the edges of the Nile, Euphrates, Tigris and Yellow River are the best examples for these. As can be seen from here, it is possible to continue the rest of life after finding the water. If there is no water, it is not possible to continue life in that region. Water is undoubtedly one of the most important parts of our life. It is the water that keeps all life alive from the smallest living organisms to the largest living being. For this reason, water is very important for human, animal and plant life.

Keeping in mind that the draft lasted for 30 years on run in the fourth Century A.D. and the island was deserted, almost all the animal life was vanished and plants left for dead, the effects of the water from Anatolia to Cyprus on the natural life will be vast and enormous. It will bring a zest of life to the island. Turkey and Turkish Cypriots were at all times on the blind side of the Cyprus conflict. Turkey reborn from the ashes of Ottoman Empire in 1923, needed almost a century to recover and become the political leader of the region again. During this recovery period, lasted from 1923 to the beginning of 21st Century, Turkey did not have the political power to be the authority in Cyprus issue and enforce political sanctions.

On the other side, Turkish Cypriots, as from 1878, the rental of the Cyprus island by British Empire from Ottoman Empire, pushed in to minority position from their administrator position and treated either as a nonexistent community or an unheard minority. (Yellice, 2012) When the negotiations started in 1968 (Akgün, 2018), the president of Republic of Cyprus Makarios III did not even approved to grant Turkish Cypriots with a weak local autonomy although the Turkish Cypriots were the founders of Republic of Cyprus based on political equality. After the coupe of 1974 and establishment of Turkish Cypriot states, Turkish Federated State of Cyprus (TFSC) on February 13, 1975 and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) on November 15, 1983, Greek Cypriots

always tried to be the dominant side of the negotiation table, hiding behind to be representing the internationally recognized state of Cyprus. After May 1, 2004 when the Republic of Cyprus, administrated by the Greek Cypriots, completed annexation procedures to EU and became a member state, their dominancy on the negotiation table doubled and their trials to enforce their unique and one sided solution as the final solution of the Cyprus issue became stronger and more dominant.

Water collected in the Alaköprü river dam on the Dragon river, Anamur, Turkey, delivered by pipes to the pump station 23 km away, on the sea shore. From there the water delivered to Cyprus by a sea crossing pipe line, where 66.5 km is halter-pipe system, 250 meters below the sea level. On the soil of Cyprus, the water delivered by pipes in 3 km length to the Geçitköy dam and stored there. The capacity of both dams is 75 million cubic meters, totaling 150 million cubic meters storage. The capacity of a single line pipe system is 75 million cubic meters per year. The system is built to hold three pipe lines side by side, with a capacity of 450 million cubic meters per year. For the next 50 years, 150 million cubic meters of water would easily be meet the total consumption of the island. The excess 300 million cubic meters is designed for export to the neighboring countries where the fresh water is scarce, like Israel and similar.

Israel-Turkish political and economic relations started declining sharply after the Blue Marmara event which took place on May 31, 2010. The Greek Cypriots considered this crisis as a turn point in Israel-(Greek) Cyprus relations and tried their best using all legal and illegal means to build up a strong relation with Israel, aiming to create a block in the eastern Mediterranean against Turkey and Turkish Cypriots. Conveying the essential and irresistible source of life, the brilliant and sparkling water of Anatolia by pipes to TRNC, seems changed the political balance and moved the political power to the hands of Turkish side. In case of an agreement between Turkey and Israel, to forward the Anatolian water from TRNC to Israel through pipes under 250 m. below the sea level, will surely lift up the political and economic relations between the two countries and will have a positive effect on the negotiations lasting since 1968. This alliance of Turkey, Israel and TRNC will change the existing political and regional balance in the Eastern Mediterranean as well. In the future, connecting electricity system of Israel directly to the interconnect electricity distribution system of European Union by submersible cables, attached to the existing pipe line system between Turkey and TRNC, (Özgürkün, 2016: p. 1) stretching to Israel will be an easy task.

It is obvious to predict that the water connected by pipes from Anatolia to TRNC will open up new possibilities for a joint policy, venture and alliances between Turkey, Israel and TRNC.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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