A Project of Destruction, Peace, or Techno-Science? Untangling the Relationship Between the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) and the Kurdish Question in Turkey[1]

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Abstract

The Southeastern Anatolia Project (*Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi,* GAP) was initiated in the 1970s to produce energy and irrigate arid lands through constructing dams and hydroelectric power plants on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers and extensive irrigation networks in southeastern Turkey. Over time, the project was expanded to achieve a wider range of goals in different fields and radically transform the Southeastern Anatolia Region. It is also widely claimed that GAP was initiated to address the root causes of the Kurdish question in Turkey and that security considerations and political calculations were actually the *raison d'être* of GAP. However, this supposed link between GAP and the Kurdish question was often established in a simplistic manner and the question how these two have been related – or not – remained largely untangled. This article aims to fill this research gap and examine the complex and multi-dimensional nature of the interrelationship between GAP and the Kurdish question based on diverse primary and secondary data sources. Accordingly, the article identifies and discusses major narratives in which GAP was conceived as a political and strategic 'anti-Kurdish' plot; remedy for the conflict; and totally technical non-political project and presents an alternative and more accurate perspective on how to interpret this relationship.

Keywords: development; security; Kurdish question; the Southeastern Anatolia Project; GAP; Turkey

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Introduction

Turkey's modernization process has been marked by the strong will of the Turkish state to ensure the development of the whole country and bring about integration and homogenization in political, economic, social, and cultural spheres at the national level since the inception of the country in 1923, or even earlier, since the first modernization attempts of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. Especially integration and homogenization were sought and given significant importance, as modern Turkey inherited a predominantly agricultural economy marked by an almost non-existent workforce, a low production and productivity level, and a low number of industrial plants the majority of which were owned by foreign businesses. Also, intensified interaction between specific regions in the Ottoman Empire and European markets in the nineteenth century led to the growth of port cities while decreasing the significance of central and eastern Anatolian cities.[1] The investments and industries were concentrated in more suitable regions due to climatic and geographical conditions, leaving some regions marginalized and deprived of scientific and technological benefits.[2] For this reason, dispersing the population and services throughout the country and reducing the long-standing disparities between inner and coastal as well as eastern and western regions have been crucial for the state to fulfill its regional policy and modernization goals.[3]

Even though a wide range of modernizing reforms and development policies were implemented and many different development plans, programs, and projects were formulated to this end throughout decades, it would not be far-fetched to claim that the Southeastern Anatolia Project (*Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi,* GAP) has been the most ambitious project in this regard. Accordingly, GAP was initiated in the 'underdeveloped' Southeastern Anatolia Region, or GAP region, in the 1970s as a technical project primarily to produce energy and irrigate 1.8 million hectares of arid lands through constructing 22 dams and 19 hydroelectric power plants (HPPs) in various sizes on Euphrates and Tigris rivers and extensive irrigation networks therein. Over time, the project has evolved into a more comprehensive – and arguably more ambitious – scheme to transform the political, social, economic, and cultural landscape of the GAP region and reshape the mindset of its local population, which corresponded to around 10 per cent of Turkey's overall surface area and population. As expected, GAP included a wide range of goals and objectives such as producing energy, irrigating lands, improving agricultural and industrial production and efficiency, raising the infrastructural standards, rationally utilizing the natural resources of the GAP region, reducing regional disparities, raising the socio-economic standards of the local population, preventing migration from the GAP region, and eliminating the remnants of feudalism and land ownership inequality. In

addition to these, it is also widely – and without much questioning – acknowledged that GAP was initiated to address the root causes of the long-standing and ongoing Kurdish question[4] in Turkey and/or complement the state's military efforts to solve the conflict. Some even claimed that security considerations were actually GAP's *raison d'être*, as it was postulated that the sole and targeted function of the project was to destroy the ecology, history, culture, and identity in the densely Kurdish-populated GAP region.

However, a closer examination of relevant policy-making debates and scholarly works of the past four decades indicates that the supposed link between GAP and the Kurdish question has been established and discussed in a simplistic and straightforward manner so far. In other words, the question as to how GAP and the conflict have been related to each other – if related at all – has not been adequately answered and remained largely untangled in the literature. Such an examination also points out that a dominant majority of existing works have relied not on primary and empirical data, but rather on secondary data, anecdotal sources, and even non-scholarly works that were produced chiefly for propaganda, advocacy, or conspiracy purposes. This article[5] aims to fill this research gap and comprehensively discuss how the interrelationship between GAP and the Kurdish question was conceived and narrated in written and spoken texts since the initiation of the project in the 1970s. Based on multiple data sources such as GAP-related proceedings of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, TBMM) from 1975–2014, the archival resources of the GAP Regional Development Administration (*GAP Bölgesel Kalkınma İdaresi*, GAP-BKİ), and 64 semi-structured interviews with politicians, bureaucrats, experts, intellectuals, and similar elite groups within the Turkish state mechanism, the article examines the major narratives in which GAP was conceived as a (1) strategic 'anti-Kurdish' plot, (2) remedy for the conflict, and (3) totally neutral and non-political development project and discusses their implications. In the following, after providing a concise history of the Kurdish question in Turkey, I present how GAP has been discussed in the context of the Kurdish question so far in the literature. Following this, I elaborate on each narrative and afterwards discuss through what kind of alternative perspectives they can be evaluated and what kind of inferences can be drawn from them. In the final section, I make the concluding remarks of the article.

A Concise History of the Kurdish Question in Turkey

The Kurdish question has been one of the most complex problems of modern Turkey. To briefly explain its roots, the Kurds held a semi-autonomous status during the Ottoman Empire, as it was built on religious, ethnic, and linguistic heterogeneity. Under the *millet* (nation)

system, religion was the only criterion for the definition of a minority group. *Millet* had a different meaning then, as 'nationality' under the Ottoman rule referred to people's membership in a religious community. For this reason, Muslims formed the Islamic community under the rule of the sultan and caliph.[6] Kurdish feudal lords and leaders were also part of this community and identified themselves as Muslims regardless of their ethnicity.

In the nineteenth century, intra-tribal conflicts among the Kurds and the Ottoman state's efforts to extend its control throughout the empire for a more modernized and centralized state structure led to unrest among the Kurds.[7] Following the First World War, the Treaty of Sèvres between the Allied powers and the Ottoman Empire partitioned the empire and granted Kurds an autonomous Kurdistan in 1920. However, this treaty was never implemented and led to the War of Independence in 1919 that would eventually establish the modern and unitary Turkish state in 1923. According to the Treaty of Lausanne – signed after the War of Independence in 1923 and which became the legal basis of Turkey's international recognition as an independent state – only Armenians, Greeks, and Jews as non-Muslims, were granted special minority and cultural rights.[8] In contrast to theocratic and cosmopolitan Ottoman society, 'Turkishness' was defined as an ethnic category in this nation-building process. In the words of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the new republic, the new form of government 'has changed the nature of the common ties among the members of the nation that persisted for centuries; instead of religious and sectarian ties, it now assembles the members of our nation through the bond of Turkish nationality'.[9] For this reason, modernizing reforms based primarily on secularism and Turkish ethnic identity were met with a backlash from the Kurds; there were 18 revolts from 1923–1938, among which the revolts of Sheikh Said in 1925; Ağrı between 1926–1930; and Dersim (renamed Tunceli) in 1937 were significantly serious. These revolts were brutally suppressed and the expression of Kurdish identity was heavily restricted afterwards.[10] In the words of Tarık Ziya Ekinci, the period between 1938–1950 represents 'the years when the political life was crippled and the history was silent in Kurdistan'.[11]

Beginning from the 1950s, Kurdish identity was gradually revived due to various factors such as transition to multiparty politics, population movements, and political and economic liberalization of the country. Also, the emerging Kurdish movement allied itself with the left-wing political movement in Turkish politics, especially with the Turkish Labor Party that openly recognized the existence of the Kurds in the political landscape and supported pro-Kurdish policies.[12] Towards the mid-1970s, the Kurdish leftist groups began to distance themselves from Turkish leftist groups on the grounds that their conception of the problem was different and their policy of socialist revolution was poor.[13] The Kurdistan Workers' Party

(*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan,* the PKK) was established in this context as a Marxist-Leninist organization under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan in 1978. Its primary goal was to fight against feudalism and colonialism and establish an independent and unified Kurdistan carved out of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey through a radical revolution and the use of violence.[14] However, since the first attack of the PKK in 1984, the demands of the Kurdish political movement changed in accordance with the domestic and international context. An independent Kurdistan, democratic republic, democratic confederalism, democratic autonomy, strengthening of local administrations, equal citizenship, recognition of cultural and language rights, and so on were demanded in different periods.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, (1) repressive policies towards the Kurds under the junta regime following the military coup in 1980, (2) violent and sensational activities of the PKK that further encouraged insurgency, (3) the influx of Kurdish refugees into Turkey due to the Iran-Iraq War between 1980–1988, (4) the rise of identity politics worldwide in the post-Cold War period, and (5) the establishment of a semi-autonomous Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq significantly increased the degree of Kurdish nationalism.[15] Following the capture and imprisonment of Öcalan in 1999, the conflict deescalated due to the PKK's ceasefire declaration until 2004. To conclude a peaceful solution to the conflict, a 'Kurdish Opening' was initiated in 2009 to grant Kurds more cultural rights and freedoms. In addition, several high-level meetings were held between the Turkish National Intelligence Organization and the PKK leadership in Europe between 2009–2011 in Oslo to discuss the demands of each party and negotiate peace. Even though this 'Oslo Process' collapsed in 2011, direct talks between the state and Öcalan continued and a ceasefire was declared in 2013. In this process, also referred to as the 'Peace Process', the state and Öcalan negotiated on a roadmap to end the conflict according to which the PKK would disarm and withdraw from Turkey and the Turkish state would make constitutional changes to grant Kurds political and cultural autonomy and improve the detention conditions of Öcalan. However, the Peace Process officially collapsed after, *inter alia*, the intensification of reciprocal distrust, hostilities, and violence in 2015. The re-escalation of the conflict once again led to the killing of hundreds of civilians, Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and police personnel, and PKK members; jailing of activists, journalists, and scholars; closure of newspapers, radios, television channels, and websites; and similar human rights abuses in 2016. Even though numbers vary, it is generally accepted that the low-intensity war between the state and the PKK caused the death of more than 40,000 civilians and soldiers, extrajudicial killing of around 5,000 people, displacement of one to four million people, and annihilation of around 4,000 villages.[16]

Indeed, the definitions of the Kurdish question vary. For instance, Mesut Yeğen argues that while the Kurdish question was actually an ethno-political problem, it was instead defined as a problem of political reaction, tribal resistance, and regional backwardness in the official Turkish state discourse.[17] More recently, in his analysis of discourses in the European Parliament, United States (US) Congress, and TBMM from 1990–1999, Hamid Akın Ünver demonstrates that the Kurdish question was defined as (1) a human rights problem, (2) a democratization problem, (3) an excessive force problem, (4) an ethnic-identity conflict, (5) a conflict intensified by TAF, and (6) a PKK terrorism problem.[18] At TBMM, its was further defined as a problem (7) intentionally created by the 'dark foreign powers', (8) fueled by the poor application of law or lawlessness, (9) exacerbated due to the mismanagement of the security forces in the region, and (10) emerged due to the lack of education, infrastructure, jobs, and poor living standards.[19] Given the multiplicity of perceptions, the state has taken more than one measure to address the problem such as maintenance of law and order for security and socio-economic reasons, the policy of non-recognition to suppress Kurdish identity, the creation of a modern state structure to rid the Kurds of the influence of sheikhs and tribal leaders, 'taming' the Kurds to prevent future revolts and integrating them into socio-economic and political life, and the creation of an effective public administration to provide goods and services in densely Kurdish-populated regions,[20] which would be directly or indirectly associated with the initiation of GAP.

GAP and the Kurdish Question in the Literature

GAP was initiated as a water and land resources development project to produce hydroelectric energy and irrigate arid lands in southeastern Turkey in the 1970s at a time when infrastructural and agricultural development were given privacy worldwide. In this period, GAP had a dominantly technical and engineering focus. For this reason, the project was administered by the General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (*Devlet Su İşleri Genel Müdürlüğü,* DSİ), which was established in 1954 to plan and manage Turkey's water resources. In the second half of the 1980s, the purely technical character of the project began to change after its environmental and social dimensions and implications also came to be acknowledged. In particular, the transfer of the responsibility to administer GAP from DSİ to the State Planning Organization (*Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı,* DPT), which was established in 1960 primarily to help governments design economic and social policies and formulate Five-Year Development Plans to redress regional development problems, played a decisive role in this shift. This shift brought the widening of the focus and scope of GAP and its redefinition as a multi-sectoral and

integrated project in the 1980s. Also in this period, GAP-BKİ was established to enable the better management of the project and given the responsibility and authority to engage in activities in planning, infrastructure, licensing, housing, industry, mining, agriculture, energy, transportation, and other services and ensure coordination among organizations. In line with the changing development discourses and practices worldwide, new concepts such as sustainability, participation, human development, and social development were injected into GAP framework in the 1990s. Thus, the project came to be defined as a sustainable human development project. In the 2000s, GAP became a highly market-oriented project thanks to the advancement of neoliberal restructuring of the Turkish political economy and spread of norms and concepts such as utilization of local potentials, prioritization of private sector investments, and competitiveness as an impact of Turkey's accession process to the European Union. In short, GAP gradually shifted from a state-led, purely technical, purely engineering, infrastructure-based, and economic development-oriented character to a market-friendly, sustainable, participatory, human-centered, and social development-oriented character over decades.

The question as to how GAP has so far contributed or would potentially contribute to complicate or solve the Kurdish question was widely discussed in the literature. To illustrate, in the 1990s, Carl E. Nestor focused on this and empirically examined the potential of GAP in terms of ensuring the socio-economic integration of the Kurds into the mainstream of Turkish state system and escalating/deescalating the conflict.[21] Later in the 2000s, Ali Çarkoğlu and Mine Eder emphasized that GAP-related domestic political concerns were in fact linked to Turkey's relations with Syria and Iraq as downstream countries and discussed how the Kurdish question was a such concern to be addressed through eliminating the economic causes of the conflict.[22] Towards the mid-2000s, Nilay Özok-Gündoğan indicated that, along with changing development discourses and practices at a global level, the escalating conflict between the state and the PKK played a significant role in the appearance of social development in the overall GAP framework in the 1990s as a complementary means of counter-insurgency and a social control mechanism in the GAP region.[23] In the 2010s, Joost Jongerden argued that dam construction was utilized as a means to fight against the PKK in various ways including using the Euphrates and the Tigris as a bargaining chip to force Syria and Iraq to cut their support to the PKK, providing socio-economic development to transform the Kurdish population, wiping out the history and culture of Kurds, and using dams as physical barriers against the mobility of the PKK.[24] Similarly, Robert Hatem and Mark Dohrmann argued that GAP actually 'erased' the Kurds, as the Turkish state has employed GAP as a tool to enable 'assimilation and

government control over an area that is notorious throughout Turkish history for being difficult to dominate' and 'permanent displacement of Kurdish populations and the destruction of Kurdish culture.'[25] Also, I discussed that linking security and development in GAP's context might not always lead to positive and expected outcomes and the link between two concepts in general and GAP and the Kurdish question in particular should be conceptualized in relative terms.[26]

The question as to how GAP has had or would have an impact on the historical and cultural heritage and resettlement of the local communities in the GAP region was also widely discussed. Even though the ancient sites of Birecik, Halfeti, Suruç, Bozova, and Rumkale attracted scholarly attention, arguably the destructive effects of Birecik and Ilısu dams on the ancient sites of Zeugma and Hasankeyf respectively attracted more attention beginning from the late 1990s. Regarding heritage, arguably one of the earliest oppositions to Ilısu Dam was voiced by Kurdish activists based in Europe such as the Kurdish Human Rights Project.[27] In the early 2000s, Mehmet Kömürcü focused on large dam projects that could endanger heritages from the perspective of international law and discussed the threats to Zeugma and Hasankeyf as well as legal instruments and the responsibility of the international community to protect such heritages.[28] About a decade later, Emrah Yalçın examined the water potential of the Tigris and Ilısu Dam from the perspective of civil engineering and proposed the construction of five small dams instead of a mega dam to save Hasankeyf from flooding with minor economic losses.[29] Recently, Muriel Girard and Clémence Scalbert-Yücel critically examined how different conceptualization of heritage by different governmental and non-governmental actors became a site of contestation among 'heritage actors' and how the heritage action led to redeployment of state power, normalization of government methods, and standardization in the GAP region.[30]

As for migration and resettlement, it is noteworthy that the Department of Sociology at Middle Eastern Technical University conducted the study *Population Movements in GAP Region* in 1994 to find out about migration patterns and characteristics of migration-giving and migration-receiving settlements, determine how GAP would influence migration, and make projections about future trends.[31] Also, a survey was conducted by the Sociology Association in the same year in the areas where Karakaya, Hancağız, Hacıhıdır, Atatürk, Dicle, Kralkızı, and Batman dams had affected the local population to find the most viable solution to relocate them with minimum losses and encourage them to make productive investments with their expropriated sum.[32] The findings of this study was also used in the project run by GAP-BKİ between 1997–2000 to ensure participatory and sustainable resettlement and employment

processes for the local population affected by the construction of Birecik Dam.[33] In the 2000s, Behrooz Morvaridi discussed the construction process of Ilısu Dam and displacement of the local population and critically assessed the state's approach towards the local population specifically in relation to the Kurdish question.[34] More recently, Çiğdem Kurt qualitatively explored the social impacts of GAP on internally displaced families in Halfeti from a gendered perspective and specifically focused on how resettlement influenced the status, roles, daily routines, relations, and life patterns of women and men and their interaction vis-à-vis each other.[35]

It is also worth noting that some critical studies also discussed GAP-related state practices and their implications in the context of the Kurdish question. For instance, Kerem Öktem discussed to what extent GAP has become successful in terms of providing solutions to political and socio-economic problems in GAP region; led to unforeseen consequences and even worsened socio-economic inequalities; and been an extension of past development policies towards the GAP region.[36] Alexandra M. Pool and Velma I. Grover focused on conceptions and arguments of different governmental and non-governmental actors who were involved in the decision-making process within GAP and examined how they had an impact on the power dynamics and governance of GAP in the context of the Kurdish question.[37] Similarly, in her ethnographic studies, Leila M. Harris examined how the introduction of irrigated farming had an impact on the reach of the state, perception and understandings of the state practices in the eyes of rural population, and interaction between rural population and the state.[38] More recently, Lena Hommes, Rutgerd Boelens, and Harro Maat examined how different state and non-state actors such as state elites, environmentalists, and the Kurdish community imagined different 'hydrosocial' territories with regard to Ilısu Dam and how they managed to justify or deny the dam in accordance with their interests through building multi-actor and multi-scale coalitions.[39] Together with the coverage of the relevant literature, the examination of empirical data indicates that three major narratives on the relationship between GAP and the Kurdish question can be identified.

Narrative 1: GAP is a Strategic 'Anti-Kurdish' Plot

According to the first narrative, which has been prevalent specifically among the Kurdish political and intellectual elites from the Kurdish political movement, GAP was initiated to intentionally and strategically inflict harm on the Kurds in general and the PKK in particular. Accordingly, GAP was a project of exploitation, assimilation, ecological and historical destruction, and repression. To elaborate on each claim, from this perspective, GAP was

essentially anti-Kurdish on the grounds that it has systematically transferred natural and human resources of the GAP region – or generally Kurdistan in the lexicon of most Kurdish elites – to western Turkey.[40] The claim that there was a one-way flow of resources from eastern and southeastern Turkey to the center existed before the initiation of GAP, though. It has long been emphasized that transportation, communication, trade, and banking systems enabled and facilitated the natural and human resources flow out of the region.[41] To illustrate these claims, a member of parliament (MP) who represented Hakkâri underlined that

> the approach and strategy of the state [was] entirely on energy production. … The state got what it wanted. GAP paid for itself. It even made profit. … [However], only 20% of irrigation projects [were] realized. Because the state's strategy [was] to extract from there, we describe[d] it as an exploitation project. They extract[ed] the resources there and use[d] them in western parts of Turkey. For this reason, GAP's contribution to the local population [was] almost zero.[42]

GAP was found essentially anti-Kurdish also on the grounds that it has contributed to 'Turkification' or 'de-Kurdification' of the local population. In this regard, Abdullah Öcalan himself underlined that when 'the background of HPPs and projects in Kurdistan' and capital behind them were examined, one could realize that '[Kurds] face[d] a serious de-Kurdification policy.'[43] Similarly, an MP who represented Diyarbakır underlined that 'GAP [was] a political and social transformation project,' as an important statesman [sic] from the State Security Court once told him in the 1990s that 'whenever Kurdish women [would] start dying their hair blonde, Kurdish problem [would] be solved'.[44]

Also, GAP was found anti-Kurdish for allegedly destroying Kurdish culture, history, and ecology. For Öcalan, GAP and similar development projects were 'similar to how ultra-nationalists kill[ed] leftists', as 'HPPs kill[ed] the nature. Here, there [was] an ecological massacre. … See Botan, Dersim, every corner [was] flooded. They buil[t] HPPs everywhere on Tigris. [Yet,] there [was] no electricity in Urfa.'[45] Similarly, a Kurdish MP who represented Şanlıurfa claimed that the Turkish state intentionally destroyed Samsat, Halfeti, and Hasankeyf through large dams 'just to produce a few more kilowatts of electricity' while 'the losses outweigh[ed] the gains of electricity production.'[46] Accordingly, as another Kurdish MP who represented Muş stated, GAP was 'a reflection of the state's approach to Kurdistan' and the state 'aim[ed] to render the region inhabitable through building large dams and HPPs and killing the plant and animal diversity there'.[47] Briefly, in the words of İbrahim Binici, an MP who represented Şanlıurfa, GAP 'lack[ed] good intention, solution, nature, humanity, and most importantly Kurds, as inhabitants of this land'.[48]

Finally, GAP was found anti-Kurdish on the grounds that damming the Euphrates and the Tigris aimed to limit Kurds' freedom of movement and prevent the maneuver capabilities of the PKK. In this regard, an MP who represented Muş underlined that 'dozens of dams between Hakkâri and Şırnak [were] incapable of producing energy. In appearance they [were] built for energy production and irrigation. Karakaya, Atatürk, Keban dams… The reason they [were] there [was] to challenge guerrilla's presence and prevent their passage.'[49] A researcher on water politics confirmed this claim and stated that 'the army admitted that dams were constructed on the passageways of terrorists. This was exposed on Vatan Newspaper two years ago. … They especially fill[ed] the caves with water and prevent[ed] terrorists from passing from the east to west.'[50]

Narrative 2: GAP is a Remedy for the Conflict

According to the second narrative, which was prevalent specifically among the Turkish political elites from the right-wing and nationalist parties, initiation of GAP would address the root causes of the Kurdish question. From this perspective, GAP could either end the conflict by itself or complement the military solutions towards this goal on the grounds that there was a causal link between the underdevelopment and 'backwardness' of the GAP region and the emergence, continuation, and intractability of the conflict. The logic was that GAP would improve the socio-economic conditions of the region, the local population in better conditions would feel loyal to the state and stop supporting the PKK, the PKK would lose its recruitment base and support from the bottom, and the Kurdish question would eventually be solved. In different terms, GAP would introduce modern, irrigation-based agriculture to the region, facilitate its integration to the markets, bring a new and modern lifestyle, eliminate feudal and tribal relations therein, increase the overall living standards, remove regional disparities, and, thus, create a positive and peaceful atmosphere that would prevent future secessionist movements.[51] Accordingly, GAP would not only 'win the hearts and minds' through development, but also rid the PKK of its propaganda material to exploit poverty to convince new members to join its ranks.

Still, as mentioned before, the idea of reversing the harsh policies towards the Kurds and instead serving them 'well and with affection' was not entirely novel.[52] For instance, in the report *Eastern Problem*, Celâl Bayar, the then Minister of Economy between 1932–1937, underlined the need to complement the efforts of the army and gendarmerie with 'a capable and regularly functioning civil service' so that people would 'think that they [were] not left to their own devices and that the state cared for them' and 'think that they, too, constituted an

integral element of the nation.'[53] Having noted this, in the initial stages of GAP in 1988, Güneş Müftüoğlu, an MP who represented Zonguldak, underlined that 'the remedy of preventing anarchy and terror in [GAP] region [was] to complete crucial investments' because 'when [their] social, economic, and cultural development [was] ensured, both anarchy and terror [would] be eliminated.'[54] In the early 1990s, İsmet Sezgin, the then Minister of Interior, made a similar connection and stated that

> We [did not] see counterterrorism only as security measures; we [gave] equal importance to its social and economic dimensions. … With this approach, within the framework of GAP, we continue[d] to use all resources allocated by our state and work[ed] hard towards developing the local population. … Thus, the claim of interregional growth inequality and regional underdevelopment, which [was] used to cloak the real objective of terror, [would] be debunked.[55]

Even though the dynamics of the Kurdish question significantly changed after the imprisonment of Öcalan in 1999, apparently the perception of GAP as a silver bullet remained intact during this period. For instance, Necati Çetinkaya, an MP who represented Manisa, repeated the same formula in 2000 and explained that 'the completion of GAP [meant] realization of the greatest development move in Southeastern Anatolia and … draining of the source of terrorism. We must not kill the mosquitoes but drain the source, the swamp in which they reproduce[d].'[56] Politicians continued to employ similar discourses even after the 'Kurdish Opening' in 2009. To exemplify, Cemil Çiçek, the then Deputy Prime Minister, stated that '[people] always sa[id] security measures [were] not enough to prevent terror, [an] economic package [was] also needed … GAP [was] the economic package of the [Kurdish] Opening.'[57] İbrahim Binici, an MP who represented Şanlıurfa, summarized the position of GAP after the failure of this initiative as follows:

> Turgut Özal had clearly emphasized the relationship between the Kurds and GAP by saying, 'if the region develops and the local population becomes rich, political reactions and conflict come to an end.' This skewed perspective, which envisage[d] substitution of Kurds' demands for collective rights with economic bribes, has given GAP this mission from the beginning.[58]

Bureaucrats and experts also widely characterized GAP as a project to provide security through development. For instance, a former project consultant from GAP-BKİ explained how TAF perceived GAP as a way out of the conflict and cooperated with civil bureaucracy to this end in the 1990s. According to her account, for instance, in a National Security Council meeting, one military official told her that TAF did its job and, from then on, it was

bureaucracy's [GAP-BKİ's] job to get TAF out of the region.[59] Similarly in the 2000s, Muammer Yaşar Özgül, the former president of GAP-BKİ stated that

> [a]s people [had] more income and a better social life, they stay[ed] away from terrorism. In other words, unemployment and underdevelopment in the region [were] sources that [fed] terrorism. As GAP [would] advance, people's social life, income level, and quality of life [would] change. Why would a person whose quality of life and lifestyle improve be interested in terrorism?[60]

It is remarkable that an expert from the same institution gave almost the same explanation regarding the causes of the Kurdish question and proposed almost the same solutions in 2014:

> If you fail to develop a region's economy and attract sufficient investment, some may engage in provocation. That was the reason behind terrorism. … The more you develop, the more you reduce interregional development disparities. The more you increase their welfare level, the more they see themselves as part of the state.[61]

A similar narrative was observable in policy documents, too. In the 1990s, it was noted in *GAP Social Action Plan* that GAP would 'accelerate the whole economy of the region, greatly contribute to the solution of the backwardness and unemployment problems of the region, and in turn [would] dry up economic and social sources of terrorist activities.'[62] In the 2000s, the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan underlined in *GAP Action Plan (2008–2012)* that 'the regional development applications initiated during our government [within GAP framework] were based on strengthening our national unity and brotherhood, spreading development opportunities to all over the country, and transition to production culture on the whole.'[63] In the 2010s, it was noted in the following and final *GAP Action Plan (2014–2018)* that the goal of the state was to 'make our completed projects lasting, sustain the peaceful environment by increasing welfare level, and strengthening the brotherhood'.[64]

Narrative 3: GAP is a Neutral and Non-Political Project

According to the third narrative, which was prevalent specifically among experts and bureaucrats, the link between GAP and the Kurdish question was weak and even spurious, as GAP has always been a totally technical and neutral project and completely detached from security considerations and political calculations. Therefore, the Kurdish question was not one of the factors that triggered the initiation of GAP. Apparently, there are three main arguments that support this narrative. The first argument emphasizes that only techno-scientific, not conflict-related and political factors played the dominant role in GAP's initiation. To illustrate, one of the former heads of GAP Regional Directorate at DSİ in Şanlıurfa made a clear

distinction between the project's technical and political aspects and explained that in such large-scale development projects

> politicians cannot have any influence on engineering projects. … A hydraulic system determines everything. You make your calculations according to water criteria. Dams cannot be built for security; they are built to provide drinking water, prevent floods, generate energy, and irrigate lands. It is naïve to think of dams as security providers or blockages against someone [the Kurds].[65]

Similarly, an expert from GAP-BKİ emphasized that 'GAP [was] a regional development project, so naturally nine provinces were chosen to this end. The project [was] implemented in Southeastern Anatolia not because Kurds live[d] there, but because of physical and technical concerns.'[66] One of the former presidents of GAP-BKİ also confirmed that 'security was not a main factor' in the initiation of GAP and underlined that

> controlling the basins, implementing the project for security, etc… There was no such thing. People later on claimed that GAP was initiated to limit terrorists' mobilization but I still [did not] think the claim [was] valid. There [were] millions of terrible things terrorists [could] do, how [could] they be stopped by a few dams?[67]

According to the second argument, GAP could not be characterized as an 'anti-Kurdish' project because, ethnically speaking, not only Turks, but also Kurds – as well as Arabs – benefited generously from the project. In this regard, a large landowner in Şanlıurfa stated that 'GAP was not initiated against the Kurds' because 'a large portion of agricultural lands in the GAP region belong[ed] to the Kurds anyway. They [were] the ones who [would] be better off when the irrigation system [was] built.'[68] Similarly, a former expert from GAP-BKİ underlined that there was no discrimination against the Kurds because they would 'reap GAP's benefits as much as Turks [would] do. True, there [were] instances where they [would] suffer as in Hasankeyf, but there [were] also instances where they receive[d] a lot of money from the state. They [would] be richer.'[69] An expert from the same institution also indicated that the Kurds were the real beneficiaries of GAP and stated that 'if there were discrimination between Turks and Kurds, [he] would not try to increase the local population's quality of life anyway and they would live a shorter life in poorer quality.'[70]

The third argument underlines that the local population's ethnic or religious identity played no role in determining whom to include or exclude in the development process. To exemplify, a former coordinator from GAP-BKİ emphasized that they did not discriminate against Kurds and Arabs and only conducted 'sociological studies to formulate projects in

accordance with their different water consumption patterns, social structures, and stuff'.[71] Similarly, another former coordinator from GAP-BKİ underlined that

> We did not care about people's ethnicity, religious sect, or belief. It did not matter whether they were Yazidi, Assyrian, Laz, Kurdish, or Arabic. The only criteria were: [Were] they poor? From a gender equality perspective, [were] they women, men, children, or youth? [Did] they have access to services?[72]

A researcher on water politics also found the claims on ethnic or religious discrimination baseless and exaggerated and stated that

> GAP [was] not an assimilation project. Not only Kurds live[d] in Southeastern Anatolia Region. Everyone [was] resettled in every dam project. It happened in Keban, it also happened when a dam was constructed on Kızılırmak River[73] and the people of Çorum[74] had to leave their lands. [Did] this mean that we assimilated people of two Sunni villages and one Alevi village there? Of course not.

Alternative Interpretations of the Relationship between GAP and the Kurdish Question

The multiplicity of narratives indicates that the relationship between GAP and the Kurdish question is not simplistic and one-dimensional, but rather complex and multi-dimensional. For this reason, instead of reaching quick judgments that decisively conclude that GAP was a security project or GAP was initiated to wipe Kurds off the map, it would be more accurate and fair to interpret this relationship through a more critical lens. This would provide four alternative interpretations or main inferences about the relationship.

The first inference is that the security dimension of GAP should be conceived as a construct rather than a given. Both different narratives and the historical trajectory of GAP imply that security considerations were hardly significant in the initial stages of the project. However, later in the late 1980s and 1990s, in parallel with the intensification of the PKK activities, GAP was constructed also as a security project and considered as another and/or complementary means to address the conflict. In other words, gradually and simultaneously GAP was securitized and the Kurdish question was 'developmentalized' over time. Still, apparently security was never the *leitmotif* of GAP. Indeed, this does not imply that GAP did not lead to any security-related outcomes, given that development cannot be easily and totally isolated from politics and power dynamics. To illustrate this inevitable interaction, a head of a department from the Ministry of Development explained that whenever, wherever, and on whatever the state establishment spent public funds, it 'calculate[d] every single return' including 'citizens' sense of belongingness, loyalty to the state'. He further explained that

whenever they aimed to

> fix the economy of [GAP] region, [they] never ignored the political agenda there. [Was] there any social engineering or indoctrinization? This absolutely exist[ed] as a side effect… Inclusion of the citizens, changing their perceptions, these long existed not only within GAP, but also in many projects that were implemented in the region.[75]

Despite this, it would be reductionist to characterize GAP solely as a security project for several reasons. First, the claim that social policies under GAP were actually social control and assimilation mechanisms was often overstated. To explicate, in the words of a former coordinator from GAP-BKİ, 'the world is not the world of the 1960s, 1970s. It is impossible to assimilate population with such means any more, especially in such a politicized region. We are in Information Age, everyone can reach any kind of information.'[76] In other words, it was naïve to claim that a population over eight million was being assimilated only through programs and activities carried out at, for instance, nine Youth and Culture Centers, nine Child Development Centers, and 44 Multi-Purpose Community Centers (*Çok Amaçlı Toplum Merkezleri,* ÇATOM)[77] in the GAP region. Second, social policies pursued in the GAP region were only slightly different than social policies pursued in other regions in Turkey. They were not specifically designed for or against the Kurdish population. As the above-mentioned coordinator also stated, for instance, social welfare funds were distributed not only in the GAP region, but also in other regions. In addition, the GAP region received the largest share of funds in this regard. Community centers were not established exclusively there, either; they were modeled on different community centers in the world and established all over Turkey.[78] Third, social policies pursued under the umbrella of GAP were formulated to replace the traditional with the modern and accelerate the modernization of the GAP region in a teleological manner. Considering that nationalism was a phenomenon highly associated with – or even a product of – modernity[79] and that social policies have been effective in terms of modernizing the region so far, arguably social policies actually increased the political awareness of the Kurds and fueled Kurdish nationalism rather than repressing their national consciousness and assimilating them. Finally, if GAP were merely a security project, priority would have been given to irrigation and socio-economic projects that would directly benefit the local communities and change their perception of the state. Instead, energy projects that provided large returns to the state but little returns to the local communities were prioritized.[80] This problem of limited trickle-down effect further estranged the local communities from both the state and the project and reinforced the belief regarding being 'neglected' and 'forgotten' for decades in their eyes. Therefore, characterizing GAP as a development project with a potential to have minor and

indirect impacts on the resolution of the Kurdish question is more reasonable than concluding that the security dimension of GAP was a given even from the beginning.

The second inference is that the complexity of the relationship between GAP and the Kurdish question and the multiplicity of narratives in this regard stems from the confrontation of politicizing and depoliticizing discourses and forces. In other words, the position of GAP in the context of the conflict is elusive because GAP has actually become an area of contestation in which involved actors engage in confrontation to define the project as well as its rationales, mechanisms, and implications in accordance with their personal or institutional set of values and interests and reap the maximum benefits out of its subjective interpretation.

Indeed, politicization and depoliticization can be understood in different ways. For Carl Schmitt, for instance, the political should be understood 'only in the context of the ever present possibility of the friend-and-enemy grouping, regardless of the aspects which this possibility implies for morality, aesthetics, and economics'.[81] In this context, negation of the political and the state, diffusion of the political into economics and ethics, consideration of political entities as economic competitors or debating adversaries, and reduction of political problems to organizational-technical and economic-sociological ones imply depoliticization.[82] Similarly, for Chantal Mouffe, the political is 'the dimension of antagonism … constitutive of human societies'.[83] Accordingly, political cannot be reduced to technical to be addressed by expert knowledge on the grounds that the political always requires making a choice between conflicting alternatives.[84] For this reason, negating antagonism, attaching great importance to rationalist and individualist approaches that disregard the nature of collective identities, and emphasizing the so-called harmonious and pacified characteristic of the world have depoliticizing implications.[85] Rather than such values, the ever-present possibility of the distinction between friend and enemy and the conflictual nature of politics constitute the genuine basis of democratic politics.[86] It is also possible to conceive depoliticization as the opposite of politicization process and closing off public deliberation.[87] In other words, depoliticization is concerned with the removal of choice, deliberation, contingency, and agency around issues. Colin Hay defines politics as 'the realm of contingency and deliberation' and makes a distinction between the political realm – the realm of contingency – and non-political realm – the realm of necessity. Accordingly, the political realm includes both governmental and non-governmental spheres. These spheres further spawn into three sub-spheres of public and governmental sphere, public but non-governmental sphere, and private sphere.[88] The non-political realm includes fate and necessity. Based on this conception, an issue is politicized if it is promoted from the realm of necessity to the private sphere, from private sphere to the

public sphere, and from public sphere to the governmental sphere. In a reverse logic, an issue is depoliticized if it is demoted from governmental sphere to public sphere, from public sphere to private sphere, and from private sphere to the realm of necessity.[89]

In this light, apparently there are two opposing camps that struggle to extend their influence and secure their positions in the space of power relations and contestation. In this configuration, one camp strives to retain the political nature of GAP and the Kurdish question based on the distinction between friend and enemy and anchor it into the realm of contingency. This camp strives also to promote GAP-induced issues that are widely presented as inherent part of development (such as environmental destruction), inevitable consequences of modernization (for instance destruction of the old), or requirements of a better life (like forced internal displacement) from the realm of necessity – which is believed to be out of human agency and control – to the private, public, and then governmental sphere. The idea is to keep the channels of expression, debate, and deliberation open to ensure that such issues occupy significant places in the agenda of the state and government elites. This politicization process is operationalized and/or facilitated through discourses, as they possess the power to have a direct or indirect impact on the decision- and policy-making processes. Even though a single utterance can have little or no impact on the policy-making process, discourses that are sustained for a long period of time do affect policy and influence action.[90] For these reasons, this camp repeatedly defines GAP in non-technical terms and argues against its 'neutrality' on the grounds that the project was far from truly and equally benefiting the local communities – if benefiting them at all. Politicization of the project indeed creates and spreads new norms and beliefs about the project at regional, national, and international levels and erodes its legitimacy especially in the eyes of the local communities and international institutions that would normally provide support to the initiation of many different projects under the umbrella of GAP.

At the other end of the continuum, the other camp strives to remove the ethno-political nature of the Kurdish question and redefine the conflict along the lines of socio-economic development. In other words, this camp aims to redefine antagonism and recast it into a milder and more manageable form. In the context of the conflict and conflict-ridden environment of the GAP region, ideally speaking the confrontation had to take place between the Turkish and Kurdish, TAF and the PKK, the oppressor and the oppressed, right-wing and left-wing ideologies, or ultra-nationalist Turkish and Kurdish political movements. However, due to the belief that underdevelopment or 'backwardness' was at the heart of the conflict, confrontation was no longer defined in such forms, but instead defined in socio-economic terms as if the

confrontation was between modern and traditional, wealthy and poor, or contented and discontented. Also, due to the neoliberal transformation of the project over time, other forms of confrontation between self-reliant and dependent, entrepreneur and lazy, competitive and noncompetitive, or adaptive and maladaptive were also defined. Such a redefinition would be desirable for the state because addressing the structural causes and/or ethno-political issues of the Kurdish question such as ending the armed conflict, decentralizing the governance of the state, normalizing Turkish-Kurdish relations at societal level, providing education in the mother tongue has always been more burdensome and challenging than addressing socio-economic development-related issues that required a less political or non-political solution toolset for the state. In addition, the redefinition of the dynamics of the conflict as such evaporated or concealed the 'Turkishness', 'Kurdishness', religious identities, and political leanings of the local population. They were stripped out of their ethnic and political identities and presented as dehumanized and neutral subjects in a sterile manner. They were widely referred to as 'them, locals, people of the region, our people, our brothers there' in legislative and elite discourses without references given to their ethno-political characteristics. Overall, then, the conception of GAP in the context of the Kurdish question is heavily shaped by how politicizing and depoliticizing discourses and forces clash to allow sides to have the upper hand in discursive battles, monopolize the knowledge production on the subject, and maintain and extend their righteousness and legitimacy.

The third inference is that many different aspects of GAP were subjected to harsh criticism and qualified as destructive also because the concept of development has had authoritarian implications. It has often been a design or process in which there was one side who instructed the other side on what to do, what not to do, and how to or how not to do whatever it was deemed necessary to be done. This power imbalance has taken multiple forms within which international institutions provided prescriptions for national governments (for instance structural adjustment programs and austerity measures), governments provided prescriptions for their domestic institutions (such as the neoliberal restructuring of education, health, and security sectors), and domestic institutions provided prescriptions for target groups at local level (development programs based on participatory rural appraisal or microcredit schemes for instance). Similar hierarchical power relations between the West and the East, Global North and Global South, elites and non-elites, or experts and non-experts have persisted as well. It has almost always been the case that development concepts, norms, standards, and even the concept itself originated from one or a few centers and dispersed in a unidirectional manner. They were either borrowed and put into practice as they were or borrowed and adapted

to national and local conditions to a certain extent, while the core philosophy and objectives behind them often remained intact. More importantly, development has involved intervening in people's lives and shaping their preferences regardless of whether they agreed or disagreed with the instructions and prescriptions provided to, or imposed on, them. Despite the entrance of participatory or bottom-up development and similar notions into the lexicon of development actors and institutions long ago, the hierarchy between 'the top' and 'the bottom' has remained relatively constant. Even when the needs, demands, and concerns of target groups were taken into consideration and negotiated, it has always been 'the top' who set the rules and limits of this negotiation process and 'the bottom' who had to abide by these rules. In other words, the relationship in which one side assumed the active role of 'the developer' and made the push for change from outside and the other side was given the passive role of 'to be developed' and dependent on an external force for change continued to exist. Authoritarian implications of development were discernable in the overall GAP framework as well. Despite the significant shifts in the project's governance and intensified efforts to include disadvantaged groups into the development process and local voices into the planning process, the power has remained concentrated in the elites as the architects of the project. From the beginning of the project until its current stage, they have wielded the power and authority to formulate and implement policies on behalf of the local population; control the pace, direction, and resources of the project; and decide on 'what is to be done' or 'what should the local population do' in a normative manner. In most cases, projects were not adapted to the priorities of people, but instead people had to adapt themselves involuntarily to the consequences of projects, as witnessed in many flooding, displacement, and planned resettlement cases. For such reasons, GAP was widely conceived and narrated as a project initiated with malicious intentions to establish and maintain control over the local population in general and the Kurds in particular.

The fourth and final inference is that the reason why and how GAP could be conceived and narrated as a project that was completely isolated from political, social, and humanitarian factors uttered by the critics and opponents of the project was related to the legitimizing implications of development. Development has an immense power to legitimize interventions imposed from outside, controversial and risky policy decisions, and destructive outcomes. Even the word development itself – along with progress, growth, improvement, and so on – tends to have positive, optimistic, and rosy connotations and is often associated with a better and improved future. For this reason, development has evolved into an almost magical and mythical concept no one should challenge and oppose, as it would be simply preposterous to question such a neutral, benevolent, and idealistic enterprise. Thanks to this 'shield from

criticism' and legitimizing power, severe drawbacks that many Kurdish politicians and activists have uttered and politicized were often normalized as the 'inevitable' side effect or 'natural' cost of processes such as development, change, modernization, and so on. Even though they were serious problems with serious consequences, the tendency was to tolerate them on the grounds that they resembled 'labor pains', 'breaking eggs to make an omelet', 'sacrifice for a greater good', and similar situations in which supposedly one had to suffer to attain a brighter future. In that sense, legitimizing power of development has not only masked the other, dark, and untold side of development, but also functioned as a motor of the process through reframing even the catastrophic failures as a price to be paid and shifting blame on some other external sources. Many controversial policies and the discontent of the local population were also legitimized through similar mechanisms in the overall GAP framework. Even though the problems of soil salinization, erosion, waterlogging, deforestation, internal displacement, flooding of sites, and changing land ownership patterns were acknowledged and addressed to a certain extent, the general tendency at the state, government, and institutional levels has been to consider such destructive outcomes as inherent in – and necessary for – development. Since they were normalized and legitimized as such, GAP could maintain its legitimacy and run on for decades despite all its drawbacks, limited trickle-down effects, and politicization efforts of those who characterized it as a detrimental project.

Conclusion

The idea that there was an undeniable link between GAP and the Kurdish question has gained currency since the 1990s. It was widely discussed in legislative and elite discourses as well as in the literature that GAP was initiated as a security project to address the root causes of the Kurdish question, which were believed to be the underdevelopment and 'backwardness' of eastern and southeastern Turkey. This narrow perspective, however, fell short on reflecting the complex and multi-dimensional nature of the interrelationship between GAP and the Kurdish question. The examination of diverse data sources indicated that there were actually three major narratives that characterized GAP as a project that was initiated against the Kurdish population with malevolent intentions; as a remedy for the Kurdish question due to its potential to eradicate the root causes of the conflict; and as nothing but a development project in a neutral fashion in the sole guidance of science and technicity. A critical and alternative assessment of these narratives indicate that (1) the security dimension of GAP was a construct rather than a given, (2) the multiplicity of narratives was an outcome of the contestation between politicizing and depoliticizing discourses on GAP and the Kurdish question uttered by different actors, (3) GAP

could be conceived and narrated as a project of destruction and more conflict due to the authoritarian nature of the idea and practice of development, and (4) GAP could be conceived and narrated as a project that was totally detached from political, social, and humanitarian factors due to the legitimizing power of the idea and practice of development.

These inferences imply that assessing GAP in relative, not absolute terms might provide a different picture of the project and illustrate how interpretations can vary depending on the position of the speaker and context in which the project is assessed. It often goes untold from whose perspective the project is conceived as beneficial or harmful. The assessments of the project and its implications by a farmer whose income was quadrupled after the extension of irrigation systems, a family who had to leave its village due to the impoundment of dam reservoirs, a woman who got the chance to see a doctor for the first time in her entire life, a seasonal worker who lost his/her job opportunity after increased agricultural mechanization, a civil engineer at DSİ, a sociologist at GAP-BKİ, and an economist at the Ministry of Development all differ. Given this, the question as to whether GAP has been a success story or a failure – which resembles the question as to whether the glass is half empty or half full – can also be answered in relative terms. Rigid definitions of the project and generic claims on its negative and positive impacts might be misleading.

The inferences further imply that prescribing techno-scientific and techno-managerial solutions to problems – or issues that are framed as problems from a technical perspective – that actually embody complex political, social, humanitarian, and psychological factors has been counterproductive in the context of GAP and arguably similar large-scale development projects in other geographies in the world. Such solutions often provide more and mainly economic benefits to the states and governments and only limited benefits to people despite the widespread claim that the former carries out development activities for the prosperity and happiness of the latter. Even if they provide benefits to people, their impacts are not often long-term due to the mismatch between the technical lens at the supply side and the non-technical lens at the demand side. This mismatch can also be viewed as a clash between rational and emotion-based perspectives, scientific and traditional practices, 'textbook' definitions and real life possibilities, and construction and reality. For such reasons, the acknowledgement of this mismatch and the abandonment of technicity as a point of departure to address problems that are loaded with complex socio-political factors that defy easy and straightforward solutions would enable the design and implementation of GAP and similar development projects implemented in the context of conflicts in a more productive and less contested fashion, as this would ensure their success, legitimacy, and sustainability.

Notes

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[4] Alternative labels include, but are not limited to, the Eastern problem, Southeastern problem, Kurdish problem, Kurdish conflict, Turkish-Kurdish conflict, terrorism problem.

[5] The article is a part of a larger research project conducted on GAP between 2012–2017 in Germany.

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[63] GAP Bölgesel Kalkınma İdaresi, *GAP Eylem Planı (2008–2012)*, 2008, p. i.

[64] GAP Bölgesel Kalkınma İdaresi, *GAP Eylem Planı (2014–2018),* 2014, p.3.

[65] Interview, 20 May 2014, Ankara.

[66] Interview, 24 March 2014, Ankara.

[67] Interview, 16 May 2014, Ankara.

[68] Interview, 30 May 2014, Şanlıurfa.

[69] Interview, 2 April 2014, Ankara.

[70] Interview, 21 March 2014, Ankara.

[71] Interview, 25 April 2014, Ankara.

[72] Interview, 25 March 2014, Ankara.

[73] Kızılırmak is Turkey's longest river. It flows across the Central Anatolia Region to the Black Sea.

[74] It is a landlocked province located in the Black Sea Region.

[75] Interview, 30 April 2014, Ankara.

[76] Interview, 9 April 2014, Ankara.

[77] Even though women are the primary target group of ÇATOM, children and adult males can also be included in ÇATOM programs.

[78] Interview, 9 April 2014, Ankara.

[79] E. Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997).

[80] According to official figures, 74 per cent of energy and 23.6 per cent of irrigation projects were completed as of 2014. See GAP Bölgesel Kalkınma İdaresi, 'Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi: Son durum', (2015), pp.33–7.
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