

**The GAP and Human Rights:
Turkey's Successes and Conflicts with Sustainable
Development in the Kurdish Region of Southeast Anatolia**

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of International Studies
and the Honors College of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

February 2006

Approved: _____

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An Abstract of the Thesis of

Julia Elizabeth Hill for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

in the Department of International Studies to be taken March 2006

Title: THE GAP AND HUMAN RIGHTS: TURKEY'S SUCCESSES AND
CONFLICTS WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE KURDISH
REGION OF SOUTHEAST ANATOLIA

The Turkish government first presented plans for the Southeast Anatolian Project (GAP by its Turkish acronym) in 1979. The project has built dams and hydroelectric plants on the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Southeastern Turkey as a means to increase electricity generation and agricultural productivity. Full-scale civil war between the Turkish government and Kurdish separatists started in 1984, prompting a reevaluation of GAP goals. The GAP has since expanded to include human development projects as an attempt to quell regional violence and transform the poorest and most traditional region of the country into an integral part of the modern Turkish state. This thesis explores how the GAP has affected Kurdish rights in the region, where there is room for improvement in the GAP, and if sustainable development projects such as the GAP can be effective in reducing regional sectarian violence.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation to Professors Anita Weiss and Shaul Cohen for their support, guidance and thoughtful insight on this project.

I am also deeply grateful for the scholarship opportunities that made possible my studies and travel in Turkey during 2004, which provided the inspiration for this thesis. Turkey is a diverse and beautiful country, full of warm and hospitable people, and it is my hope that as Turkey's people continue to strive toward increased prosperity, the nation can fully embrace the wealth of cultures that make it so unique.

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Turkish Pronunciation Guide

Credit: Andrew Mango's "The Turks Today"

Modern Turkish uses the Latin alphabet, modified to ensure that there is a separate letter for each main sound. The spelling thus aims at phonetic consistency. Consonants have more or less the same sound as in English, except that:

c is pronounced as *j* in *joy*
ç is pronounced as *ch* in *chair*
ğ is silent, but lengthens the preceding vowel
j is pronounced as in French, or as *s* in *measure*
ş is as *sh* in *ship*
h and *y* are pronounced as consonants, as in *hit* and *yellow*

Vowels have the following values:

a as in *father*
e as in *pen*
i as in *meet* (the capital also carries a dot, İ)
ı is a back, close, unrounded vowel which does not exist in English, the nearest equivalent being the phantom vowel in the second syllable of *rhythm*
o as in *potent*
ö as in German, or in French *eu*
u as in *room*
ü as in German, or in French *u* (in *une*)

Chapter One

Introduction to the GAP and Research Methodology

1.1 Introduction to the GAP

Traveling the roads of southeastern Turkey, through Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa, the landscape glows green with farmland. One can stand on Diyarbakır's black city walls and understand how the Dicle (Tigris) River below is the one read about in historical textbooks, the one that together with the Euphrates River forms the borders of the Fertile Crescent, the cradle of civilization. Now, as it was thousands of years ago, water remains one of the most important resources of the region, and the usage of Turkey's rivers has political, sociological and international implications. The fields of Turkey's Southeast Anatolia would not be so green today were it not for the massive Atatürk Barajı damming the Euphrates River near Adıyaman, diverting irrigation water to otherwise dry locations. This realization of the Southeast Anatolian Project (GAP by its Turkish acronym-- Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi) is due to the efforts of the Turkish government to domesticate Turkey's energy resources and improve agricultural production in the region.

These original goals have evolved to include a human development project, pledged to bring higher standards of living and stability to a part of Turkey less developed and more politically volatile than the country's western regions. As Turkey vies for European Union membership and works towards accomplishing the United

Nations' Millennium Development Goals, it increasingly recognizes the southeast region as an area of the country which is not developed enough and needs to be improved. Yet despite significant accomplishments towards achieving some of its economic and human development goals, a project of such scale has also brought with it ecological and human health problems and rapid regional urbanization. More importantly, it has brought opposing viewpoints from human rights groups and parts of the regional Kurdish population that do not appreciate an increased governmental presence in their lives, and do not find themselves reaping the rewards of so-called 'development.' Not all of the region's primarily Kurdish population is as satisfied with the project's progress as the Turkish government might wish. Turkey's neighbors, and the next stops on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, Iraq and Syria, have contested Turkey's use of the region's water, and at times worsened Turkey's relations with the Kurds through their overt or covert support of Kurdish rights parties in Turkey. Turkey's consumption of water was a definite sore point when Turkey came to the brink of war with Syria in 1998 over the Syrian harboring of a Turkish Kurdish separatist. Thus, the development of infrastructure in southeastern Turkey has brought up social complications that the Turkish government is addressing in some respects, and ignoring or subverting in others. Questions arise as to whom benefits the most by the GAP, and if it can last as a sustainable development project if it creates or exacerbates conflict within the region it hopes to improve.

1.2 Research Questions and Methodology

In this thesis, I wish to further explore (1) the social implications the GAP has had thus far on its regional population, particularly the Kurdish sectors of that population; (2) how the GAP, controlled by the Turkish government, is (and/or is not) responding and adapting to the needs of this population, framed in the context of basic human rights; (3) how the GAP can be better implemented as a model of sustainable development; and (4) why it should be, for the sake of all parties involved.

Most written material on the GAP tends to focus on fairly impersonal statistics--the Turkish government will often laud the raw economic success and relative agricultural productivity the project has brought about, while environmental groups criticize over-irrigation of crops and subsequent overtaxing of the land. Publications by human rights advocates may mention the GAP as a destructor of Kurdish culture when GAP projects such as the İlisu Dam threaten to submerge villages and force relocation of thousands, yet also view certain sub-projects within the GAP as vital in decreasing poverty rates and improving human rights within the region. Much has been written on the Turkish government's long-standing Kurdish 'problem' in the southeastern provinces of the country, but little has examined how the *responsible* implementation of a human development project such as the GAP could alleviate some of the tension that creates regional violence. Responsible implementation (that which strives towards all of the GAP goals, and addresses concerns raised by interest groups) is essential, for the GAP

can not be sustainable if any of its components are ignored. A healthy environment is crucial for the health, livelihood and economic prosperity of the regional population, and more regional economic equality is seen as a stabilizer in an area of political turmoil. Yet, without the infrastructure to implement higher education standards, the population will not know how to farm the land effectively, nor have the means to run their businesses. The goals of the GAP will be outlined in more detail in Chapter Two, and criticism and praise of the GAP as a sustainable, human development project will be explored in more depth in Chapter Four, but it is important that critical analysis of the project start at this point in the project's history for several reasons.

With a project of the size and magnitude of the GAP, there is no doubt that the regional population has already been seriously impacted by it. Since improvements in infrastructure were the original goals of the GAP, many major infrastructural components of the project are already in place, though some have been delayed by Turkey's economic troubles in 2000. The human development components of the GAP, however, which are newer goals, were set back further by war in the southeast and Turkey's economic crisis, and most are only now being implemented. In regards to both infrastructure and human development projects, the region of Şanlıurfa is the most integrated of the GAP provinces, and will be used to examine mistakes that have been made at certain stages of GAP implementation. These are mistakes that can be learned from, and avoided, when implementing later stages of the GAP in other provinces. In written format, the GAP Master Plan outlines the need for creating a working

relationship between the environmental, social, and political aspects of the project to reach its goals, and states openly that the targets of the project “complement each other and form an integral whole“ (GAP Master Plan). To what degree this “integral whole” is truly being implemented will be debated, but if this is inferred, then the “success” of the GAP as it pertains to human rights can be measured by answering several questions:

- How have people’s lives changed as a result of improved technical infrastructure and increased agricultural productivity?
- Are the particularly underprivileged populations of this region, such as the Kurds, better able to exercise their basic human rights under the social development auspices of the GAP, and are they satisfied with the changes it has brought about?
- Whom is the GAP really benefiting, and what is it really developing?

These are not easy questions to answer, and require more than a mere statistical analysis (though this is important and will be used to an extent). Comparisons of discrepancies over the last ten to fifteen years in the education and literacy gaps and number of health care facilities between the GAP provinces, and the more developed, western parts of the country (including İstanbul and Ankara) provide fairly uncontroversial measurements of progress. Looking at the potential for environmental degradation is also a telling sign as to whether or not the GAP can prove sustainable for the region. The most important factor in measuring the level of improved human rights brought about by the GAP is the

assessment of the attitudes of the southeast region's population. The Kurds of Southeast Anatolia, through the GAP, may be better-educated, generating more agricultural output, and have jobs, but be just as, if not more disaffected with the Turkish government than they were before GAP was well-implemented. Thus, to measure success, background knowledge of the project's history and the Kurds in Southeast Anatolia, as well as current knowledge of political events and present development project operations, must be taken into consideration.

To provide such a background, Chapter Two outlines the Turkish government's initial goals of electricity generation and agricultural production in implementing the large-scale project, and presents a picture of the Southeast Anatolian lifestyle before the GAP was started in the region. It also provides an introduction into why and how the GAP evolved into a human development project, as a response to both domestic conflict and international pressure. The background of this domestic conflict is explored further in Chapter Three, which details the changing position of the Kurds in Turkey. It begins by looking at the Kurds under Ottoman authority, before exploring the processes that shaped the Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey over the past century. Special emphasis is placed on the fourteen-year war of the 1980s and 1990s fought between Kurdish separatists and the forces of the Turkish government, which was a primary catalyst to exploring the human development potential of the GAP. Chapter Four, as mentioned earlier, breaks down and discusses the GAP's goals of working toward sustainable development, relating it particularly to the Kurds and the rights granted to

them. It examines how the success of sustainable development through the GAP relies on both domestic attitudes of Kurds within Turkey and international cooperation from Turkey's neighbors, Iraq and Syria, who, like Turkey, are dependent on the water of the Tigris and Euphrates and have Kurdish populations. Chapter Four concludes by reflecting on how the GAP has succeeded, and where it needs to be improved, if sustainable development, particularly for the Kurds, is to become reality.

Answering such politically sensitive questions also requires a researcher to explore beyond the biases found in information that governments choose to present to the world, and to find a broader range of opinion. Therefore, information from the Turkish government is approached carefully when it concerns issues of Kurdish rights, or relations with its neighbors, for the government is prone to avoid publicizing any information that casts it in a negative light. Any interest and support on the part of the United States government in the GAP is also viewed cautiously-- the United States is usually slow to criticize its closest ally in the Middle East, particularly when it sees potential for U.S. business involvement in the GAP. Information provided by most NGOs and human rights watch groups can be viewed as less-biased than government publications (though, certainly, quite sympathetic to local marginalized populations). Information from all of these sources has been consulted in the writing of this paper, but screened to an extent to weed out propaganda. A broad range of other sources have also been consulted, from the academic articles of Turkish scholars to sociological accounts of the Kurdish situation by writers from other parts of the world.

From a personal standpoint, I lived and studied in Turkey from January to August of 2004, and traveled through parts of Southeastern Turkey and the GAP provinces in April of that year. My personal experiences are incorporated and included when deemed necessary. The local people I encountered in these travels were a great inspiration to me for further exploring the topic of human rights in relation to the GAP. The fierce national secularism behind a united Turkish front that was required for the Turkish Republic's initial survival, has been an excuse for the government to continue to delegitimize calls for broader Kurdish rights, up to the present day, creating a disheartening situation in parts of Southeastern Anatolia. Yet more than eighty years have passed since the country of Turkey came into being, and increased tolerance for a multicultural society could strengthen Turkey, both domestically, and as an accountable member of the international community. It is to how the GAP can help bring about such a society that we now turn.

Chapter Two

Origins and Goals of the GAP

2.1 The Original Goals of the GAP

Like so many things in Turkey, the GAP's origins can be attributed to the republic's first leader, Kemal Atatürk. It was at Atatürk's suggestion that, in 1936, the Electric Works Studies Agency was started up to study the Euphrates River, in order to discover future energy exploitation opportunities for the growing Turkish nation (GAP Project). While the Agency began work with a gauging station at Kemaliye in 1938, further planning was delayed until the 1950s due to World War II. Through the 1950s and 1960s, future top politicians in Turkey would get their start in hydrological planning, which would help assure the continuing recognition of water management as a top priority in shaping Turkey's future. In 1955, future Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel, with a degree in hydrological engineering, became head of the newly established Directorate of State Water Works (DSİ by its Turkish acronym). Another future prime minister and president, Turgut Özal, and his younger brother, would carry out studies of the hydroelectric potential of the Tigris and Euphrates while working with Ankara's Electrical Studies and Research Administration in the 1950s. Both of these future politicians would be influential in the early stages of hydrological planning in Turkey and, as politicians, in the eventual implementation of the GAP, when it was named officially as such in 1977 (Kolars 25-26). Both would also have to address the Kurdish struggle for independence in Southeast Anatolia, a subject which will be discussed in

depth later.

In 1970 the first detailed plans for developing the Euphrates were introduced as the Lower Fırat (Euphrates) Project, a dam-building plan that incorporated both hydroelectric power generation and improved irrigation agriculture (Brismar 33). The goals of building dams along the Euphrates were to meet future agricultural production requirements and to contribute to the region's economic growth. The project's irrigation schemes were expected to create a 30-fold increase in agricultural productivity (103). At the time the Lower Fırat project was introduced, 60 percent of the Turkish population was without energy, and 86 percent of the energy that was in use was consumed by the western industrialized cities. Thus, the dams would also extend the national energy system towards the east and supply the more industrialized western Turkey with the energy it lacked. Developing the Euphrates in the 1970s also allowed Turkey to extend its riparian rights to the river for such uses, without having to fear reprisal from downstream Syria or Iraq. No water treaty existed at the time for the basin, making it impossible for Syria or Iraq to hold Turkey accountable for its water usage. In 1977, the Lower Fırat Project was expanded to include similar goals for the neighboring Tigris River, and the project was renamed the Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi (Southeastern Anatolia Project).

Turkey's economic reasons for developing the GAP were twofold. By 1983, without significant hydropower resources (later developed under GAP), Turkey was importing 40 percent of its energy in the form of petroleum, coal and electricity from

other countries (Kolars 2-3). Importing energy is not cheap, and in the wake of rising Middle East oil prices of the 1970s, Turkey was in need of developing its hydropower resources, especially after seeing a 30 percent increase in the nation's total energy use from 1975-1982. Controlling the flow of the Tigris and Euphrates could also contribute to agricultural development. Using water from reservoirs to irrigate otherwise dry land, Turkey could become more self-sufficient agriculturally, and perhaps even produce a surplus to sell to neighboring countries (Kolars 2). Since both the Euphrates and Tigris rivers originate in Turkey, and hydropower and irrigation water from a river is best cultivated close to its source, Turkey had the basic resources it needed: it just had to plan how to convert the rivers' surface runoff into energy. The plans drawn up to meet the goals of producing more domestic energy and increasing agricultural output were ambitious.

The GAP Master Plan consists of 22 dams and 19 hydroelectric power plants on the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and their tributaries (Southeastern Anatolia). These are all scheduled to be running by 2010, though Turkey's economic crisis of 2000 has delayed some construction, and will almost certainly mean the project is not completed on schedule. The crowning achievement of these projects is the Atatürk Barajı, located just north of the city of Şanlıurfa and on-stream since 1992. A dam with an 84 million cubic meter capacity, it measures an impressive 80 meters high and 800 meters at its widest point. The Atatürk Barajı has a generation capacity of 2400 MW, equal to 32 percent of the GAP's total generation capacity. Feeding off of the dam's reservoir are

the two 26-kilometer Şanlıurfa Tunnels, irrigating the adjacent GAP provinces (Shales 333). It is intended to supply water to 882,380 ha of land, or 54 percent of the total envisioned irrigated area under the GAP.

If all planned projects are completed on schedule, and functioning as smoothly as the Atatürk Barajı, they will together produce 7476 megawatts of power (27 billion kWh per year). This is approximately 22 percent of Turkey's projected energy requirements, and equivalent to *all* of Turkey's electrical output in 1988 (Foreign). Brismar notes, however, that such energy generation is only possible if all generators are operating at full capacity 10 hours a day, every day of the year. The 7476 megawatt estimate also fails to take into account any water diversions from the reservoir. As previously mentioned, it has been increasingly difficult for Turkey to complete projects on time, so it remains to be seen how much energy Turkey will actually produce from the GAP. Yet even if numbers never reach their projected estimates, the contribution of the GAP to the nation's energy grid is substantial.

Nine Turkish provinces located in the Tigris and Euphrates basins, near the Syrian and Iraqi borders, are affected by the reservoirs' irrigation feed: Adıyaman, Batman, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Kilis, Mardin, Sırt, Şanlıurfa and Sırnak (See Map on Page 14). These provinces contain 9.7 percent of Turkey's total surface area, and one fifth of its irrigable land (Southeastern Anatolia). The GAP's estimated increase of irrigated lands to 1.6 million hectares will double the territory in Turkey under agricultural production (Foreign). The building of reservoirs makes multiple growing

seasons possible in the GAP region. Before the GAP, winter was the primary growing season in Southeast Anatolia, but only supported rain-fed crops such as barley, wheat and lentils. In Şanlıurfa (where the GAP has had the most impact so far), these crops amounted to 50% of the annual agricultural output during the 1980s. Other common crops included olives, pistachios, hazelnuts, chickpeas, and persimmons. Summer was sunny, but too dry to yield a good harvest. By providing irrigation water during the warm summer months, the GAP made it possible to grow completely new and more diverse types of crops. Summer crops such as cotton, maize, sesame seeds and soybeans are now being cultivated, and fields in the GAP region now have the potential to produce three crops a year (Brismar 39). The costs of this large-scale project are estimated (and on track) to total approximately \$32 billion, and to date, the government of Turkey has already spent \$17 billion (Southeastern Anatolia).

2.2 Social Structures and Conditions in Southeastern Anatolia

While the state's initial objectives focused primarily on increasing energy and agricultural production, such a large-scale undertaking obviously has a tremendous impact on the people who live in the GAP region. Before examining what the GAP has done, an examination of the social structure and typical lifestyle within the GAP region will be useful for the reader.

The GAP region makes up 9.7 percent of Turkey's total area, and in 2000 it housed approximately 11 percent of the Turkish population, or 6,604,205 people. At the time of the 1990 census, the population of the GAP region (at the time 9.7 percent of the

Turkish population) was growing at a rate of 3.6%, while the national average growth rate was 2.4%. Thus, while the population of Turkey was expected to double in 32 years, the GAP region's population was projected to double in a mere 19 years. This has obviously not been (and will not be) the case, for though the GAP region's population has continued to grow, many residents of the GAP region who were driven from their villages during the government's war against the PKK are thought to have migrated westward to other parts of Turkey or Europe in search of safety and jobs.

Map of Southeastern Turkey and the GAP Region
 Accessed February 2005 at http://www.adiyamanli.org/ataturk_dam.htm



The Southeast region of Anatolia has been historically overlooked and ignored by central governments retaining authority over it. The most accessible parts of Turkey have always been its ports, and so while the coastal cities of İstanbul, İzmir, and Adana easily thrived both at the height of and after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, no great investment was made into developing trade in the rugged landscapes in the eastern regions of the country. Roads to the region were few, and protectionist trade tariffs put in place by the Turkish government made little difference to a population in a heavily self-sufficient agricultural economy. The Kurds, who are the most populous of the region's ethnic and linguistic groups, have retained their presence in the mountains of Southeast Anatolia for centuries, through the rise and fall of empires and despite invasions through their land from the east. Originally nomadic tribesmen, the Kurdish population evolved into an essentially feudalistic society in the last centuries of Ottoman rule. As was Ottoman practice, local leaders were left to retain most authority in their respective districts, so long as they paid their taxes to İstanbul. With Ottoman decentralization during the Tanzimat (Reform) Period of the 19th century, tribal chiefs (*ağas*) used their social authority to gain rights to and manage most of the land, while the rest of the population became landless sharecroppers. While Kurdish assimilation efforts after the establishment of the Turkish republic temporarily reduced the ağas' authority, the establishment of a multi-party system of government reestablished their power as vote-getters. Ağas have maintained their authority in Southeast Anatolia and still wield considerable influence over the social structure and politics of the region today. Ağas

will often put up candidates for local elections, and those under an ağa's authority will vote along tribal lines. Ağas may also hold the title of *mukhtar* (village head), and often act to mediate any disputes between or within villages. While all members of a tribe may not be related, the idea of reserving leadership roles for certain individuals based on lineage and fictive kinship (*kirvelik*) remains (Kudat 261).

The population of Southeast Anatolia is almost exclusively Muslim, with a small percentage of Assyrian Christians. The majority of these Muslims are Sunni Muslims, though there are also high numbers of Alevi Muslims, whose religious practices incorporate traces of Shi'ism and Turkish mysticism. Religious sheikhs carry significant political and social power within the Muslim community of Southeast Anatolia, which is the most religiously conservative region in Turkey. Sheikhs are widely respected figures and often step in as mediators when there are inter-tribal disputes. Sheikdom is not limited to the land-owning elite-- any member of society may theoretically become a sheikh if they receive the proper education and training. While sheikhs do not carry as much weight as ağas, a 1992 survey in Şanlıurfa revealed that 22 percent of households identify themselves as belonging to a sheikhdom, and 81 percent identify themselves belonging to a tribe. The number of households belonging to a tribe jumped to 93 percent in rural areas (Boshara 35).

Of these households, 60 percent are nuclear families, but a quarter of all households are extended, a significantly higher number than in other parts of Turkey. Kudat claims that the presence of an extended family in close proximity has "constituted

a strong social control over women's participation in public life." This presence is evident in the widespread practice of the bridegroom's family paying a bride price to the family of the bride, and in women's voting decisions, which are usually determined by the male head of the household. Women were granted equal legal rights in the Turkish civil code of the late 1920s but in the Southeast, common attitudes and traditional laws tend to prevail concerning women's rights to own property, particularly land. Women often participate in their family's agricultural activities, but most women (and their families) do not believe they should have access to inherit their family's land from their fathers (Kudat 259). This tendency to distrust a woman with family lands may well be based on their lack of access to a formal education. Almost three quarters of rural women are illiterate, and most did not graduate from primary school (260).

Other social problems abound in the poverty-stricken regions of Southeast Anatolia. Transportation is poor, sometimes making it difficult for children to get to school. Access to safe drinking water is not universal, and health services are neither accessible nor adequate. Electricity and communications systems are also sub-standard.

But of all the social constructs in Southeast Anatolia, the uneven distribution of land is the most problematic, for any funding the government provides the region does not always affect the landless poor who need it most. In the years leading up to the GAP's induction, this became increasingly evident. With the mechanization of agriculture after the 1960s, many peasants beholden to a local ağa for land to farm found themselves without jobs, and migrated out of the rural villages and into the cities. High

numbers of emigrants moved from their traditional farms to urban areas and outside the region in the 1960s and 1970s, yet retained their strong tribal, familial, and religious ties. Such population movement was previously unprecedented for the Kurds, and that this emigration occurred during decades known for social unrest in Turkey and worldwide is of great importance. One Kurd in particular, Abdullah Öcalan, was so influenced by the Marxist ideas he came in contact with at this time during his studies in Ankara that he would found the Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK), starting an era of armed Kurdish resistance to Turkish authority that led to a civil war in the 1980s and 1990s, and has renewed itself amid present-day violence in the Middle East. Abdullah Öcalan's ideological stance and the PKK's impact on the Kurds' situation in Turkey will be discussed at greater length in the following chapters, but it is worth noting at this point, since the Turkish government's desire to end the violence in Southeast Anatolia and find a lasting solution to their Kurdish "problem" led to the reinvention of the GAP as a multi-sector sustainable development project.

2.3 New Goals Emerge: GAP as a Human Development Project

When the GAP was in its early planning stages and concerned primarily with increased energy and agricultural production for Turkey, the affected GAP provinces bore witness to a bloody war between Turkish forces and Kurdish insurgents that lasted in its most violent stages for 14 years. When large-scale problems surfaced in the mid-1980s, the Turkish government looked to make the GAP more than just economically advantageous for the country (Southeastern Anatolia). Incorporating the consistently poor and mostly

Kurdish population of Southeast Turkey into the GAP project would do more than simply improve the regional quality of life with newer agricultural technology and higher-paying jobs. It would also give the Turkish government the infrastructure to promote more political stability in the region, and keep economic goals on track. Meeting economic goals for the region was particularly important in dealing with not only the Kurdish population of Turkey, but with the large numbers of Kurdish refugees fleeing to Turkey in wake of wars in neighboring Iraq and Iran.

Thus, when the Turkish government came out with the re-invented GAP Master Plan in 1989, the original goals had been expanded on to include improving socio-economic conditions, modernizing the traditional agricultural system, expanding the livestock, fishery, and forestry sectors, and developing industries and services. The GAP was meant not only to expand export earnings and support urban and industrial development in other parts of Turkey, but also to discourage separatism through improved social welfare so the final vision for GAP could become a reality. The GAP hoped to bring the Southeast up to speed with the rest of Turkey by “stimulating processes of urbanization, industrialization, and modernization within the region” (Brismar 34). It is debatable whether these stimulating factors create the effect of reducing separatist tensions rooted in oppressed Kurdish identity and autonomy. However, the Turkish government’s professed desire to improve the standard of living in a region they had long neglected appeared to be a step in the right direction.

In the 1990s, the GAP’s approach to development changed yet again. The United

Nations 1992 Conference on Environment and Development spawned the Rio Declaration, which emphasized the importance of considering the health of humans and the environment when implementing development projects, and making such projects sustainable. In response to the Rio Declaration's articles on reducing poverty, consideration of the environment, and creating a greater role for women through development, Turkey held a conference on the sustainability of the GAP in 1995, and subsequently challenged itself to become the epitome of a large-scale sustainable development project. The conference created a plan to bring the communities of Southeast Anatolia up to par with the rest of Turkey through the basic strategies of "fairness in development, participation, environmental protection, employment generation, spatial planning and infrastructure development" and the more specific goals of targeting sustainable development through improved communication, transportation and tourism, more regional jobs, providing health services, and improving the education and rights of the region's women" (Southeastern Anatolia). The result of the conference was the establishment of a five-year joint program (which has since been extended) between the GAP-Regional Development Administration (GAP-RDA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This "Sustainable Development Programme in the GAP Region" works to implement 29 projects ranging from creating small-scale businesses for women to providing transportation for children to school. In 1997, the President of the GAP, Olcay Ünver, illustrated how the focus of the GAP had changed when he stated that long-term prosperity in the region could only be achieved if

“development is human oriented, and if it is designed and implemented with a focus on sustainability” (Brismar 38).

Despite publicized attention to sustainable development, political stability and security continued to be the Turkish government’s underlying focus of the GAP’s goals in the region. The GAP timetable was revised in 1998, and when the GAP goals were restated in the new regional development plan in February 2002, increasing the region’s socio-political stability was explicitly added to the list of top priorities. This goal was stated long after the Turkish forces disabled the PKK operating capacity in 1998 and captured PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999, but the southeast was never considered completely stable, just quieter (Foreign). True to form, calm in the region was short-lived, and Middle Eastern chaos caused by the current war in Iraq has spilled over into Turkey, particularly in the last two years. The PKK (renamed Kongra-Gel in 2002) ended its 2000 ceasefire in June of 2004, and the renewal of its operations has once again forced the Turkish government to face the Kurdish “problem” it continually fails to solve.

The GAP has already made laudable progress towards many of its sustainable development goals (though there is certainly room for improvement in several areas), but has failed to create the vital regional security it envisioned. It is certainly not the first failed attempt at dispelling chronic regional violence. But if the GAP is bringing about radical social change in Southeastern Anatolia, couldn’t it possibly help create a desirable enough situation for the Kurds so that violence against the Turkish

establishment was no longer necessary? The history of Kurdish relations with the Ottoman and Turkish states is long and complex, and to propose a solution through physical infrastructure may not be enough. A regional increase in government presence (which many Kurds view as untrustworthy), without an increase in the political and cultural rights the Kurds have long desired, may even create more problems than it solves. This is undoubtedly the greatest challenge the GAP faces, and so before examining where the GAP has succeeded and where it can improve its chances for creating sustainable development, an analysis and understanding of the Kurdish resistance movement on Turkish territory is necessary.

Chapter Three

The Kurdish 'Problem' in Turkey

“Dizhmin a babe nabita dust a kurre”

“The enemy of the father will never be the friend of his son”

-Kurdish Proverb

3.1 The Kurds in Southeast Anatolia

There is one memory that stands out in my mind from my ten-day tour of the southeastern regions of Turkey in April of 2004. On holiday from our studies in Ankara, I was with four other Americans who were as excited as I was to explore this completely different side of a country we had already started to know and love. We were trying to cram as much as we possibly could into ten days, which was an incredible task, considering the millennia of human history the region had to offer, and the long bus rides on poor roads between destinations. Yet despite gazing in awe upon such wonders as ancient Armenian churches, ruins of ancient universities, kings' tombs, and the Biblical Mt. Ararat, we were most enjoying the conversations we engaged in with the local people. These conversations gave us a deeper look at the intricate web of people and cultures that make up Turkey, and what we found just below the surface of relative calm was rebellion brewing in the discontent of the region's population. This first made itself evident by the increased military presence the farther east we traveled. The Turkish *jandarma* (military police) would stop buses at checkpoints, and there were bases or

checkpoints in every city we passed through. But the discontent became strikingly evident to me when we arrived in the city of Van, a large Kurdish city on the edge of the largest lake in Turkey.

We had befriended a young local man at the kebab shop we had stopped at for lunch, and he had offered to show us around. He took us to the outskirts of the city to ancient Uratrian rock carvings, where women were sunning their woven carpets on the rock faces, and children scampered around. The scene was peaceful, but as we were walking my friend pointed to the side of a large nearby hill, where the words “*Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyene,*” were painted in large white letters. This phrase, which roughly translates into “Happy am I to call myself a Turk” can be seen throughout Turkey, usually accompanied by a statue of Kemal Atatürk, who first spoke these words in an early speech as President of the Turkish Republic. Atatürk had rallied an Anatolian army after World War I to push back the European powers that had carved up the Ottoman Empire and claimed the modern state of Turkey for the peoples of Anatolia. A strong sense of national solidarity had been crucial to the success of Atatürk’s fragile new state, and placing a Turkish nationalist identity over any other form of self-identification was the easiest way to preserve such solidarity. But 80 years after the founding of the state of Turkey, the presence of the words in this location did not seem to produce great feelings of national pride and unity. We asked our guide who wrote the message on the hillside, and he grimly stated, “The military.”

“And look here,” he continued, pointing to the low walls we were walking beside. “Here people have written in support of Öcalan, and the *jandarma* have painted over it.” White blocks of spray paint marred the sand-colored walls, the ends of letters sticking out from the blocks here and there. The young man’s face was matter-of-fact and resigned, but his voice held bitterness, a bitterness toward the forces that controlled his life, the government that forced him to shamefully hide his identity in his own city, his own country. Discontent with higher authority was a sentiment I encountered often throughout my trip in the Kurdish regions of the country. The history behind such sentiment, and the history of nationalist Kurdish identity, dates to before the founding of modern-day Turkey, before the Turkish government blatantly ignored and subverted “Kurdishness” to a greater Turkish identity. The Turks were not the first to view the Kurds as inferior, and also not the first to understand these sometimes violent mountain people as a dangerous force to be reckoned with.

The origins of the Kurdish people are unknown, but countless peoples have migrated to or through the region of Asia Minor the Kurds lay claim to today. The people living in the mountains of Kurdistan have been given credit for practicing agriculture and animal husbandry as early as 12,000 BC, but have been nomadic herdsman since 2400 BC (Randal 20). The emergence of a distinctly Kurdish society has been placed as far back as 2,000 years ago, though the Kurds are first mentioned in written history by Arab historians in the 7th century AD, and the region was not referred to as Kurdistan until the middle of the twelfth century under Selcuk administration

(White 15). Today, though the exact borders are disputed, the term ‘Kurdistan’ refers to the regions of southeastern Turkey, eastern Iran, northeastern Iraq and northern Syria, which have predominantly Kurdish populations. Kurdish communities are also found in parts of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and in migrant communities throughout Europe and western Turkish cities. In total, Kurds number at least 25 million, and over half of the world’s Kurds live in Turkey.

The exact number of Kurds in Turkey is uncertain, as no census based on ethnicity has occurred since the 1950s. The government does not recognize ethnic minorities, and fictitiously classifies all of the population as “Turkish,” an identity created to strengthen national unity after the Turkish War of Independence. But of the 49 identifiable ethnic groups in Turkey, Kurds comprise the largest, making up anywhere from 12 to 19 percent of the population (Kırıřcı 121). Kurds living in Turkey speak primarily the Kurmanci dialect of Kurdish, though Zaza is also spoken by a minority of Turkish Kurds. But even linguistics cannot provide an accurate estimate of the Kurdish population, since younger generations of Kurds have grown up in the western cities of Turkey where Kurdish culture is not as prominent, and have not learned a Kurdish dialect in a Turkish-language education system.

Most Kurds in Turkey are orthodox Sunni Muslims who follow the Shafi’i school of Islam. This differs from Turkish and Arab Sunnis who follow the Hanafi school, and while the differences in religious practices are not great, the small differences can be

exaggerated by a Kurd as a case for wanting to not be recognized as a Turk. Another important religion, as it relates to the Kurdish nationalist movement, is the presence of a significant number of Alevis in the northwest parts of Kurdistan. Alevis have some similar practices, but are *not* the similarly-named Alawites, which are found in Syria and Iraq. Originally known as the Kızılbaş, or “redheads,” the Alevis hold in high regard both Ali (the son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed) and the Shah Ismail of the Safawid Empire, who spread Shi’ism across Persia. While Alevi worship has traces of Shi’ism, it also incorporates Turkish shaman traditions. Interestingly, Alevism is quite liberal in its attitudes toward women, advocating monogamy, allowing women to worship with men, and encouraging women to get a good education and enter any occupation they wish (These attitudes may explain the significant numbers of women PKK fighters in a region usually known for its conservative attitudes toward women). Approximately 1.5 million of the 3.5 million Alevis in Turkey are Kurdish (the rest are Turks), and Alevis have repeatedly been the victims of discriminatory violence in Turkey (both at the hands of Sunni Kurds and Turkish authorities). The tribal rifts between Alevi and Sunni Kurds proved a great boon to the early Kurdish nationalist movement, and it has only been in the more recent years of the PKK that Alevi and Sunni Kurdish goals have become more closely aligned (Bird 139).

3.2 Kurdish Nationalism Before World War I

Kurdish nationalist identity is a product of the infiltration of Western European

ideas of nationalism in the nineteenth century. As the imperialist intentions of Britain, Russia, France and Germany closed in with a military presence on Ottoman territories, the Ottoman Empire was faced with the double threat of nationalism, which threatened the multi-ethnic character of the Empire, and the increased military power of Christian nations, which undercut the sultan's authority as head of both state and religion. European powers were gaining increasing influence over Ottoman affairs as the "sick man of Europe" struggled to catch up with the quickly industrializing western end of the continent. As part of their attempt to begin the dismantling of Ottoman power, Western European powers pressured bureaucrats in İstanbul for fairer administrative treatment and more protection of Christian minorities within the Empire. The culmination of this was a legal end to discrimination against non-Muslim minorities during the Tanzimat ("Reforms") period in 1839. Non-Muslim minorities within the Ottoman Empire had always been given freedom of religion (though were obliged to pay higher taxes), but the Ottoman sultan was the legal and spiritual head of the Islamic caliphate and Empire. Recognizing non-Muslims as minorities rather than religious communities within the Empire signaled the start of a long decline in the sultan's authoritative power. Ottoman leaders rightly suspected that this could dissolve the Empire, and there was a great fear that Christian minorities in Eastern Anatolia would seek to form a Christian state with Russia. At the same time, more Kurds were starting to recognize themselves as a distinct people, though tribal loyalties and the preservation of Islamic identity in the face of Christian threats were more important than a wider ethnic association, making the rise of

Kurdish nationalism a slow and sporadic process until after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

The first distinctly Kurdish uprising, led by Sheikh Ubaidullah in 1879-80, would be directly related to the new freedoms granted to Christian minorities in Eastern Anatolia. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 had caught up the Kurds in its violence, and destroyed much of the Kurdish leadership structure. The Treaty of Berlin, which ended the war gave certain protection to the Armenian and Nestorian Christians within the Empire. Sheikh Ubaidullah saw the Treaty of Berlin as potentially granting statehood to these Christian minorities in the near future. Since the Kurds occupied the same lands as the Armenians and Nestorians, Sheikh Ubaidullah decided to take action against this potential threat. He organized a Kurdish Tribal League, and started an 1879 rebellion against Ottoman troops, which was quickly put down. Ubaidullah managed to avoid taking responsibility for the rebellion and reassured the Ottoman government of his loyalty, but his quest for recognition of Kurdish rights continued. He warned the British against promoting Christian interests in the region, writing the vice-consul in 1880 that:

The Kurdish nation is a people apart... We want our affairs to be in our own hands, otherwise the whole of Kurdistan will take the matter into their own hands, as they are unable to put up with these continued evil deeds, and the oppression which they suffer at the hands of the two governments [Ottoman and Persian]... (White 56)

Sheikh Ubaidullah's nationalist aspirations would be quashed in 1880 when he invaded across the Persian border, presumably with intent to consolidate power and later attack

the Ottomans with the hope of forming a Kurdish state. The Persians soundly defeated Ubaidullah and he was captured and exiled by the Ottomans when he retreated.

Ubaidullah's relative success in rallying various Kurdish tribes for the cause of Kurdish statehood was certainly one of the factors that led to the creation of the Hamidiye cavalry regiments by the Ottoman authorities in 1891. These regiments were commanded by Ottoman Turks, but composed primarily of Sunni Kurds, with regiments divided along tribal lines. The Ottomans used the Hamidiye to commit multiple atrocities and massacres against the Armenians starting in the 1890s in an attempt to quell Armenian nationalism-- a sadly ironic situation considering the thousands of Kurds that would suffer at the hands of the Turkish government a century later for holding similar intentions. The Hamidiye would also target Alevi and non-Hamidiye Kurdish tribes for land expropriation, creating long-term animosity between Kurdish tribes. The Ottomans did not want or need a Kurdish nationalist movement on their hands, and found exacerbating tribal tensions and controlling large numbers of Kurds through the military structure beneficial. But the educational opportunities afforded to those Kurds who participated in the Hamidiye regiments also worked to contribute to Kurdish nationalism, as young Kurds gaining access to leadership roles were exposed to nationalist movements occurring across the crumbling Ottoman Empire.

At the end of World War I, Kurds who held nationalist aspirations (mostly intellectuals) attempted to capitalize on the fall of the Ottoman Empire and create a

Kurdish state. They took hope in U.S. President Wilson's Twelfth Point which claimed that:

The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.

A prominent Kurd, Mahmud Şerif Paşa, went to the Paris Peace Conference in March of 1919 to make his case for a Kurdish state:

In virtue of the Wilsonian principle everything pleads in favour of the Kurds for the creation of a Kurd state, entirely free and independent... We demand that independence which is our birthright, and which alone will permit us to fight our way along the road of progress and civilization, to turn to account the resources of our country and live in peace with our neighbors. (Kırışçı 79)

Perhaps it was the letter from ten Kurdish tribal leaders to the French High Commissioner in Istanbul protesting Şerif Paşa's willingness to accept an Armenian state in areas that included Kurds in return for Kurdish independence. More likely, it was the Allies' intention that the Twelfth Point concern Christian minorities and the British desire to control the oil-rich parts of Kurdistan, but one way or another, Şerif Paşa's request was flatly rejected.

To most Kurds, tribal loyalties were still far greater than nationalist aspirations, and as it became more and more likely that the Ottoman Empire would be carved up, most Kurdish ağas were looking to preserve the political and religious power they had been granted by Istanbul. Kurds therefore became active participants in the National Congresses of Turkish Provinces during 1919. The Congresses laid out a plan for a

provisional government to resist foreign occupation should the Ottoman Empire be split up. Kurdish loyalty would soon be tested, and many Kurds would fight with dedication in the Turkish War of Independence to preserve what they could of what had once been a great Islamic Empire.

3.3 The Kurds After the Turkish War of Independence

When Turkey became an independent republic in 1923, it was still reeling from the economically and politically devastating effects of World War I. The Ottoman Empire had been divided amongst victorious foreign powers at the war's end by the 1920 Treaty of Sevres, in a last attempt by Sultan Mehmet VI to save some part of his kingdom. Only a small section of Central Anatolia remained under the control of its original Turkish inhabitants, and this population would quickly reject the dealings of the now-powerless sultan in Istanbul. Under the leadership of a famous World War I general, Mustafa Kemal (later to be known as Atatürk), the population rallied around a common Muslim identity, was able to drive out French, British, Italian, and Greek presence, and claim what is now modern-day Turkey as their own. These reclamations were given recognition by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, yet the fragility of the new state, surrounded by wartime enemies on all fronts, was all too apparent to Mustafa Kemal. Elected the country's first president, he turned Turkey towards the west, with sets of sweeping reforms meant to Westernize and stabilize the country. Atatürk considered Western Europe to be the epitome of modernity and progress, and in the name of such

modernity the alphabet was changed from an Arabic to Latin-based script, the veil and fez were outlawed in all government buildings, and a democratic parliament was put in place in Ankara under a new constitution, which guaranteed all citizens, including women, political rights. The right to all citizens of equality before the law, regardless of “birth, nationality, language, race or religion,” had also been guaranteed by the Treaty of Lausanne and the new Turkish republic was making great advancements in creating a strong nation-state. Yet to strengthen a new nation, the state demanded a strong *Turkish* national identity, which in turn ignored a large, and very important section of the population-- the Kurds.

The Treaty of Sevrês, in addition to partitioning the Ottoman Empire into various protectorates and mandates, had allowed for an Armenian as well as a Kurdish state in Eastern Turkey. The Treaty of Lausanne, however, made no mention of either, and instead divided the Kurds between four newly-created states. Most Kurds had willingly fought for Atatürk’s cause, which they viewed as a united Muslim front against foreign and Christian forces invading their land. Unrest within the Kurdish regions of the country grew, however, following the end of the Turkish War of Independence, as Kurds felt brushed aside by both the Treaty of Lausanne and the creation of Turkish nationalism. Of the 23 revolts against the Turkish resistance movement before the end of 1921, only three involved Kurdish tribes, and these were instigated from Istanbul by bourgeois Kurds who had idealistic nationalist tendencies. Their positions of power were enough to start rebellions in the countryside, but there was not enough tribal unification

to create meaningful results, and these revolts were quickly put down by Atatürk's armies. In contrast, following the creation of the Turkish republic, 16 of 18 rebellions between 1924 and 1938 involved Kurds, some of which were serious thorns in the side of the new government in Ankara (Kırışcı 100). While tribal, linguistic and religious divides still prevented a unified nationalist movement among Kurds, sheikhs and ağas were able to spur their tribes to action on religious and cultural grounds.

Atatürk's secularization of the new republic had included abolishing the caliphate in 1924, which was a blow to many of the Kurds who had rallied behind a Muslim identity during the War for Independence. Perhaps even more demeaning to the Kurds were the Turkification practices which closed Kurdish schools, teaching foundations and religious fraternities, and removed any reference to "Kurdistan" from government documents. The Turkish government outlawed Kurdish dress, music and names, and banned Kurdish publications, the formation of any Kurdish organization and the use of the Kurdish language in courts and government offices. The first post-independence Kurdish rebellion occurred in 1925 near the southeastern city of Diyarbakır. While the Kurdish elite (mostly former Hamidiye members) who organized the rebellion had purely nationalist intentions toward Kurdish independence, Sheikh Said was chosen as the rebellion's leader to give the struggle religious undertones, and rally the wider population to its cause. The rebellion, though it turned out an impressive 15,000 fighters, failed within a matter of months, again due to tribal differences (the Alevis chose not to join in a cause that would create a Sunni Kurdistan) and a swift and powerful Turkish

military response which killed the sheikh and his followers, and drove thousands from their homes.

Sheikh Said's rebellion would lead to many other uprisings over the next decade, most significantly the Ağrı Dağ revolt in 1930 (primarily by Kurmanci-speaking Kurds) and the 1937-38 revolt in Dersim (mostly Kızılbaş Alevi). The relative preparedness and training of the fighters at Ağrı Dağ and the revolts that popped up in other Kurmanci areas in its wake translated into a harder fight for the Turkish military. It also meant that when the rebellion was finally suppressed, the military took harsh repressive measures against the Kurds, which included deportations, executions and burning of villages. In 1932, in response to the uprisings, a law passed in Ankara stated that Kurdish regions could be completely evacuated "for sanitary, military, political, cultural or strategic regions." It also officially renamed Kurds as "mountain Turks." Ankara would have one more sizeable fight with Kurdish forces in Dersim (now Tunceli by its Turkish name) from 1937-1938. The leaders of Dersim had been unruly even in Ottoman times, refusing to pay taxes and wanting broader autonomy. The leaders in Dersim wanted nothing to do with the Turkish state either, and even appealed to the League of Nations for assistance to the wider Kurdish nation against Turkish tyranny (even though only Kurdish Alevi were involved in the Dersim revolt). As the Turkish government prepared to "solve" their Dersim problem by broadening the government's power, the residents of Dersim launched what they considered to be a defensive revolt. The consequences were disastrous as Turkish military forces used warplanes and

indiscriminate bombing to kill over 40,000 people in the Dersim region while putting down the revolt. In total, Ankara's 1925-1938 campaign against Kurdish dissidence had displaced over 1 million Kurds (O'Ballance 16). The military's incredible brutality and the high number of civilian casualties suffered at Dersim stunned the entire Kurdish population and brought all forms of the Kurdish nationalist movement to a dead standstill for the next several decades. Hatred amongst Kurds for the central government persisted, however, would rise again in the 1960s, and still persists to this day.

3.4 The Rise of Kurdish Nationalism Under Abdullah Öcalan

In 1950, Turkey held its first democratic, multi-party elections. The new Democratic Party would win in a landslide victory against the Kemalist factions. Since regional deputies were elected to parliament, many Kurdish landowners (or their representatives) were able to secure legislative seats in Ankara and argue for their own interests. As jobs started to disappear in the southeast, poor Kurds started to blame their constant struggle for survival on their landlord, and many would move from the southeast to Western Turkish cities and Western Europe (O'Ballance 44). What started as a trickle in the 1950s, became a stream of Kurds in the 1960s as the further mechanization of agriculture eliminated even more jobs in the southeast. The increased economic inequality brought about by the Democratic Party's rural development plan in the 1950s and the general failure of the economy overall lost the trust of many voters; the Democratic Party's attempt to keep order by increasing their powers through parliamentary majority lost

them the trust of the military. A 1960 coup was followed by a new constitution which actually increased the public's freedom to express opinion, though in practice this did not apply to the Kurdish forms of expression, which were still prohibited, lest they undercut Turkish identity. Still, the increased mobility of Kurds in the 1960s exposed many who traveled west to the leftist movements that were flourishing in Turkey. Journals discussing Kurds started to pop up, but were quickly put down, as were Kurdish dictionaries and stories that were published (Miesalas 224).

In 1965, urban Kurds established the Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan (PDKT), similar to Iraq's KDP, with the hope of gaining Kurdish autonomy to the benefit of the aḡas. The PDKT was significant in that it was the first Kurdish nationalist organization to form since the destruction of Dersim, but it was unable to keep up with the growing radicalization of the Kurdish movement which demanded separatism. It was, however, an easy enough target for retribution after massive demonstrations protesting published racial slurs against Kurds and demanding Kurdish rights (organized by Kurdish students) drew tens of thousands in southeastern cities (O'Ballance 79). PDKT leaders were mysteriously assassinated or arrested following these demonstrations, and radical Kurdish leftists reorganized in 1969 by founding a network of "Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Centers" (Devrimci Doḡu Kùltür Ocakarı-- DDKO in Turkish). The DDKO was legal in Turkey, since it conveniently omitted the word "Kurdish" in its title, but its unstated goals were to free the Kurdish nation from Turkish oppression and the Kurdish workers from their class struggle against the aḡas. The

DDKO was short-lived since the military coup of 1971 resulted in the arrest of all DDKO leaders. A pre-emptive strike against a Kurdish uprising in the works had been one of the driving forces behind the 1971 coup, but the destruction of the DDKO only postponed the massive Kurdish uprising the military had feared.

The 1971 coup, which not only destroyed the DDKO, but banned the Turkish Worker's Party (which had garnered broad support from the Kurds by declaring the East's underdevelopment was due to government inattention), only served to spawn more leftist movements in the 1970s. The DDKO resurfaced as the Democratic Cultural Association, but was unsuccessful in its attempt to unite the various Kurdish movements (O'Ballance 105). Radical student groups such as Devgenç (Revolutionary Youth) gave way to militant leftist branches such as Devsol (Revolutionary Left). Several underground Kurdish nationalist organizations also carried out operations through the 1970s, encouraging a revival of Kurdish identity and language, and advocating everything from Maoist principles to Soviet visions, and from autonomy for Kurds within Turkey to a completely independent Kurdistan (encompassing Kurdish territory in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey). All of these organizations would be illegal and mostly subdued by the end of the 1980 coup (yet another military response to the parliament's inability to quiet the protesting workers), with the very significant exception of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan-- PKK). The PKK was the brainchild of Abdullah Öcalan, a poor Kurd from near Urfa, who had been a university student in Ankara at the time of the 1971 coup. Joining in the Marxist fervor of the day,

he was arrested in 1972, and spent seven months in prison evaluating his revolutionary ideals, and becoming a strong proponent of revolutionary violence as a means to eliminate imperialism. After serving in several revolutionary organizations after his release, Öcalan decided in 1975 that he would form his own band of revolutionaries, advocating armed struggle as the means to Kurdish liberation. After Öcalan gathered a following in the Kurdish countryside, the PKK held its first meeting in November of 1978. PKK violence first targeted the ağas of the Bucak clan and their supporters in the Urfa area. Öcalan's power base drew on Kurds who had become disaffected with the ağas after losing their work and livelihood. During PKK training, they were strongly indoctrinated with Öcalan's vision of revolutionary violence as the way to overthrow the class structure.

After the 1980 coup the PKK, along with most other Kurdish nationalist associations, suffered serious setbacks (as did other political groups and individual dissidents). By November of 1981, the Turkish military claimed that since 1980, they had detained 43,130 people in Turkey on suspicion of terrorist or illegal political activity. Over half (29,929) were in custody. The military was well aware of the fast growth of the PKK and deeply concerned with increasing violence in the southeast, and therefore moved swiftly to stop any activity. A mass trial of 477 suspected PKK members in Diyarbakır resulted in ninety-seven of the accused receiving the death sentence. After January 1983 hunger strikes protesting the ill-treatment of the Kurdish population, ninety-two PKK leaders were arrested; by April, fifty-three had died in custody. A mass

trial sentenced to death the other thirty-nine (O'Ballance 153). Even after a return to civilian rule in Turkey in 1983, Kurdish activity in the southeast remained under close government scrutiny.

The PKK survived the 1980 coup and subsequent martial law in the southeast for several reasons. Öcalan was able to bypass Turkey's strict press censorship on the Kurdish issue by taking his ideas on Kurdish nationalism to the Western European press, and therefore to the Kurdish migrant communities outside Turkey. Since Kurds living in Western Europe typically had migrated from Turkey to find work, playing on their disaffection with the aḡas provided Öcalan with a broad base of support and, often, even more recruits for the PKK. Öcalan had also had the foresight to gain Syrian government support for his operations by 1979. Syrian dictator Hafez al-Asad was only too happy to have Kurdish fighters training on his territory or in Lebanon's nearby Bekaa Valley if they could eventually be used to destabilize his Western-friendly neighbor that had already started to harness the irrigation waters of the Euphrates (Kinzer 112). Asad did not want attacks on Turkey launched from Syrian territory, but after the fall of the Iranian shah, Damascus and Tehran worked together to help PKK fighters infiltrate Northern Iraq, from which they could launch their raids against the Turkish military. Because of purges of the PKK by the Turkish military, Öcalan's plans for cross-border raids by the PKK's guerilla forces did not get underway until August of 1984. Their offensives were well-organized however, and the initial forty-person teams that entered the towns of Semdinli and Erüh to release prisoners and execute government

collaborators also took hostages, had a medical team, and warned villagers against government collaboration (O'Ballance 155). The violence they had started would not end for another fourteen years.

The Turkish government responded to the continuing guerilla attacks by shoring up its border defenses. A fairly meaningless anti-terrorist agreement with Syria did little more than electrify the security fence between the two countries. Along the border region with Iraq, Turkey launched Operation Sun, which allowed Turkish forces to move up to five kilometers into Iraq for up to three days without warning for the purpose of arresting PKK members (O'Ballance 155). Over eight hundred PKK members were arrested in this way. Stabilizing the Iraqi border region was important in keeping the oil pipeline from Iraq to Turkey secure during the Iran-Iraq war, and in reality, Turkish forces far overstepped the five kilometer limit in their pursuit of PKK fighters (133). Still, the PKK fighters continued crossing the border in large numbers. The Turkish government also armed local village guards, called *korucu*, as a militia to fend off the PKK fighters. The *korucu* and their families became additional targets for the PKK, which once again pitted Kurd against Kurd in the midst of a nationalist struggle. The PKK was ruthless in its pursuit of those it considered against revolutionary violence and also targeted teachers (for assimilating Kurds into Turkish society), mosque personnel, and distributors of Turkish national newspapers (Mango *Turks Today* 218). Meanwhile, Turkish military forces would enter villages suspected of sympathizing with the PKK during the day, and kill women and children while men were working in the fields. The

military build-up on the part of the Turkish government was massive-- by 1986, forty-five thousand troops were in the Southeast, and over the next decade, their numbers would grow to two hundred thousand (Bird 320). Villagers were forced to decide whom they sympathized with, or in some instances were forced into sympathizing with either the village guards or joining the PKK. Such decisions left many families divided, but with the onset of emergency rule in 1987, and the Turkish government offering little protection to neutral villagers (and often committing terrible human rights violations against them), more and more turned to supporting the PKK. Over the course of the insurgency, from 1984-1999, the PKK recruited over thirty thousand men and women to fight as guerillas for its cause.

In 1991, the Turkish government removed the ban on the Kurdish language in speech, song, and music, which was the closest the government had ever come to recognizing the Kurds as a distinct people. At the same time, however, anti-terrorist legislation was passed in Ankara that condemned any actions by organizations or individuals that attempted to change the political, legal, social, or secular structure of the Turkish state. Violence in the southeast reached even greater heights in lieu of this new law as the government targeted civilian support for the PKK rather than the military operations-- the number of Kurdish villages destroyed by the Turkish government during the insurgency skyrocketed from about three hundred in 1992 to over three thousand by the end of 1995, which turned even more villagers into the PKK fold. The PKK also continued atrocities against its political opponents (which often included Kurds) and

schools (over 5200 schools closed between 1992 and 1994 due to insecurity; 192 of these schools were burned down), but feelings of Kurdish nationalism were on the rise following the lift of the language ban, and even some Kurds who held no Marxist inclinations (of which there were many) felt that the PKK might be the best path to gaining greater Kurdish rights from the Turkish government.

The end of the Gulf War signaled the beginning of the end for the PKK insurgency, though the PKK would remain on the offensive for several more years, and heavy fighting would continue until 1998. The likelihood of a Kurdish state seemed unrealistic even to some PKK members due to the continued migration of the Kurdish population out of Southeast Anatolia. With the end of the Cold War, international sympathy for the PKK waned-- the United States viewed the PKK as a domestic threat to Turkey, and along with Western Europe, classified the PKK as a terrorist group (the PKK had carried out attacks on the Turkish tourism industry and several political assassinations in Western Europe, but continued to benefit from the support of Kurds in Western Europe). Turkey's NATO allies provided arms to the Turkish government to help defeat its PKK insurgency. Many of these arms were used against common civilians, and in violation of the rules of war, but none the less signified the West's lack of interest in Kurdish affairs in Turkey. Turkey's neighbors also had no desire in promoting a Kurdish state-- they merely liked using the PKK to weaken Turkey. The PKK also faced the threat of political Islam's resurgence in Turkey. Hizbullah, an underground Kurdish Islamist party named for the Lebanese group with similar religious

leanings, carried out many murders against PKK members, and despite Turkey's secular heritage, may have been encouraged by the Turkish state as a means to undermine the PKK. At the same time, and as further testament to the continued divisions within Turkish Kurdistan, legitimate parliamentary reform parties with Islamic leanings started to gain some of the conservative Kurdish vote in Southeast Anatolia, which meant a decisive cut into any votes for Kurdish nationalist parties with ties to the PKK.

In April 1993, Turkish President Turgut Özal may have been close to negotiating a permanent settlement with Öcalan, who had called a ceasefire the month before. Özal, himself of Kurdish background, had gone farther than any other politician in seeking to address the Kurdish problem in Turkey and reach a real solution. In the 1980s, he had tried to economically integrate the eastern Kurdish provinces of Turkey by creating infrastructure in the region and launching the GAP project, and it had been at Özal's prodding that the Kurdish language ban was lifted in 1991. Özal was truly a unique politician, and had a better chance than any other leader at striking a deal with Öcalan, but any chance of negotiation with the PKK ended when Özal died suddenly of a heart attack on April 17, 1993. Özal predicted mere days before his death that if he didn't do something quickly to address the Kurdish problem, "the situation will get much worse" (Randal 279) Indeed, the PKK would end its ceasefire in May of 1993, and the insurgency would drag on even more violently for six more years. Parliamentary parties with Kurdish interests as part of their platform were continually disbanded in the 1990s for seeking to undermine ethnic Turkish unity, their parliamentarians tried and

imprisoned out of office, and the inability of Kurds to gain rights through peaceful democratic processes seemed to leave the violence of the PKK as the only option that got any notice from Ankara. Those on the side of the Turkish government may also have had a reason for continuing the fighting, for while the cost of maintaining the state of emergency in the southeast was a costly \$11.1 billion in 1994 (compared to a Turkish GNP of 173 billion in 1993), those who were willing to be a part of the government security system (including village guards and their clan leaders) received extra pay and enjoyed a higher standard of living (O'Ballance 132).

By 1998, Turkish forces had essentially destroyed the operating capacity of the PKK, and turned their focus to capturing Öcalan. The Turkish military ordered Syria to evict Öcalan in the fall of 1998, and amassed ten thousand troops along the Syrian border to show the seriousness of their request. Asad did expel Öcalan, but not back to Turkey. Instead, a wild goose chase ensued as Öcalan was briefly given safe haven in Russia, welcomed as a hero by leftists and Kurds in Italy, finally captured in Kenya after being sheltered at the Greek Embassy in Nairobi, and brought back to Turkey to face trial in February, 1999. The trial was underway by May, and though almost everyone expected the death sentence to be handed down, no one was prepared for Öcalan's monologue on the first afternoon of the trial. Abandoning the revolutionary principles and demands for Kurdish independence he had long espoused, Öcalan stated:

Now is the time to end this conflict, or it will get much worse. I want to dedicate my life to bringing Kurds and Turks together... We want to give up the armed

struggle and have full democracy. I will work with the Republic of Turkey toward the goal of peace and brotherhood... I call on both sides to stop the bloodshed... Turkey's future is at stake... Barriers against the Kurdish language and culture should be removed... give the Kurds linguistic and cultural freedom. Kurds should not hesitate to use this democratic chance in the best way possible. I call upon the state not to block the way. (Kinzer 126-127)

Suddenly, after fourteen years of an incredibly costly war, after the destruction of over three thousand villages and the displacement of millions of Kurds, and after the deaths of over 37,000 Turkish soldiers, Kurdish guerillas, civil servants and civilians, the fighting was over (Bird 304-305). Öcalan was handed the death sentence, which was later commuted to life in prison at the request of European leaders who Turkey was looking to appease for future EU membership. PKK fighters honored Öcalan's request for a ceasefire, and peace returned to the southeast, despite a continued Turkish military presence.

Öcalan's call for Kurdish democratic rights within a peaceful Turkey was a significant departure from the PKK's revolutionary principles. But the idea appeals to many Kurds, far more than the idea of independent Kurdish statehood in the chaotic Middle East ever did, and the European Union has made improved human rights and democratic reform in Turkey's Kurdish regions a key sticking point for Turkish membership. Kemalist Turks still find the idea of granting the long-unruly Kurds full democratic rights an affront to the unity of Turkey and a bitter pill to swallow, but the Turkish government continues to face increased pressure from the international community to improve its record of human rights and work toward the UN's Millennium Development Goals. The Justice and Development Party, which came to power in 2002,

has put addressing these priorities at the top of its list as the path toward Turkey's future membership in the EU.

The leader of the Justice and Development Party, and the current Prime Minister, Tayyip Erdoğan, has straddled the fence on the issue; in August 2005, he promised increased democratic opportunity for Turkey's Kurds as a way to appease the Kurdish population and end renewed PKK violence fueled by war in Iraq. It is a promise which has yet to fully manifest itself. Though Erdoğan has made conciliatory gestures such as lifting the ban on Kurdish-language teaching and radio and television broadcasts, Turkish bureaucracy still makes it difficult for Kurds to implement such programs. The Kurdish parliamentary party, DEHAP, is kept under close scrutiny, and though it took 6 percent of the vote in the 2002 parliamentary elections, it was conveniently kept out of parliament since a party must take at least 10 percent of the nationwide vote to hold a parliamentary seat. Recovering from the destruction of war has been no easy feat for Kurds either. Over 104,000 Kurds applied for compensation from the government for wartime losses under a 2005 law, of which only 5,239 were considered, and only 1,190 individuals paid before the deadline for consideration passed (Survey of Turkey 16).

Turkey is certainly not the only country to proceed slowly down the road of resolving sectarian violence. It does, however, have incredible natural and economic resources at its disposal to speed up the processes of reconciliation-- the GAP has the potential to smooth the waters (both literal and figurative) between Turkish and Kurdish

factions by bringing Southeast Anatolia up to snuff with the rest of Turkey. If the GAP can contribute to a more stable Kurdish region, perhaps the Kemalists of Turkey would not have to worry about continued Kurdish separatist intentions, and would therefore be more comfortable granting Kurds their democratic rights. The next chapter assesses the success of the GAP and notes where there is room for improvement, particularly in relation to improving Kurdish rights in Southeast Anatolia.

Chapter Four

The GAP's Progress and Setbacks

4.1: Measuring Progress towards the GAP's Original Goals

The GAP's progress towards achieving its original goals of power generation and increased agricultural output is easily measured quantitatively, though to solve some of the problems that have arisen, GAP administrators have been challenged to think creatively. Electric output goals are on track, and the government keeps pressing ahead with its waterworks projects despite setbacks from a poor Turkish economy in the past few years. As of the end of 2001, three quarters of GAP's energy program had been completed, and GAP dams were generating 13 percent of all Turkish-generated electricity and 43 percent of its hydroelectricity (Mango, *Turks Today*, 227). This was despite that a 1999 drought (the worst for the Upper Euphrates Basin in twenty years) had put the Atatürk Barajı at close to an operational minimum in 2000. Southeastern villages that previously had no electricity, particularly those in the Harran plain near Şanlıurfa, have become part of the power grid under the GAP.

Implementing irrigation plans has been a slower and far more complicated process than electricity production. Only 215,000 hectares of the GAP's planned 1.6 million is currently under irrigation. Over half of this irrigated land is concentrated in the Harran plain and is fed by irrigation tunnels from the Atatürk Barajı. The

quadrupling of irrigated land since 1995 in Urfa province (from 30,000 ha to 120,000 ha in 2003) has had incredible transforming effects (Boshara 73). Land that used to be dry and brown is now green and flourishing with crops. The gross agricultural output value for the region has increased from \$31.5 million a year before irrigation to \$277.4 million a year in 2001. After production costs are taken out of this value, this sum amounts to \$1,536 per person in the province, almost triple the amount before 1995. Even if uneven land distribution in the province amounts to uneven profit distribution, sharecroppers are still making more money than before irrigation systems were in place. The number of new tractors in the region, and the increasing ability of sharecroppers to buy automobiles and household items such as televisions, washing machines and refrigerators, speaks to this new economic boom. But for the landless classes, spending money on such items can sometimes leave households without any money for part of the year, and they are forced to borrow cash at exorbitant rates (89). Investing in their own land would improve the long-term prospects of many sharecroppers, but improving the immediate quality of life seems to be a higher priority.

Current crops in heavy production are wheats and barleys, tobacco, sugar beet and cotton, and agricultural export profits continue to increase (Shales 333). Though the GAP Master Plan, in the interest of crop diversification, called for cotton to make up only 25 percent of irrigated crops, cotton has quickly become the predominant crop, accounting for 72 percent of irrigated crops and making the GAP region the producer of 40 percent of Turkey's cotton from 1996-1999. Heavy cotton production is popular

because of its high returns to farmers, but has proved a great detriment to the land. Crops such as cereal can be produced without heavy irrigation, but cotton cultivation requires large amounts of water. Since farmers are not charged by the amount of water they use but rather by the number of hectares they farm and are uneducated in proper irrigation techniques, they tend to over-water even cotton crops. Current irrigation tactics are causing drainage and soil salinity problems as well as significant loss of water to evaporation and soil absorption (due to poor irrigation canals) (Yazar). GAP and DSI officials are concerned that more precise water conservation methods will be vital to preventing soil degradation in the region. Pressurized pipe systems, though 50 percent more costly than current systems, are planned for future irrigation projects to reduce salinity build-up in the soil. Water supply associations are also considering moving to a volume-based pricing system for water delivery.

Potential climate change and its effect on crop yields is another reason for irrigation techniques to improve quickly. Diyarbakır has not seen snow for the past five years, though snow used to come regularly in winter, which is a sign that climate change is already happening in the southeast (Survey of Turkey 15). The region is not naturally water-rich and it may be dangerous to make the area artificially productive on such a large scale. A projected two degree Celsius rise in average temperatures in the coming years will lower the soil moisture despite current irrigation in the region, and crop production may be limited without supplying even more water (Komuscu 543). Ali Komuscu suggests further crop diversity and the exploration of better dry-farming

methods and more advanced methods of water management. However, with an economic crisis on its hands and only a 48% return on money invested in the project so far, the Turkish government seems to prefer putting projects in place to start them yielding a profit, and improving them later (Southeastern Anatolia).

The GAP-RDA is also working to implement responsible and effective irrigation techniques by educating farmers through the Management, Operation and Maintenance (MOM) Project. Started in Urfa in 1993, the program was put on hold from 1994-1997 while Turkey struggled economically. It has since restarted, but is still working to repair the damage wrought by improper education to farmers during the initial years of irrigation. In 1992, 71 percent of Urfa's population migrated outside the region for cotton and citrus harvests, primarily to Adana. With the addition of irrigation water to Urfa in 1994 (and no MOM program in place), farmers started cultivating what they knew-- cotton-- and became set in their ways, since cotton crops were enough to pay the ağa and their bills for the year, and required only six months of work on the farm (the rest of a farmer's year could be spent living more comfortably in the city). By 2000, only 12 percent migrated outside the region for work, and Urfa had become the southeast's prime migrant destination in a testament to the increased agricultural employment brought by the GAP. But the region's monoculture is taking a heavy toll on the land. Over 3,000 cultivatable hectares in the province have been lost to salty soil and high water tables, and many farmers still will not switch to crop diversification. This may be partially due to the lack of storage, transportation and marketing available for

perishable foodstuffs such as peppers, tomatoes, eggplants, and soybeans (which actually are bigger moneymakers than cotton), and the government's continued cotton subsidies. MOM has been trying to convince the government to encourage private companies to build food products plants as incentive for farmers to diversify crops. More farmer training is also having some impact-- one president of a water association in Urfa said that in 2003, 95 percent of the land in his district was used to grow cotton, but more educated farmers are now choosing to diversify, and cotton cultivation now only takes up 30 percent of the land. The MOM Project may be put to even better use with a fresh start in Diyarbakır, which will eventually have 500,000 ha of newly-irrigated land. Farmers there are eager to avoid the mistakes of farmers in Urfa, and MOM is anxious to make sure the farmers have a vested interest in starting sustainable irrigation techniques (Boshara 111).

4.2: Measuring Progress Towards Achieving the GAP's Human Development Goals

The international community regards improving the situation of the people in the GAP region (and hopefully stabilizing the Kurdish situation) as an issue that deserves international concern and support. While Turkey has carried most of the financial burden in developing water works and agriculture, the economic and social development aspects of the GAP have been supported by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Project (UNDP) and many other NGOs (Harris 746). The United Nations, through its Millennium Development Goals, is challenging countries worldwide to

reduce poverty and improve the health, education and living standards for their populations. To reach such goals, the United Nations has been willing to help Turkey overcome obstacles to human development in the southeast, such as a 68.8 percent regional literacy rate, which lags well behind the national average of 85.6 percent. The major vehicle for such change has been the UNDP GAP Umbrella Project, that focuses on issues of gender, environment, livelihoods, and poverty, has a budget of \$5.4 million which it is using in projects to promote sustainable development around the region (United Nations, "Southeast"). Projects under the Umbrella include increasing access for rural children to secondary schools through the establishment of a school bussing system, increasing youth participation in local communities, providing health care education and family planning to women, and analyzing Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs) to "identify this sector's potential contributions to local economic growth and expansion of their labour absorption capacity" (United Nations). The development of SMEs is designed to encourage people to stay in small to medium-sized cities so the larger urban centers are not overtaxed with people seeking employment. The promotion of small-scale farming in villages is one possibility in the implementation of SMEs, but at present, 10 percent of the region's population owns 75 percent of the land, and land redistribution does not figure into any part of the GAP, making this a fairly unrealistic possibility unless newly irrigated land is given to landless villagers (Harris 749).

GAP not only has created an agricultural boom in the region but has also brought greater industrial production to the southeast. The Turkish government offers incentives

to industrial investors in the region such as tax breaks and the reduction or elimination of licensing fees. The hope is that outside investors will improve the regional infrastructure and bring in expertise in areas such as urban development, water treatment, telecommunications and building the electric grid (Boshara 57). It might also benefit the Turkish government to offer these companies incentives to hire locally. The shrinking number of jobs in agriculture over the past few decades, the number of landless farmers, and the added brutality of the civil war in the countryside has meant a massive population shift in the southeast from small villages to urban areas (Table 1 illustrates the population's en masse movement to Southeast Anatolian cities).

Table 1: GAP Regional population by province and rural/urban distribution
(source: SIS)

	1985			1990			1997			2000			Growth
Province	Population	Urban%	Rural %	Population	Urban%	Rural%	Population	Urban%	Rural%	Population	Urban%	Rural%	1990-2000
Adiyaman	430728	36.7	63.3	510827	43.5	56.5	679067	58.1	41.9	623811	54.3	45.7	22.10%
Batman	N/A	51.3	48.8	344121	56.6	43.4	400380	68.2	31.8	446719	68.4	31.6	29.80%
Diyarbakir	934505	51.5	48.5	1096447	54.3	45.7	1282678	64.9	35.1	1364209	60	40	24.40%
Gaziantep	966490	67.4	32.6	1010396	73.1	26.9	1127686	76.8	23.2	1293849	78.7	21.3	28.00%
Mardin	652069	41.1	58.9	558275	44.6	55.4	646826	56.1	43.9	705098	55.5	44.5	26.30%
Siirt	524741	39.7	60.3	243435	45.3	54.7	262371	60.5	39.5	264778	58.4	41.6	8.80%
Sanliurfa	795034	51.2	48.8	1001455	55.1	44.9	1303589	60.2	39.8	1436956	58.4	41.6	43.50%
Simak	N/A	34	66	262006	47.8	52.2	316536	59.1	40.9	354061	60	40	35.10%
Kilis	N/A	N/A	N/A	130198	67	33	N/A	N/A	N/A	114724	65.4	34.6	-11.90%
GAP Region	4303567	47.6	52.4	5158013	55.6	44.4	6129041	64.1	35.9	6604205	62.9	37.1	28.00%
Turkey	50664458	55.8	44.5	56473035	59	41	62865574	65.1	34.9	67844903	65	35	20.10%

Even those who are seasonal migrant farmers tend to spend part of the year in the city, and the population shift to the cities will probably increase in coming years, particularly since the agricultural benefits of the GAP will partially diminish over time (as has been the history of other large-scale dam projects such as Egypt's Aswan Dam). A population

shift of this size makes implementing the human development components of the GAP essential to meeting the needs of newly-urbanized Kurds, and reducing incentives for sectarian violence. The Turkish government hopes to create 3.2 million new jobs through the completion of the GAP project, but these jobs may not particularly benefit the Kurdish population if they require technical expertise beyond the abilities of the region's undereducated population (Foreign). Since unemployed youth are some of the most willing recruits for the PKK, and the creation of more urban jobs may be a prime deterrent for Kurds to support the separatist movement, providing a strong education that prepares youth for such jobs is of vital importance.

The national education system in Turkey has expanded significantly in recent years as the number of universities has grown to 78 (some of these appearing in the Southeast), more students are choosing to stay in Turkey for their education, and 2004 signaled the first year Turkey's education budget was larger than that of its armed forces (Survey of Turkey 16). Despite these improvements, the greatest challenges to the education system in Southeast Anatolia is the lack of access to schools for rural children and the inability of poor families to send their children (particularly girls) to school. Seasonal migrants living in villages for only half a year may find it difficult to afford the costs of sending their children great distances to attend school, especially when they are not in one place for the duration of the school year. A 1998 World Bank survey of thirty-five villages found that over half of the children of primary school age were not enrolled, primarily due to either inadequate or a complete lack of school buildings (Kudat 266).

Children are often seen as more useful working in the fields than studying in school, causing them to lose several months of school instruction (Harris 754). Children are also more prone to fall ill from poor health conditions in the villages, further reducing their abilities to go to school; increased agricultural production is causing problems with malaria-infected mosquitoes and exposure to pesticides, and poor drinking water breeds diarrhea and typhoid fever (Kudat 266). In conjunction with provincial governors, a World Bank/Turkish Social Solidarity Fund program is attempting to keep children healthy and in school by offering cash payments as incentives to low-income families who send their children to school and get their infants vaccinated. The school program provides poor mothers with monthly payments of \$15-20 per child based on attendance. While payments are given for children of both sexes, girls who stay in school receive larger grants in an attempt to reduce gender gaps in regional education (Survey of Turkey 16). Such programs appear to be making a difference amongst younger generations where despite continued low literacy rates in rural areas in the Urfa province, the percentage of literate girls (46 percent) has caught up to and actually exceeded the percentage of literate boys (41 percent) (Kudat 265).

The need for a reduction in gender inequality extends beyond the sphere of formal education. Though women have had equal rights under the law in all respects since the early days of the Turkish Republic, and despite the widespread presence of female PKK fighters (possibly due to the liberal Alevi attitudes towards women), attitudes and practices towards most women, as mentioned in Chapter Two, are more

conservative and traditional than in other parts of the country. It is difficult to imagine a great future for gender empowerment when 84% of men surveyed in the Şanlıurfa villages said that women (who do many of the household and agricultural chores) do not need training in irrigation methods and water management techniques, training that could give them the abilities to become engaged in small-scale enterprise or family money management (Kudat 272). Even in the cities of the southeast, men are far more prevalent in public life. To empower women in the home and in the business sector, the GAP Social Action Plan, with support from UNICEF, has provided for Multi-Purpose Community Centers (ÇATOM by their Turkish acronym) since 1995 to provide education, skills training, and social programs for girls and women, ages 14-51. By the end of 2001, twenty-three active ÇATOM's in eight of the GAP provinces had reached over 60,000 urban women through their programs, and many others at the village level (Boshara 68). ÇATOM's train women in health and family planning services, child care, proper nutrition, home economics activities such as carpet-making, canning, sewing and handicrafts, and teach computer skills or hairdressing. The centers not only give women the chance to socialize more outside the home, but give them the chance to earn an income with the skills they learn through the clinic. Centers offer consulting services on how to start up businesses such as textile workshops, and some women are able to contribute significantly to their family's income. Though women may only make a few hundred dollars annually through such work, such a sum makes up a significant amount of the average family income of \$3,940, and such a contribution may give a woman a

much greater say in family affairs and decisions such as marriage. The complaints ÇATOM directors have are typical of NGO's everywhere: the lack of funding makes it difficult to expand their services to other places they are needed. More funding would allow clinics could provide childcare, giving more women the chance to attend ÇATOM's, and more services could be initiated outside the urban center where they are desperately needed (71).

4.3 The GAP's Sustainability in Relation to the Kurds

So far, this chapter has examined the relative success of various GAP projects, but how has the GAP affected the Kurdish situation in the region? Many Kurds are happy at the opening of more jobs, rising incomes and the chance to escape some of the poverty within the region (Harris 755). But opportunity is not reaching all Kurds in the southeast, and some are becoming quite disaffected as the construction of more GAP projects disrupts their familiar lifestyles. The most recent project on the GAP's agenda, the Ilisu Dam, will submerge the important Kurdish cultural site of Hasankeyf and require the forced resettlement of as many as 34,000 local people (Smith; Bird 343). Most of this population is Kurdish, and although the government is offering them compensation to leave their villages to flooding, many do not see leaving their homes as a positive contribution to their lifestyle (Foreign; Smith). The resettlement issue has cost the GAP some of its funding. Under pressure from human rights and environmentalist groups, some countries and contractors have withdrawn support of the project (Smith). A campaign put together by various NGOs and Kurdish activist movements forced the

British company, Balfour Beatty to withdraw its funding in 2002, a crucial move in halting project construction. Not prone to tarnish its own reputation while aggressively seeking European Union membership, the federal government has promised to address these concerns, and the Ilisu Dam project has been sidelined for the past few years (though German company Siemens might now be taking the project on). But determination to continue what they have started has meant that even voices of protest have done little to put back the government's wider GAP production schedule.

The Kurdish relocation issue posed by the Ilisu project is touted by international advocacy groups and Kurds alike as the government using the GAP as an opportunity to quiet the Kurdish population's quest for rights, all under the veil of modernizing the region. The implementation of GAP projects along the border regions has provided an excuse (other than the presence of PKK fighters) for the military to provide extra monitoring in historic areas of instability. Educational opportunities are improving, but the language of instruction remains Turkish in most cases. The economic situation is also improving, but increased industry influx in the area has brought outsiders in, which some Kurds claim is a plot to reduce the large Kurdish concentration in the population (Harris 753). Not all GAP provinces will benefit equally from the project. While social services can be implemented in all of the GAP provinces, provinces with more arable land are bound to produce more employment opportunities and economic revenue. In the 1980s, Adiyaman had already cultivated 97 percent of its arable land, and mountainous Siirt, which is a hotbed for Kurdish separatist activity, has low-quality arable land, and little of

it (Kolars 58).

The attitudes of Turkey's Kurds are also influenced and affected by international forces, particularly the actions of Turkey's neighbors, Syria and Iraq. Turkey's damming projects have resulted in an 80 percent reduction in the flow of the Euphrates on Iraqi territory and a 40 percent reduction on Syrian territory. These rivers are of significant importance to otherwise water-scarce Syria and Iraq, but Turkey's superior military and economic strength has meant that Syria and Iraq have been unsuccessful at getting Turkey to sign any kind of trilateral agreement on water distribution (Harris 745). Turkey has also refused to ratify the Law of Non-Navigable Uses of International Watercourses, lest the Tigris and Euphrates be declared as "international waterways," and not the "trans-boundary rivers" Turkey dubs them, meaning outside countries would pay less to import the water from Turkey, and Iraq and Syria might have more of a say in how much water they receive (Yetim). With a current arrangement from a 1987 protocol which was drawn up according to World Bank statistics on Syria's water needs, Syria receives 500 cubic meters per second of Euphrates water, an amount Turkey has provided, and sometimes exceeded, in times of crisis with Syria (Aras & Koni 49). The region's current drought, however has meant at times that Syria receives only 75 cubic meters per second, such as in September 2000. Turkey has been encouraged by the United States and the UN to work toward a tri-lateral water agreement with Syria and Iraq, but has yet to do so.

Though Turkey holds superior economic and military power in the region, it has

managed to avoid entering any kind of water agreement. The Turkish government needs to be cautious, however, with how it approaches water issues with Syria and Iraq, since poor relations could be detrimental to Turkey's Kurdish situation. Syria's support of the PKK and harboring of Abdullah Öcalan has already been given some attention in Chapter Three. The power given to Kurds in the new Iraqi government will certainly have an effect on the desires of the Kurdish population in Turkey, and therefore the GAP, though the current instability and unpredictability in Iraq makes it hard to draw any concrete predictions as to what kind of changes these may be. The war had meant reduced trade between southeastern Turkey and Iraq, and increased PKK activity along the border regions in the past year and a half. Andrew Mango suggests that even with all of the progress the GAP has made in developing the region, only a more stable Iraq and Syria can allow the southeast truly to develop, and give the Turkish government the peace of mind to allow more Kurdish rights.

4.4: Conclusions

If a stable Middle East is the final piece in the puzzle of creating sustainable development and increasing Kurdish rights in Turkey, then resolution is certainly a long way off. This should not, however, prevent Turkey from taking steps toward resolving those issues which it has control over. The results of recent poll by Dicle University (located in the primarily Kurdish city of Diyarbakır) of 876 Diyarbakır residents found that over 90 percent of respondents felt there was a "Kurdish issue" in Turkey, and most

of these respondents felt it was the largest problem currently facing Turkey. There is no one solution to the “Kurdish problem,” though the GAP has helped Turkey in the right direction. Improvements in areas of education (particularly women’s education), literacy, health care, and community-building can universally be considered positive, and the work being done to counter the negative effects of environmental degradation and rapid urbanization is promising. But the GAP alone is not enough to solve the Kurdish issue, particularly since many Kurds have moved outside the GAP region in recent decades. If greater democratic rights are the solution to appeasing the Kurds (as Erdoğan claims they are), then a certain amount of government decentralization could be beneficial. Locally electing regional and provincial executives and legislators and reducing the percentage of votes necessary for a party to hold parliamentary seats, would give Kurds greater vested interest in their government.

Kurds who want to move up in Turkish society have been forced into abandoning their Kurdish heritage for the past 83 years, and the many violent rebellions against Turkish authority since the founding of the republic is a telling sign that they are tired of suppressing their ethnic identity. As part of its recent push for EU membership, the Turkish government ratified both the 1976 UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in December of 2003, which allow for a people’s right to self-determination within a country through representative and internal forms, but not through secession. No doubt Turkey’s previous lack of ratification stemmed from Kemalist tendencies to suspect any form of

self-determination that is not “Turkish,” and the recent ratification is a promising sign that Turkey may at last be planning to acknowledge the diverse backgrounds of the Turkish people. Now is the time for Turkey to move toward recognizing its multicultural heritage, and the Kurds would certainly be an ideal place to start. Most Turkish Kurds do not harbor separatist intentions-- they would merely like the ability to freely celebrate their cultural identity as they participate in wider Turkish society. Without granting Kurds such cultural rights, however, those who support separatist tendencies could grow in numbers. In a 1995 speech, then Prime Minister Tansu Çiller revived one of Atatürk’s sayings with a twist when she stated, “Happy is one who can say one is a citizen of Turkey.” The GAP has started the process of transforming Southeast Anatolia into a region that can catch up with the rest of Turkey and consider itself happy to be part of the Turkish state. If the Turkish government is willing to grant Kurds additional cultural rights and ethnic recognition, then the combination of progress through sustainable development and freedom of expression may be just what Kurds need to be satisfied citizens of the Turkish republic.

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