

# Modernizing the Nation: Postcolonialism, (Post)Development, and Ambivalent Spaces of Difference in Southeastern Turkey

**LEILA M. HARRIS**

Corresponding Author: lharris@ires.ubc.ca

2008

Final version: Harris, L. (2008) Postcolonialism, Postdevelopment, and Ambivalent Spaces of Difference in Southeastern Turkey. *Geoforum* 39: 1698-1708. DOI: 10.1016/j.geoforum.2008.03.002

Citations of this work should use the final version as noted above

## Table of Contents

SUMMARY .....	2
INTRODUCTION.....	3
II Theoretical Starting Points: Postdevelopmentalism, Postcolonialism, and Feminist Geographic Contributions.....	4
III. Three Key Moments: Foundations GAP deVELOPMENT .....	9
Foundations of the Modern, Secular, Turkey.....	10
Advent of the PKK, Kurdish Identity, and Resistance .....	12
Uniting with Europe? Turkey and the EU.....	13
IV. Socio-Spatial Atavism and GAP Development Transformation .....	14
V. Key Tensions and Ambivalences: Engagement with Postcolonial Theory .....	18
Regulating Gender.....	18
Contested Nationalisms.....	20
VI. Conclusions.....	22
Bibliography .....	24

## SUMMARY

This paper advances recent conversations related to the need to better engage postcolonial scholarship in development geography. To do so, I bring together analytics offered by postdevelopmental, feminist geographic, and postcolonial scholarship to analyze contemporary development efforts in Southeastern Turkey. To provide necessary background for the case study context, the paper considers three key moments foundational for Turkish modernist development aspirations: the foundations of the Republic through Kemalism, the emergence of Kurdish separatism and PKK resistance, and Turkish efforts to gain entry to the EU. Reading these moments, and their culmination in contemporary development efforts focused on the southeastern Anatolia region, through postdevelopmental and feminist geographic literatures invites a reading that highlights socio-spatial difference as *underwriting* modernist development interventions in the Southeastern Anatolia region. Drawing on postcolonial scholarship, particularly Bhabha's notion of ambivalence, further enables a reading of socio-spatial difference as also *undermining* Turkish modernist development, signaling precisely the points where the project comes undone. The example thus lends endorsement to the need for enriched engagement between postcolonial theory, feminist and development discussions in geography, suggesting that postcolonial concepts might enable clearer focus on the ambiguities, tensions, and contradictions inherent to development geographies.

Keywords: modernity, postcolonialism, postdevelopmentalism, gender, ethnicity, socio-spatial difference, Turkey, Kurds, critical development studies

## INTRODUCTION

As other scholars have noted, postcolonial and development studies remain curiously disconnected, despite obvious theoretical, empirical, and geographical overlap (e.g. Sylvester, 1999). Given the coincidence of developmental and postcolonial concerns and geographies, as well as the increasing acceptance of postcolonial approaches in human geography (Ryan, 2004; Nash, 2002), there have been increasing calls for rapprochement between these fields (Radcliffe, 2005; Laurie with Calla, 2004; Simon 2005; McFarlane, 2006, McEwan, 2003). As Radcliffe (2005) notes, among other productive lines of inquiry, work that connects postcolonial scholarship, development geographies and questions of social difference is likely to be a particularly productive avenue in the coming years. This paper contributes to these discussions, illustrating productive intersections between postcolonial, development studies, and feminist geographic scholarship through an examination of socio-spatial difference in relation to contemporary development efforts in southeastern Turkey. After providing a brief discussion of postdevelopmentalism, postcolonialism, and feminist geographic approaches to state and nation, I then examine the historical and discursive foundations of contemporary state-led development transformations of the border areas in Turkey's southeast. In the final section, I draw both on the theoretical discussions and the case study example to highlight possibilities for research and understanding enabled by working at the interstices of these subfields.

My argument is that there are particular insights related to the Turkish modernist development project that only come into focus through analytics offered at the intersection of these approaches—highlighting the value of bringing these literatures more fully into conversation. Apart from details related to the Turkish case, there are several additional contributions offered by this examination. First, the analysis contributes to other work illustrating the centrality of social, and spatial, difference as key to theorizing contemporary development efforts. As such the analysis adds to longstanding geographic concerns with gender and development, in this case demonstrating not only that socio-spatial difference is key to understanding uneven effects of development interventions, but also may condition and shape those very interventions from the outset. The analysis also responds to more recent calls to deal more adequately with intersections between multiple dimensions of social difference in relation to development geographies, such as those related to race or ethnicity (see Laurie with Calla, 2004; Power, 2006). In this example, intersections between gender, ethnicity, and spatial difference in Turkey's border regions are detailed. Second, analytics offered by these literatures also enable a reading that highlights social and spatial difference as key points that underscore the ambivalence of Turkish developmentalism. Thus, social and spatial difference not only *underwrite* Turkish modernization efforts, but also *undermine* those efforts as well. Specifically, drawing on Bhabha's notions of ambivalence and mimicry, I argue that it is precisely through the insistence of Turkish development projects on overcoming socio-spatial difference, that Turkish 'modernity' itself is called into question. Attentiveness to 'ambivalence' in relation to contemporary development, I argue, is one of the key contributions of postcolonial approaches to development theory, offering needed correctives to oversimplified critiques of 'development failure' that characterize other critical

approaches. Third, as I revisit in the conclusion, bringing these literatures together to inform a reading of contemporary Turkish developmentalism exposes other key sites for learning, and future research possibilities for development geographers.

## II THEORETICAL STARTING POINTS: POSTDEVELOPMENTALISM, POSTCOLONIALISM, AND FEMINIST GEOGRAPHIC CONTRIBUTIONS

“Let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions, and societies which draw their inspiration from her.”  
(Fanon, 1963, 315)

“To see development as a historically produced discourse entails an examination of why so many countries started to see themselves as underdeveloped in the early post-World War II period, how “to develop” became a fundamental problem for them, and how, finally, they embarked upon the task of “un-underdeveloping” themselves by subjecting their societies to increasingly systematic, detailed, and comprehensive interventions”  
(Escobar, 1995, 6)

“It is precisely these unexpected intersections - the legacy of modernist projects of colonialism, nationalism, and development - that I have identified as being central defining features of the postcolonial condition. Postcolonial theory provides the analytic framework to describe these hybrid discourses and practices and to delineate the intertwining of ‘local’ practices with global and national projects of development.”  
(Gupta, 1998, 20)

Even as the spaces and logics of postcolonialism and development studies share many commonalities, there has nonetheless remained somewhat of a gulf between these lines of inquiry (works by Gupta, Spivak, Radcliffe and several others noted below constitute efforts that serve to bridge this divide). Indeed, some have critiqued postcolonial scholarship for its heavy focus on representational practices and literary criticism, without much attention to questions of poverty, state failure, or unequal political, economic, and institutional power relations that are of such import for much of the world (see Simon, 2005, McEwan, 2003, and Sylvester, 1999).<sup>1</sup> There have been

---

<sup>1</sup> Using Sylvester’s (1999) turn of phrase, some argue that postcolonial scholars may be concerned with whether the subaltern can speak, but not with whether the subaltern eats.

extended discussions related to what exactly what is meant by the ‘postcolonial’ (Ryan 2004 and Nash 2002 explore this specifically in relation to geography), for instance as with the quote above by Gupta suggesting that developmentalism is a key feature of the ‘postcolonial condition,’ while others argue for the need to avoid a consistent definition or to disassociate the prefix ‘post’ from the idea of ‘formerly colonial’ and instead focus on contemporary relations of power that mark the Global South (McClintock, 1992; see Sparke, 2007 for related discussion).

Rather than attempt to delineate exactly what is meant by the postcolonial,<sup>2</sup> my focus here is rather to contribute to ongoing discussions of what concepts and focus associated with postcolonial scholarship offers to development geographers, particularly to explore what postcolonial analytics offer to readings of contemporary development geographies and encounters. As Radcliffe (2005) notes, there has been increasing attention to postcolonial work among development geographers, and with this a tendency to favor postcolonial approaches over postdevelopmental scholarship. Indeed, postdevelopmentalist work has lost some currency following critiques related to the sometimes simplistic celebration of the ‘local’ or ‘indigenous’, tendencies to cast unified and coherent constructions of the ‘West’ or painting development as a failure *writ large*, seemingly giving up on the idea of improvement altogether (see Radcliffe 2005, Curry, 2003 for discussion). Citing such weaknesses, critical development scholars have increasingly moved away from postdevelopmentalist work, instead seeking inspiration from postcolonial scholarship. While my project here is precisely to highlight some of the nuance that postcolonial analytics may offer, I aim to do so in a way that is also attentive to the shared lineage and aims of works across these fields. Indeed, I consider that it is not useful to delineate postcolonial and postdevelopmental works as entirely distinct, but rather is helpful to recognize the shared interest and overlap between these approaches.

Among other shared aims, postdevelopmental scholarship has been instrumental in highlighting issues of power related to development efforts, for instance, focusing on global development institutions, professionalization, and discourse. A focus on power and development expertise has been engaged productively in particular locales (for instance in the case of Lesotho; Ferguson, 1994), or to consider the historic and global lineage of development interventions (as Escobar’s often cited 1995 monograph underscores). Postdevelopmental work also shares with postcolonial scholarship interest in questions of representation and imagined geographies (Said, 1978; Gregory, 1994; Escobar, 1995). For example, similar characterizations of spaces and peoples as ‘backwards’ and in need of assistance or transformation have served to justify both colonialism and development interventions. Other key contributions of postdevelopmental work have been to highlight the many failures of specific development efforts, particularly those that have not paid sufficient attention to cultural considerations, local livelihoods, or gender concerns (e.g. Shiva, 1993, suggesting

---

<sup>2</sup> Ryan (2004) defines the ‘postcolonial’ as referring both to the formerly colonial world, as well as to a set of theories, practices, or ideas committed to anti-colonial struggle. General themes of postcolonial geographical work include issues of how geographical knowledge has shaped, and been shaped, by colonial power, the spatiality of colonial power, effects and expressions, and the ways that colonialism is encountered and resisted by different groups in different spaces.

overlap with postcolonial interest in geographical difference, cultural considerations and identities). Related to this, there are less explicit connections between postdevelopmental interest in locally-driven development, and questions of voice, representation, and subaltern histories (and critique of such offered by Spivak, 1988, see Briggs and Sharp, 2004 for discussion).

Given these considerable similarities, there may appear to be little intellectual justification for distinguishing these traditions. There are, nonetheless, contributions of postcolonial scholarship that are somewhat distinct, including several that offer particularly fruitful lines of inquiry for development concerns (some of which share considerable overlap with feminist questions, see Laurie with Calla, 2004, Kothari, 2001). Among other threads, there is an interest in postcolonial scholarship on *subjectivities*, for instance, by interrogating identities and politics among the 'populations' that are targets of development interventions. This is what Gupta's (1998) anthropological contribution does so well, focusing on hybridized subjectivities among agrarian populations of rural India. Building on postdevelopmental interest in key dichotomies, West/non-West, developed/non-developed, Gupta interrogates how these notions are understood and narrated by 'subjects of development.' Characteristic of postcolonial work, Gupta's examination doesn't cement these dualisms, but rather seeks to understand how they are constituted, how they operate, and to what effect. As Gupta writes,

“what constitutes the experience of modernity as ‘postcolonial’ in a country such as India is the acute self-awareness of this temporal lag and spatial marginality. Development discourses, with their built in teleologies and spatial hierarchies, created subject positions that reinscribed inequalities after the dismantling of formal domination with the end of colonial rule” (1998, 11).

Another focus of postcolonial work that is of considerable interest for development geography relates to theorizations of *hybridity*. Again, Gupta's contribution, *Postcolonial Developments*, is just one example of the ways that questions of hybridity might prove rewarding for examinations of development encounters. His focus on hybridized agricultural knowledges that fuse elements of 'indigenous' knowledge with scientific narrative and explanation allows us to think through the 'contact zones' of development encounters, serving to break down, rather than reproduce common dichotomies (see also Sharp's 2003 discussion on how notions of hybridity have been taken up in political geography). Another important element that is highlighted by postcolonial work is to examine relations of power not only through focus on the underdeveloped world, but to also forcefully consider the necessary linkages to overdevelopment (Power, 2006), as well as to institutions, and professionals, and other elements situated in the 'core.' This focus builds on Said's contributions in *Orientalism* (1978), as his work highlights that the production of the 'Orient' is not only critical to understand the 'East' or the 'colony,' but indeed, these geographical imaginaries are also central to the constitution of the 'West' and the 'metropole' as well. While this focus on interconnections is not one I am able to take up here, postcolonial theory invites development scholars to consider questions of power, subjectivities and exchange through interlinked analysis of development institutions and interconnected power topographies that link North and South (cf. Martin, 2005).

Yet another line of inquiry informed by postcolonial work is to consider the production of certain geographies, territories, and spaces, in relation to postcolonial processes, and the ‘postcolonial present.’ For instance, Wainwright (2005, forthcoming) argues for the need to consider the production of certain spaces (e.g. states), and not take them as *apriori* givens, as to do so would be to occlude a series of postcolonial power relations that constituted those territories and spaces (in his work, the entities of ‘Minnesota’ or ‘Southern Belize.’ See related discussion in Sparke, 2005). As I draw out with my case study example from Turkey, there are also particular postcolonial concepts, such as those of *atavistic time* and *anachronistic space* (associated with the work of Anne McClintock) and *ambivalence* and *mimicry* (both associated with the work of Homi Bhabha), that also offer potentially fruitful analytics for development geographies.

In her discussions of ‘anachronistic space’ and ‘atavistic time’ Anne McClintock provides conceptual tools to unpack the spatio-temporal logics of colonialism. In its most basic sense, anachronistic space refers to those ‘spaces’ that appear as fundamentally amodern. Atavistic time refers to the sense that certain people and places occupy a time that is *prior*, prior to development, prior to modernity—the primitive past.<sup>3</sup> Given my focus here, it is notable that McClintock (1995) explicitly theorizes gender and other dimensions of socio- spatial difference as foundational to these concepts. Specifically, McClintock theorizes race and gender as constitutive of what marks and defines particular spaces at anachronistic, and particular populations as atavistic. The Turkish case study offered here builds on insights from McClintock’s work, together with contributions from Partha Chatterjee (1993), and geographers such as Nina Laurie (with Calla, 2004) Sarah Radcliffe and Sallie Westwood (1996), all of whom highlight the intersections of social difference with development narratives, impetus, and effects.

As I will highlight in the discussion below, and in the conclusion, the concepts of mimicry and ambivalence from the work of Homi Bhabha are also potentially instructive for development geographers. Related to the discussion above, a particularly notable contribution of postcolonial theory, I believe, is the interest in recognizing contradictory tendencies and ‘hybridities’. Bhabha’s notion of ambivalence enables such focus, capturing the situation whereby the ‘colonized’ are never completely opposed to the ‘colonizer’,<sup>4</sup> indeed the colonizer “may be both exploitative and nurturing, or represent itself as nurturing at the same time” (Ashcroft et al., 1998, 13). In this vein, one of the useful elements of postcolonial theory is to avoid simplistic castings of colonial power (or development logics) as singularly repressive. Instead, there is acknowledgement of the simultaneous complicity and resistance among the ‘colonized’/ subjects of ‘development.’ Thus, while postcolonial work shares with post-developmentalism an interest in exploring power relations, exposing for instance how development discourse and practice may retrench colonial relations, or exacerbate divides that mark West from the rest, postcolonial work importantly also suggests the possibility that target

---

<sup>3</sup> Of interest, Radcliffe (1996), and Radcliffe and Westwood (1996) build on McClintock’s ideas of the gendering of national time, to also consider spatial dimensions, with many parallels to the analysis offered here. Their work, and more recent work by Craske (2005) highlights ambivalence in relation to gender and nation, however, they are not using the idea of ambivalence in the sense that Bhabha uses the term, as I do here.

<sup>4</sup> This also has resonance with a Gramscian notion of ‘hegemony’ whereby subjects submit to power, in opposition to a theory of power that is strictly coercive (Gramsci, 1991/1997).



populations might welcome or even demand such intervention. Stated another way, postcolonial theory opens the door to thinking about relations between ‘developers’ and the ‘subjects of development’ persisting in ambivalent tension.<sup>5</sup>

Mimicry is another concept associated with Bhabha’s work. Related to notions of ambivalence, the concept also refers to processes that reveal doubleness and contradictions inherent to colonialism. Through colonialist relations, Bhabha explains, peoples and places are forced to replicate Western forms and understandings. However, this mimicry can never actually be realized. Thus, while postcolonial India might attempt to replicate European systems and understandings, for instance by adopting the British educational system, the replication can never fully occur, and will always signal failure. Highlighting the centrality of socio-spatial difference, Bhabha sums up the tensions related to mimicry with the turn of phrase, ‘not white not quite’, referring to the ways that racialized difference signals failure for postcolonial sites. By definition, mimicry can never fully succeed, therefore it is paired with menace as its necessary double—the insistence on sameness is that which necessarily fails, disrupting and challenging the very terms of the colonial project.

These concepts and threads from postcolonial work highlight several interesting, insightful, and even necessary ways forward with respect to complex, contradictory, and ambivalent development geographies. Even as others have successfully linked postcolonial scholarship to development issues (Gupta, 1998; Radcliffe and Westwood, 1996; Radcliffe and Laurie, 2006; Laurie with Calla, 2004; Spivak, 1988; Chatterjee, 1993; Wainwright, forthcoming), there seems to be ample room to foster more learning across these approaches. I now turn to the case of contemporary development efforts in Turkey’s southeast to examine what analytics offered by these combined approaches lends to a reading of the GAP development project. Clearly sympathetic to elements of critique offered by postdevelopmental theorists, I make the case that feminist geographic approaches emphasizing socio-spatial difference, and postcolonial approaches emphasizing the necessary ambivalence and slippages of developmental encounters, offer key correctives to some of the simplifications implicit in some gender and development and postdevelopmental literatures. In the conclusion, I will revisit elements of the preceding discussion to further consider how geographical, postcolonial, and feminist, concerns might be more productively fused in future critical development scholarship (see also Radcliffe, 2005; Laurie with Calla, 2004).

---

<sup>5</sup> As Simon (2005) and others have noted, many in the Global South welcome investment and infrastructure, rather than simply rejecting development as some postdevelopmental scholars might imply. This is in contrast to work by Escobar (1995), Scott (1998), Ferguson (1994) and Shiva (1993), among others, whom all cast developmental processes in an overwhelmingly negative light, characterizing these interventions as Western exploitation of the poor, marginalized, or oppressed peoples and places of the ‘third world.’

### III. THREE KEY MOMENTS: FOUNDATIONS GAP DEVELOPMENT

"We had misunderstood! As a nation, we were demonstrating the far-reaching effects a small misunderstanding might have. Those were the years when we wanted to modernize as quickly as possible. A lot was changing in due speed. We were under the impression that throwing away all remnants of the past would transform us into new, different beings. Everything that was wrong and insufficient would be dumped out with the past, and from this clean slate a perfect country, as well as a brand new culture, would spring forth. In other words, it was the regrettable heyday of the misunderstanding that in order to become modern, we had to abandon many of our qualities...both sides of Istanbul were striving to completely erase their history and nature" (56).

"...in both physique and personality, my mother combined the classical Anatolian woman's dark hair and eyes, sturdiness, and patience, with the elegant features of her ancestors from the Caucasus...She took pride in her thick black hair; in Igdir, 'the Rose of the East'; and in us...Pervin Gokay, on the other hand, was seen as one of the most European and modern of movie stars in Turkish cinema. Famed for her blond hair, slim figure, and fine arts degree, she seemed utterly different and inaccessible to my mother..(as if) a surreal visitor to our country, from a planet other than the one we and the neighbors inhabited. A mystical, enigmatic, and wonderful creature! Besides being a beautiful and educated woman, she was also successful....a product of Turkey at European standards. Atatürk's ideally envisioned Turkish woman! She was an excellent image" (71).

From the novel *Mediterranean Waltz* by Bukent Uzuner, 2000.

How are particular people and places cast as anachronistic in relation to imagined futures of the nation, marking such as backwards and in need of transformation in relation to visions and understandings of 'modernity?' In particular, how do imaginings of socio-spatial difference (e.g. gender, ethnicity, or region) become symbolically marked in relation to nationalist and modernist discourses and practices (see Radcliffe and Westwood, 1996). In this section, I explore these questions in relation to massive state-led development efforts associated with the 'Southeastern Anatolia Project' or GAP (its Turkish acronym). The GAP project is a large-scale contemporary development intervention that began formally with the establishment of the GAP Regional Development Administration in 1989. In brief, the project seeks to radically transform the landscapes and populations of Turkey's Southeastern Anatolia region—by many indicators the poorest and least developed of the country.

As I discuss in greater detail below, the southeastern Anatolia region is significant as the border region with Syria and Iraq. It is also the home to considerable Arabic and Kurdish speaking minority populations, and has also been the focus of long-term struggles between Turkish state forces and Kurdish separatists (See Ünver, 1997a or Çarkoğlu and Eder, 1998 for overview of the GAP project; Harris, 2002 for discussion of the GAP project in relation to the Kurdish issue; and Dahlman, 2002 for discussion of political geography of the southeast region). To modernize the region, and bring it more fully in line with the rest of Turkey, the project hinges on the productive use land and water in the region, including massive damming and diversion of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers for hydroelectricity and irrigation of agricultural lands. I do not endeavor to provide a comprehensive discussion, or critique, of the GAP project here (for that, see above citations). Instead, *my aim is to engage postcolonial, feminist, and geographic approaches to understand and analyze the Turkish development impetus focused on the southeastern Anatolia region*. Thus, my effort is not to analyze specific elements of the project, or its outcomes, but rather to highlight what sort of reading might be enabled at the intersection of these lines of scholarship. As I will detail, these literatures open space to better understand the impetus and foundations of this effort in relation to gender, ethnicity, and other operations of social and spatial difference. Further, and importantly, analytics offered at the interstices of these approaches also help to understand that it is precisely through a focus on socio-spatial difference that the Turkish development effort comes undone, signaling failure.

Before offering such an analysis, it is first necessary to briefly sketch three key moments of Turkish historiography to be able to understand Turkey's modernist development impetus, and ongoing development challenges. The first is the establishment of the Republic in 1923, and subsequent Kemalist reforms. Following insights from postcolonial studies, analysis of state and nation building processes must also be attentive to the ways that these processes are iterative and contested. The second moment is the advent of the PKK<sup>6</sup> as an organized secessionist movement in the late 1970s, demarcating a decidedly Kurdish identity to oppose the notion of a unitary Turkish state and nation. The third moment is that of the 1997 refusal of the European Union to include Turkey on the list of candidate countries for accession, instead outlining a plan of financial and democratic reform specific to Turkey. Analysis of all three moments helps to foster an appreciation for how it is that state and nation building processes, and developmentalisms, are dynamic, contested, and importantly read through markers of social and spatial difference.

## Foundations of the Modern, Secular, Turkey<sup>7</sup>

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the 'father' of modern Turkey, was instrumental in establishing

---

<sup>6</sup> PKK stands for the Kurdish Workers Party, founded in 1979. The PKK has been the most significant Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey through violent engagement over questions of Kurdish identity and territoriality.

<sup>7</sup> I use the term secular throughout, recognizing the important intervention made by Andrew Davison (1998) and others, that secularism is not entirely appropriate for the Turkish context, given extensive state involvement in religious

the terms and territory of the emergent Turkish republic in the 1920s and 1930s. Rather than relying primarily on a shared past and history that commonly marks nationalist projects,<sup>8</sup> Atatürk expressly defined ‘Turkishness’ as forward-looking, emphasizing an ideal of what the modern secular Turkish nation would *become* through affinity with the West. Some have argued, in fact, that there was no term such as ‘Turk’ or ‘Turkey’ before the late 1800s or early 1900s,<sup>9</sup> with a deliberate framing of Turkishness only after the fall of the Ottoman Empire (Kirişçi, 1998). Attempting to forge a singular identity that would unify populations and create a nation and state loosely associated with the former seat of empire, the term *Türk* was deliberately defined as unitary and inclusive, superseding all previous identities (Deringil, 1998). While Kemalism attempted to cast Turkish citizenship in a way that would avoid privileging certain ethnic or linguistic groups over others, in practice, there have been marked inequalities for certain populations (such as Armenian and Greek Christians) throughout Turkish history.

As noted, Kemalism is primarily characterized by the effort to forge Turkish identity as the future of the nation—instituting bold reforms to disengage from Turkey’s Ottoman past. With Atatürk himself having been educated in Europe, Kemalism stresses ‘Western’ ideals of education, secularism, and modernism; a repugnance of ‘Oriental’ aspects of the Ottoman legacy; and a desire to mimic all that was ‘progressive’ and ‘good’ in the Western and European imagination. To this end, the Ottoman foundation on which Turkey rests was all but abandoned by the deliberate rewriting of Turkish identity and history through a suite of reforms: mandatory universal education, modernization of the Turkish language, and restrictions on dress to demonstrate Turkey’s Western character. In these senses, Turkey became a ‘mimic state’ and ‘mimic nation’ *par excellence*. While not forced through colonial pathways (in the sense that Homi Bhabha uses the term), the Turkish state fully incorporated Western and European ideals, including dichotomies between European modernism and non-European atavism.

Several state practices can be detailed as representative of the modernist Western logic forged by Kemalism. The first example is the insistence on a modern ‘Turkish’ language, adopting Western roman script to replace use of Arabic characters, thereby separating the language of modern ‘Turkey’ from its Ottoman past, and from Arabo-Turkic dialects of its southern and eastern neighbors. As Anderson (1983, 45) explains, the application of a novel and distinct ‘Turkish’ language was important for the

---

institutions and practices. Similarly, many of the notions of modernity predate Kemalist reforms, for instance efforts undertaken during the Tanzimat period of the Ottoman Empire (see Zürcher, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> For instance, Chatterjee (1993) describes the centrality of notions of India’s past towards forging newly independent postcolonial nationalisms, intent on rewriting their own histories as that of ‘modern states.’

<sup>9</sup> As Kirişçi notes with reference to thinker Ziya Gökalp, prior to the establishment of the Turkish Republic there were Turks, but no idea of the Turkish nation (1998, 232). Navaro-Yashin (2002, 10) suggests that the term *Türk* was used primarily in Europe to refer to the Ottomans, but was not used as a category for self-identification with any specific population during that time. R. Davison (1998, 118) somewhat differently describes the emergence of a Turkish nationalism as a reaction against Arabism in literature and following the Greek-Turkish war of 1897. He describes that these events led to a nascent nationalism around the notion of being a ‘Turk’, although the term had primarily been used by Ottoman elites to refer to Anatolian peasants. The associated term ‘Turkic’ generally refers to all peoples sharing Turkic linguistic dialects, but is different from the association with ‘Turk’, used more specifically to refer to Anatolian society and the modern geography of the Turkish state.

demarcation and insistence of boundaries of modern Turkey from its more geographically extensive Ottoman past. In addition to these linguistic inscriptions to demarcate Turkish territory, a number of reforms were also instituted to temporally isolate Turkey from its atavistic past. Wearing of the fez, female headcovering, and other modes of dress were outlawed due to their association with traditional religion and lifeways, framed as being inconsistent with a modern secular Turkey. In their place, Western dress and education were encouraged as attempts to redefine even the most personal aspects of the new Turkey for modern citizen-subjects. As stated in the 1925 hat law, “The issue of headgear, which is completely unimportant in and of itself, if of special value for Turkey who wants to become a member of the family of modern nations. We propose to abolish the hat currently worn, which has become a mark of difference between Turkey and other modern nations, and replace it with the hat that is the common headgear of all modern civilized nations” (cited in Cınar, 1998, 57).

Atatürk also forged the future of Turkey with particular attention to its women, proclaiming “The Turkish woman should be the most enlightened, most virtuous and reserved woman of the world” (cited in Arat, 1998, 1). Noting that Turkey’s progress as a nation was reliant on progress with respect to equality between men and women, Atatürk insisted that change was needed, “the failures of our past are due to the fact that we remained passive with respect to the fate of women” (cited in Moghadam, 1993, 82). Indeed, Kemalism ushered in equal voting rights for women in 1934, preceding Switzerland, Italy and other European neighbors. The Turkey imagined and defined by Kemalism would thus not only replicate, but even outpace Europe, adopting women’s rights, universal education, and a common language to fashion a unitary and modern Turkish state and nation. With respect to the key operations of difference critical to my argument, efforts to transcend ‘differences’ between Turkey and Europe were thus reliant on transcending ‘differences’ between men and women, while also solidifying a disjuncture between modern Turkey and the Ottoman past.

## Advent of the PKK, Kurdish Identity, and Resistance

One of the most significant and direct challenges to Atatürk’s unifying vision for the territory and people of modern Turkey found expression with the emergence of the Kurdish Worker’s Party (PKK) in 1979. Following years of sporadic rebellions in the southeast, the PKK emerged as a formal secessionist movement that overtly challenged the legitimacy and territory of the Turkish state. The Kurdish dominated southeast is the primary seat of the movement, as both the principal site of PKK raids against Turkish state installations, and of many state crackdowns against Kurdish separatists and sympathizers (McDowall, 2000, and Kirişci and Winrow, 1997 provide details on Kurdish identity, history, and resistance).

There remains considerable debate regarding what constitutes ‘Kurdishness,’ and how Kurdishness should be characterized in relation to other pluralistic identities in Turkey and throughout the Middle East. Even with such difficulties, it has been suggested that approximately 56% of the population in the southeastern Anatolia region is of Kurdish

origin, and that Kurds represent as much as a quarter of Turkey’s overall population (Kirişci and Winrow, 1997).<sup>10</sup> For scholars of Turkish history and Kurdish identity, it is increasingly argued that as with ‘Turkishness’, ‘Kurdishness’ is a recent category of identity, in fact, consolidated in dialectical relation with specific Republican state practices. For instance, Yeğen (1996) argues that Turkish state discourse created the “social space where Kurdish ethnic political identity was constituted” (217). Arguing that Kurdish resistance developed primarily in opposition “to the secular and national characteristics of the modern Turkish state” (224), he writes, “the constitution and exclusion of Kurdish identity was intrinsically related to the project of transforming an a-national, de-central, and disintegrated political, administrative, and economic space [under Ottoman rule] into a national, central, integrated one [under the Turkish Republic]. Indeed the exclusion of Kurdish identity was the outcome of that [state building] project” (226).<sup>11</sup> The rise of Kurdish identity, and Kurdish resistance, highlight the necessity of focusing on socio-spatial difference in relation to Turkish developmentalism in Turkey’s southeast.

## Uniting with Europe? Turkey and the EU

A final moment that serves to situate my reading of Turkish development in the southeast relates to ongoing debates about Turkish accession to the European Union. As an original signatory to the 1963 ‘association agreement’, Turkey has continually attempted to gain entry into the European Union. However, during the 1990s, there were repeated refusals on the part of the EU to accept Turkey as a candidate country for full membership. In December of 1997, Turkey was dealt what appeared at the time to be a decisive blow, as EU officials refused to include Turkey on a list of potential candidate countries, a list that included Poland, Slovenia, Hungary and Cyprus—several of which had only recently begun negotiations with the EU (Hale and Avci, 2001). Ankara’s response was furious, calling the decision a “violation” and “illegitimate” given earlier international agreements (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1997). At that time, the possibilities for Turkey’s acceptance appeared to narrow.

In 1999, Turkey stated it would attempt to gain entry to the list of candidate countries one final time, and if refused, would look towards enhanced alliances with its neighbors to the east (R. Davison, 1998; Hale and Avci, 2001). Resulting from this final push, Turkey was eventually accepted as a candidate country, with a list of reforms that would have to be undertaken to remain under consideration. Among them, abolition of the death penalty and improvement of human and cultural rights were noted. Consistent

---

<sup>10</sup> Kirişci places the estimate for of Turkey at 12 million (1998, 232).

<sup>11</sup> Related to these more nuanced appreciations of Kurdish identity and Turkish historiography it is also critical to note that Kurdish identity and separatism should not be viewed as synonymous, indeed many ‘Kurds’ are opposed to separatist arguments, and PKK tactics in particular (as Kirişci and Winrow, 1997, and Barkey and Fuller, 1998 discuss). Related to this, it is clear that associations of ‘Kurdishness’ as ‘anti-Turkish’ or as oppositional to the Turkish state are overly facile, as a number of scholars have pointed to long periods of support among Kurdish populations for Ottoman rule, and hybridized identities where Kurds identify forcefully with the Turkish state.

with EU directives, a number of other reforms have been enacted in the past several years. Among other changes, a 2002 law allows the teaching of Kurdish in special private foreign language schools (*özel dershane*),<sup>12</sup> and there has been some easing of restrictions against religious political parties. In the past several years, the platform of the ascendant Islamic Justice and Development Party has included further rapprochement with Europe, signaling a conjoining of secularist Kemalist ideals and contemporary Islamist politics.

## IV. SOCIO-SPATIAL ATAVISM AND GAP DEVELOPMENT TRANSFORMATION

These three moments: the Kemalist revolution; violent clashes between state forces and the PKK, and desire for inclusion in the European Union, come together as foundational to understand the contemporary moment—intensive transformation and modernization of the southeast border region through the Southeastern Anatolia Project, or GAP. The project potentially operates in the service of several distinct, yet interrelated, goals: to realize the goals of a modern ‘Western’ Turkey outlined through Kemalism, to overcome long-standing disparities between the southeast and the rest of the country that have fueled Kurdish separatism,<sup>13</sup> and to address elements of the Kurdish question, underdevelopment, and other issues that will improve Turkey’s chances of gaining admission to the EU. Transforming Turkey’s least developed and most contested administrative region to better meet these goals relies on spatial and temporal re-orderings of the physical and social geography of the upper Tigris-Euphrates basin. Reorganizing the seasonality and location of Tigris and Euphrates river waters according to agro-industry rather than natural pulses, altering the size and shape of agricultural plots to allow for more efficient irrigation, and coordinating social relations to promote democratic water management, are all practices that are simultaneously reorder and remake the social and physical landscape of Turkey’s southeastern border region.

As noted, I do not endeavor here to provide a general overview of the GAP project (see Çarkoğlu and Eder, 1998; Harris, 2002; Kolars and Mitchell, 1991). Instead, my focus is on what can be understood about this development effort through an analysis at the intersection of postdevelopmental, feminist geographic, and postcolonial approaches. As I will argue, these literatures highlight social and spatial difference as both *underwriting* and *undermining* GAP modernist development. Through much of GAP development discourse, the southeast is highlighted as Turkey’s primary ‘anachronistic space,’ seemingly stuck in a primal or prior, atavistic time. It is for this reason that the

---

<sup>12</sup> Prior to this law change, if one wanted to enroll in Kurdish language courses, this would have only been possible outside of Turkey.

<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that much of the PKK discourse focused on underdevelopment of the southeast. As such, continued poverty and economic disarticulation has been key to forging support for Kurdish separatist movements and aspirations.

southeast requires explicit state assistance to transcend the temporal and spatial divides that separate it from the rest of Turkey, and that serve to retrench notions of Turkey being distinct from Europe. Consider this quotation by Kinzer (1997) referring to former GAP President Ünver, he notes

“his goals are nothing less than to transform an arid tract of land the size of Austria into a fertile and prosperous garden, to break down a feudal structure in which most of its six million residents live in poverty and to provide so much work and opportunity that people will flow into the region from other parts of Turkey rather than fleeing in despair.”

In Ünver's own words (1997b, 467):

"Early in the next century, GAP's physical facilities will have been completed. Nineteen power plants will be humming to produce 27 billion KW of electricity annually, and farmers will be tilling 1.7 million acres of irrigated land, producing bountiful crops. Agro-industrial factories will dot the land, some 10 million people will be living in the region, mostly in the towns and there will be employment for almost everyone who asks for it. Extremes of misery will no longer exist, and prosperity will be evident for everyone except the most prejudiced and opinionated."

As is evident with these sorts of quotes, it is notable that even the biophysical geographies of the southeast, mountainous terrain extending to the very hot and dry semi-arid plains along the border with Syria, serve as topographic symbols of the obstacles to economic integration and development. Paralleling discussions by Radcliffe and Westwood (1996), notions of ethnicity figure into representations of the geography of the southeast. As the only majority Kurdish region, and as the primary site of ongoing separatist conflict, the southeast's atavism is necessarily articulated through notions of Kurdishness. As postdevelopment scholars teach us, it is important to be attentive to how cultural assumptions play into notions of who is 'underdeveloped' (in this case rural Kurdish and Arabic speaking citizens). As I have noted elsewhere, it is also clear that underdevelopment in the region is also conditioned by the diverse histories of conflict that mark this region (consider high rates of illiteracy as a primary indicator of underdevelopment, for instance, given that Kurdish print media was banned for a considerable period of time, Harris, 2002).

Added to the centrality of ethnicity, and ethnic conflict, to understanding the representations and conditions of the region, gender also is central in terms of how the atavism of the southeast is imagined and cast. As McClintock (1995) and others have argued, in many cases notions of gender difference or 'regressive' gender relations often serve to justify intervention as part of the Western civilizing mission under colonialism. Indeed, in colonial contexts, the status and situation of women were often taken as markers for 'backwards' cultures or economies, making the position of women also of particular concern for newly independent postcolonial states to gain legitimacy



(Abu-Lughod, 1998; Chatterjee, 1993). As innumerable examples have shown us, the situation of women, and gender relations generally, are also major preoccupations of development discourse and practice (e.g. Abu Lughod, 1998; Escobar, 1995; Chatterjee, 1993; Craske, 2005). Indeed, Cohen (1989, 223) writes, “Women, ethnic groups, and youth, are identified...as target groups that must ‘catch up’...they require greater attention.”

The case of GAP development is no exception. Picking up on the preoccupation with women in Kemalist discourse and practice, GAP entails considerable attention to the woman question; focusing on civil society participation, as well as particular efforts to reduce natality, promote literacy, and related concerns. In fact, ‘evidence’ that the southeast remains ‘backwards’ and ‘underdeveloped’ often hinges on gender differentiated statistics. For instance, planners make reference to ‘fact’ that women of the southeast have ‘too many children’ (rates of fertility were approximately 4.35 in 1990, versus 2.65 for Turkey as a whole; GAP-RDA 1997). Female illiteracy (56% of women compared to 82% of men), practices of polygamy, and low rates of female participation in public life are all commonly cited as indicators that mark the southeast as ‘underdeveloped.’ As feminist development scholars have often noted, while modernization projects might promote women’s education and other aims to further women’s potential and societal role, these interventions may also subject women to increasing modes of discipline, regulation, and processes of normalization—allowing new societal forms that “usher(ed) in new forms of gendered subjection (in the double sense of subject-positions for women and forms of domination) as well as new experiences and possibilities” (Abu-Lughod, 1998, 13). Given this ambiguous potential, many consider that it is necessary to view the potential of modernization projects that target women with skepticism, echoing critiques of certain forms of Western feminism (e.g. Abu Lughod, 1998; Mohanty, 1991; Ahmed, 1992).<sup>14</sup>

Paralleling the assessment of indigenous women from the highlands in Ecuador (Radcliffe and Westwood, 1996), in the case of Turkey it is Kurdish and Arabic speaking women who are interpellated as being in need of state attention and reform. It is also these (rural, minority, religious, veiled) women that stand in as the multi-ethnic Anatolian village women of Turkey’s past, in contrast to the ‘modern Turkish woman’ (urban, middle class, secular) of Turkey’s future.<sup>15</sup> Among critiques by Kurdish feminists that highlight these issues of socio-spatial difference, Kurdish feminist Fatma Kayhan notes that family planning efforts aimed at reducing fertility in the region constitute ‘genocide of the wombs of Kurdish women’ (cited in Açıık, 2002, p. 296). While such a critique is likely to be overstated, there are clearly culturalist biases in developmentalist

---

<sup>14</sup> Ahmed’s critique is instructive for the Turkish case, as she highlights feminist attention to the veil in Islamic contexts to demonstrate how certain feminist preoccupations may serve colonial domination.

<sup>15</sup> As one of the few works that highlights similar themes to those I emphasize here—gender, modernity, and discursive underpinnings of development practice—Sarah Radcliffe and Sallie Westwood’s *Remaking the Nation* (1996) offers a key comparison. In their book, they analyze state portrayals of rural indigenous women from the Andes as a ‘problem’ and target of development. They argue that Ecuadorean state planners pursue the ideal represented by non-indigenous urban woman, who stands in for visions of ‘modernity’ articulated through Eurocentric notions of progress. Important for my conceptualization here, they also highlight spatial and temporal framings of these issues and the variable geographies that underpin such ideas.

characterizations of the southeast, framing the predominantly Kurdish population as ‘lacking’, ‘in need of catching up’ or in need of discipline and development. Such a critique draws centrally on the interventions of postdevelopment scholars (e.g. Shiva, 1993 and Escobar, 1995).

As geographic development literatures have often highlighted, in addition to the representations of landscape, there are other spatial considerations related to ways that social differences are cast. In this example, it is rural spaces of the southeast that are ‘backward’ and ‘atavistic’ vis a vis Turkey’s urban ‘developed’ West. Indeed, during field work in Ankara and the southeast region, words such as ‘backward’, ‘tribal’, ‘traditional’, ‘illiterate’<sup>16</sup> were frequently invoked by GAP planners to refer to social and cultural attributes of the region. Whether related to the physical geography, Kurdish separatism or linguistic obstacles, all of these elements come together to situate the geography of southeast as Turkey’s primary anachronistic space. As such, it is not only the literal border zone of Turkey with respect to its Arab and Muslim ‘non-democratic’ neighbors to the south and east, but is also the border area where the Kemalist modern developmental vision appears to reach its limit. In the spaces of the southeast, Turkey’s modern developmental vision has been repeatedly frustrated, directly, through violent separatist campaigns, or indirectly, as the space that has not yet followed Kemalist prescription. Importantly, this has also been the region most affected by the Gulf Wars and interventions in Iraq over the past twenty years, having suffered economically due to loss of trade with neighboring Iraq during the conflict and sanctions, and more recent cross-border Turkish military interventions in search of PKK rebels. Through the alteration of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the establishment of women’s centers, and related efforts, GAP endeavors to redefine Turkey’s spatio-temporalities of the region, and in so doing, holds the potential to reposition Turkey along the spatio-temporal divide between tradition and modernity that separates Turkey from its ‘European’ neighbors. Indeed, the central preoccupations of the EU in terms of needed political and economic reforms all center squarely on the southeast, whether with respect to economic development, Kurdish cultural rights, border security with neighbors to the east, rising Islamisms, and other issues that mark the region.

To this point, I have traced elements of Turkish developmentalism with the GAP project, and have drawn on parallels and contributions from postdevelopmental, and feminist geographic scholarship. Reading GAP development in relation to those literatures underscores notions of social difference, notably gender and ethnicity, as central to Turkey’s imagined geography of what southeastern Anatolia is, and what it should be. It is the project of specifically highlighting potential contributions of postcolonial scholarship to such a reading that I now turn.

---

<sup>16</sup> These terms appear in GAP planning documents to describe socio-cultural characteristics of the southeast region and were also iterated in interviews with planners.

## V. KEY TENSIONS AND AMBIVALENCES: ENGAGEMENT WITH POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

As promised, my aim is to engage with contributions from postcolonial theory, specifically the concepts of *mimicry* and *ambivalence* introduced earlier, to enrich the analysis of socio-spatial difference in relation to contemporary GAP development. As noted, Homi Bhabha uses the term ‘ambivalence’ to capture the ways that colonial relations and emergent nationalisms are inherently contradictory, generating the seeds of their own destruction. Bhabha writes that ambivalence finds expression in the necessary doubleness that haunts colonialism, or the very idea of the nation. For instance, because nationalism is narrated in relation to cultural boundaries, these boundaries also offer the possibility of transgression, as “thresholds of meanings that may be crossed, erased, and translated in the process of cultural production” (Bhabha, 1990, 4).<sup>17</sup> Ambivalence captures the ways that insistence on boundaries or other aspects of nation building necessarily also opens up spaces and possibilities to disrupt those very processes (see also Kaplan et al, 1999).

As I’ve argued, while not forced through colonial pathways, Turkey has arguably become a mimic nation and mimic state *par excellence*.<sup>18</sup> Kemalist longings to be ‘Western’ and ‘modern’ expose a fascination with, desire for, and fetishization of the ‘West’. With repeated failed attempts to gain entry to the EU, Turkey’s recurring assertions of its ‘Europeanness’ also reveal the ambivalent possibility that this mimicry may never be realized. Given current debates related to Turkey’s attempts to gain acceptance to the EU, often these debates turn on a sense of ‘not-christian not-quite’—revealing fundamental dissonances with respect to attempts to be accepted as part of ‘Europe.’

### Regulating Gender

Returning to aspects of socio-spatial difference, I have argued that gender and ethnicity, in part, underwrite contemporary GAP development transformation in the southeast. Attentiveness to concepts of mimicry and ambivalence invites a reading of gender and ethnicity not only as underwriting GAP development, but also as undermining GAP modernization efforts, marking precisely where efforts to define Turkey as ‘modern’ come undone.

With respect to gender, rising Islamisms and debates over use of the veil in Turkey provide visible markers of Turkey’s ‘difference’ in relation to neighboring Europe (see Göle 1996 for discussion of veil debates in Turkey). As noted, Kemalist ideals of the

---

<sup>17</sup> Bhabha’s notion of ambivalence draws heavily on theories of language, notably the work of Derrida, arguing that because the nation is a form of narrative, its meaning is never fixed, and is always tentative and displaced, revealing its ambivalence.

<sup>18</sup> In this sense, my use of mimicry differs somewhat from Bhabha’s. For instance, he tends to discuss mimicry as forced, whereas with the Turkish context this is not the case. As I detail, however, there are also aspects of forced mimicry related to assimilation of Kurds in Turkey.

educated, secular, modern Turkish woman found expression in a number of reforms that specifically targeted women's status. Among such laws, the ban on the veil in public buildings is a highly charged symbol of the tension between Kemalism's ideal of 'modern Turkish woman' in contrast with the 'atavistic religious woman' of Turkey's past. As Atatürk himself said "In the future it will be necessary to search for covered and veiled women (only) in history books..." (cited in Cinar, 1998, 68). To outlaw the veil in public spaces is an attempt not only to foster 'modernity,' but in fact, to regulate it, demonstrating Turkey's modern and secular character by disallowing markers of religiosity that are considered to be gender regressive. As Bhabha's mimicry suggests, this insistence on 'sameness', in this case with respect to replicating Western dress, leads precisely to its failure, resulting in menace.

While early Kemalist reforms encouraged Western dress over traditional attire in a general sense, the overt ban on women's headcoverings in public buildings has proven to be a key conflict in contemporary Turkish gender politics (again, see Göle, 1996; Ahmed, 1992; Secor, 2002; Gökarıksel and Mitchell, 2006). One very visible contest over the veil came to a head on the first day in session of a newly elected female parliamentarian (emblematic of Turkey's 'progress' and 'success' in achieving gender parity in ways that outpace some countries of Europe or the U.S.).<sup>19</sup> Entering the chamber with a headscarf, she was booed out of the session by the other parliamentarians. The other parliamentarians booed her precisely because she was challenging the Kemalist insistence on secularism and gender equity, however, somewhat ironically, the result of their doing so was also to mark her differentially as 'woman', creating an environment hostile to certain female parliamentarians. Similar consequences can be read in relation to the ban on headscarves keeping many young girls from being able to attend school, or university. Young women are frequently denied entry to college entrance exams if they are veiled. Without the exam, the girls are unable to attend university. Thus, the strict regulation against the veil has the effect of denying these girls educational opportunities. In a similar vein, in the GAP region, girls are often withdrawn from school before they reach puberty as it is commonly considered inappropriate to allow girls and boys in the same classroom after a certain age. In conversations with GAP planners I have asked directly if single-sex classrooms would be considered to enable girls to continue their education, particularly as issues of women's illiteracy and participation in public life are most marked in this 'traditional' and 'religious' region.<sup>20</sup> The response to this suggestion was that sex-segregated classrooms would go against the Kemalist vision of gender equity. In all of these examples, the insistence on regulating a particular vision of 'gender equity' has the opposite effect—differentially marking 'women', keeping girls from educational opportunities, and reinforcing gender divides. The ban on the veil is also expressly invoked in popular discourse to challenge Turkey's 'Europeaness'. For instance, in

---

<sup>19</sup> Turkey has often had higher percentages of female parliamentarians than the U.S. has had female congressional delegates, with a notable high-ranking female, Tansu Çiller, serving as Prime Minister in the early 1990s.

<sup>20</sup>As discussed elsewhere (Harris and Atalan, 2002), there have been a series of women-only centers established in the southeast that have been successful with respect to women's literacy programs. In interviews and focus group discussions, women cite the safety of the women-only spaces as crucial for their ability to secure permission from their families for attendance.

recent interviews (2007) with women's NGOs in Turkey one activist expressed dismay that only Turkey stands out with respect to the rest of Europe in terms of disallowing veils in universities, contrasting the law with France's prohibition that only affects children, but not adults. Perhaps even more notable, the democratic crises in the spring of 2007 related to the nomination of Abdullah Gül as a presidential candidate were largely tied to the potential that his wife, a 'covered' woman, occupying the presidential residence. While the special democratic election called for July 2007 successfully averted a military intervention, there is lingering uncertainty related to the heavily charged symbolism around the veil, and what these means for the future of Kemalist secular and gender-equity ideals.

Such examples reveal key 'ambivalences' of Turkey's gender practices and development policies. It is precisely those efforts to regulate or aggressively demonstrate Turkey's modernity, secularism, and Europeanness that serve as the sites where the project falls into question. Instead of proving that Turkey is 'western' 'secular' and 'modern' these are the very practices that the European Union and other observers point to as examples of the Turkish state's 'undemocratic' 'amodern' and 'un-European' character. It is also possible to imagine that these policies, through an insistence on particular notions of secularism, are also in part responsible for fueling rising Islamisms of the past several decades, against affirming a notion of Turkish 'difference' vis-a-vis Europe. As the region of the country where women's education is least common, veiling is the norm, and Islamist movements are particularly on the rise, the southeast region is a focal points for all of these debates and ambiguities.

## Contested Nationalisms

In a parallel sense, it is precisely those moments where Turkish state practices forcefully insist on demonstrating or proving its modernity that other elements of the modernist nationalist project come undone. Building on the notion of the southeast as anachronistic space elaborated above, similar ambivalences emerge with respect to Turkish modernization efforts in the southeast. The insistence on creating a modern unitary Turkish space in line with the boundaries shown on contemporary international maps serves instead to mark precisely the point consolidating a unitary 'Turkey' falls into question. Returning to Yeğen's (1996) argument with respect to the emergence of Kurdish identity in dialectical relation to Turkish state practices, it is clear that it is the degree of insistence of Turkish state practices on a singular 'Turkish' ethno-linguistic identity is precisely what fosters and cements elements of Kurdish identity formation. Consider, for instance, the ways that restrictions on use of Kurdish language, or the fact that even identifying as a Kurd landed some in jail, might serve to galvanize opposition against the Turkish state and serve to build support for the Kurdish separatist movement. In this case again, it is precisely the degree of insistence on certain visions of a modern unitary *Turkish* state that defines the field of Kurdish identify formation, and resistance. Indeed, these policies, and the military conflict of the past several decades, have served in part to create the very conditions of 'underdevelopment' that serve to define the Kurdish-dominated southeast at present. For instance, low rates of literacy

are directly attributable to bans on print media and broadcasting in Kurdish, as well as prohibitions against schooling in Kurdish (many families have opted to keep children out of school altogether). Similarly patterns of economic underdevelopment and disinvestment in the southeast are clearly affected by the ongoing conflict between the PKK and Turkish military, as well conflicts across the border in Iraq (see Harris, 2002). In all of these ways, Kurdish identity, resistance, and economic underdevelopment of the Kurdish-dominated southeast can only be understood in relation to Turkish state practices to foster, and regulate, a *modern, unitary, and Turkish Republic*. Associated with these practices, European politicians, academics and human rights activists have waged heavy criticism against the Turkish state. At the moment, granting greater linguistic and cultural rights to Kurdish populations remains a concern frequently brought to the attention to the Turkish government, and is one of the key issues highlighted by the European Commission with respect to continuing obstacles to Turkey's accession (European Commission, 2006; Dahlman, 2004).

As with contestations related to the veil, the history of the Kurdish conflict and associated state policies offers another clear signpost for Turkey's ambivalence in a postcolonial sense. In brief, certain state practices intended to solidify unitary 'Turkish identity,' instead have served to generate and cement 'Kurdish identity'. The mimicry in this instance is the forced assimilation of Kurds, forcing use of Turkish language and other specific guidelines, yet they never quite become 'Turks.' Here again, the state project generates the seeds of its own destruction, resulting in the menace of PKK separatist violence in the southeast, calling into question the very legitimacy and sanctity of the Turkish state apparatus and Turkish state territory. Related to this, consider Dahlman's (2004) point that the many Kurdish asylum seekers who fled the violence of the southeast serve as visible markers of Turkey's repressive practices in the spaces of contemporary Europe, harming Turkey's EU accession possibilities. In this way as well, the degree of insistence serves to define the very boundaries where the project of forging a modern, 'European' state and nation comes undone.

As Bhabha describes, we need "to see the cultural not as the *source* of conflict - *different* cultures- but as the *effect* of discriminatory practices - the production of cultural *differentiation* as signs of authority... Hybridity intervenes in the exercise of authority not merely to indicate the impossibility of its identity but to represent the unpredictability of its presence (1994, 114 emphasis original). In the case of hybridized Kurdish-Turkish subjectivities that emerge in the southeast, these associations have been mutually constituted in and through separatist violence and state repression related to multi-ethnic and multi-lingual populations. Mirroring state cultural violence, PKK resistance constitutes menace for the sanctity, territory, and legitimacy of the Turkish state, mocking the "essentialism necessary to preserve authority (that) must be exceeded in the articulation of differentiating, discriminating identities" (*ibid* 114). As Lloyd explains, such paradoxes are characteristic of nationalism generally, while nationalism may summon into being a 'people', it is always confronted with those people as a potentially disruptive excess over the nation and the state (1997, 189). This is precisely Bhabha's idea of 'doubleness' of the nation and its subjects, serving as markers of ambivalence. In the case of Turkey, PKK resistance and Kurdish identity are in part constituted by Turkish repression and denial of the same, rendering the state apparatus 'problematic'.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The Southeastern Anatolia region marks those ambivalent spaces where Turkish state, nation, and development aspirations fall into crisis—revealing Turkey as non-unitary, non-democratic, un-modern, and non-Western. With distinct patterns of underdevelopment in the region, in part resulting from decades-long Kurdish conflict, the southeast undermines Turkish ‘unity’ (due to continuing separatist challenges from Kurdish factions) its ‘modernity’ (due to perceived excesses of Turkish state violence and repression, as well as economic disarticulation and associations with gender regressive practices) and ‘Westernness’ (as the poorest, most ‘traditional’, and among the most religious regions). The situation of the southeast, from school closures and village raids, to rural poverty, to lack of participation by girls in schools, and mass migrations all serve, as visible markers of the state’s excess in pursuit of modernist and nationalist ideals.

I have also argued that social difference, specifically gender and ethnicity, are central to defining the spatial difference in the southeast. The atavism of the southeast, defined in relation to gender and ethnicity provides rationale for its transformation, and for massive state intervention. My attention to the co-invention of the ‘gender problem’ and the ‘Kurdish problem’ in the space of the southeast builds on recent work on gender and nation (e.g. Mayer, 2000; Radcliffe, 1996), broadening the focus of other gender and development scholarship to consider other operations of social and spatial difference. In the case of state-led development in the GAP region, the Turkish state simultaneously relies on, and attempts to overcome key operations of difference: man/woman, Turkish/Kurdish, developed/undeveloped, European/non-European. As I have argued, efforts to transcend these dichotomies serve to underwrite modernist development practices. Importantly, there are also ways in which efforts to transcend these dichotomies also may serve, in part, to retrench these differences (see also Harris, 2006).

Engaging postcolonial theory to understand a seemingly non-colonial sites serves to rupture limited associations of the ‘post’ colonial with previously colonial spaces (e.g. McClintock, 1992). I have sought to demonstrate the relevance of these concepts with diverse times and spaces, regardless of specific histories of imperialism. As McClintock argues, to privilege imperial relations in postcolonial analyses is also to obscure contemporary features and operations of power, be they uneven relations of military power, or differential relations to circuits of capitalism. Considering specific socio-spatial articulations and processes of uneven power relations, such as that which situates Turkey in opposition to ‘Europe’ or the southeast in opposition to other parts of Turkey, also enhances attentiveness to the role of space and time in uneven relations and operations of power. While I haven’t been able to detail these connections, it should be clear that Turkish developmentalism is necessarily linked to broader circuits of power, whether broader processes of colonialism, global feminisms, or international developmentalisms.

Returning to my central aim of adding to calls for enriched conversation between postdevelopmental, postcolonial and feminist geographic approaches, I hope my

reading of Turkish state development highlights the value of thinking spatially about development encounters and contact zones. Postcolonial theory, in particular, offers some particularly fruitful analytics to analyze the fissures, slippages, and contradictions associated with modernization efforts. In my reading, understanding socio-spatial difference not only as central to *underwriting*, but also as *undermining* Turkish modernization efforts is only possible by considering concepts and elements at the intersection of these literatures. Drawing on postcolonial theory specifically, I have argued that attempts to overcome ‘differences’ in the Turkish case mark the necessary ‘ambiguities’ and ‘failures’ of Turkish modernization efforts. I am hopeful as well that the example I have detailed here also adds corrective to Bhabha’s own work, demonstrating the value of these analytics for understandings of social difference and gender, and also enabling examinations of the power-laden and contested construction of particular spaces and geographies—aspects that have been the subject of critique against Bhabha’s scholarship (e.g. Sparke, 2005).<sup>21</sup> I am also hopeful that the example from Turkey offers at least a partial response to Radcliffe’s (2005) query as to whether postcolonial theory is able to provide politically engaged and materially based frameworks for understanding patterns of development. I believe that it does.

As Ryan (2004) notes there is a great deal to be learned, and unlearned, from postcolonial studies. I have only been able to explore some of these engagements here. Still other work focused on questions of representation, voice, and multiculturalism, have yet to be taken up fully in development geography (Simon, 2005), a particularly exciting possibility particularly considering the intersection with feminist work (Laurie with Calla, 2004, Sharp, 2003). Whatever the points of engagement, it is important to maintain that postcolonial perspectives do not necessarily offer “a simple or straightforward way out of complex theoretical and practical issues and questions. Instead they open layers of questions about what underpins and is taken for granted in western geographical narratives and how they have been inextricably entangled with the world they seek to analyze and mistaken for self contained, universal and eternal truths (Sidaway, 2000, 607).” It seems we have only just begun to benefit from these intersections, possibilities, and ambiguities.

---

<sup>21</sup> Sparke (2005) faults Bhabha for being oblivious to the regulative geographies of nationalism that maintain the place and space of the nation-state. My example from Turkey engages analytics offered by Bhabha, while attentive to the production of these regulative geographies, and related power dynamics and exclusions.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abu-Lughod, L. (Ed.), 1998. *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Açık, Necla, 2002. Ulusal Mücadelede Kadın Mitosu ve Kadınların Harekete Geçirilmesi: Türkiye'deki Çağdaş Kürt Kadın Dergilerinin bir Analizi. In: Bora, A. and Günel İletişim, A. (Eds.), *90'larda Türkiye'de Feminizm (Ninety Years of Feminism in Turkey)*(originally published in German, translated by Tanil Bora). İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, pp. 279-306.
- Ahmed, L. (Ed.), 1992. *Woman and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
- Anderson, B., 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, London.
- Arat, Z., 1998. *Deconstructing Images of 'the Turkish woman'*. St. Martin's Press, New York.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H., 1998. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. Routledge, London.
- Barkey, H. J. and G. E. Fuller, 1998. *Turkey's Kurdish Question*. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD.
- Bhabha, H., 1990. *Nation and Narration*. Routledge, London and New York.
- Bhabha, H., 1994. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, London.
- Briggs, J. and J. Sharp, 2004. Indigenous Knowledges and development: a postcolonial caution. *Third World Quarterly* 25(4), 661 - 676.
- Chatterjee, P., 1993. *The Nation and its Fragments*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Cınar, A., 1998. *Bodies, Places and Time: Islamic Visibilities in the Public Sphere and the Contestations of Secular Modernity in Turkey*. PhD Thesis, Political Science Department. University of Pennsylvania, 247 pp.
- Cohen, Y. (Ed.), 1989. *Women and Counter-Power*. Black Rose Books, Montreal.
- Çarkoglu, A. and M. Eder, 1998. The Southeast Anatolia Development Project. *CIDC Insight: Turkey* 18 (July), 111-123.
- Cravey, A., 1998. Engendering the Latin American State. *Progress in Human Geography* 22 (4), 523-542.
- Craske, N., 2005. Ambiguities and ambivalences in making the nation: women and politics in 20th century Mexico. *Feminist Review* 79, 116-133.
- Curry, G. 2003. Moving beyond postdevelopment: facilitating indigenous alternatives for 'development', *Economic Geography* 79(4), pp. 405 - 423.

- Dahlman, C., 2004. Turkey's accession to the European Union: the geopolitics of enlargement. *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 45 (8), 553-574.
- Dahlman, C., 2002. The political geography of Kurdistan. *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 43 (4), 271-299.
- Davison, A., 1998. *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey: a hermeneutic reconsideration*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
- Davison, R., 1998. *Turkey: A Short History*. The Eothen Press, Huntingdon.
- Deringil, S., 1998. From Ottoman to Turk: Self-Image and Social Engineering in Turkey. In: Gladney, D.C. (Ed.), *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, pp. 217-226.
- Escobar, A., 1995. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- European Commission, 2006. *Enlargement strategy and main challenges 2006-2007*. Brussels.
- Fanon, F., 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press, New York.
- Ferguson, J., 1994. *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development', Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- GAP-RDA, 1997. *Women and GAP Towards 21st Century* (September). Ankara.
- Gökarıksel, B. and K. Mitchell, 2005. Veiling, secularism, and the neoliberal subject: National narratives and supranational desires in Turkey and France. *Global Networks* 5 (2), 147-165.
- Göle, N., 1996. *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.
- Gramsci, A., 1971/1997. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. International Publishers, New York.
- Gregory, D., 1994. *Geographical Imaginations*. Blackwell, Oxford.
- Gupta, A., 1998. *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India*. Duke University Press, Durham, NC.
- Hale, W. and G. Avci, 2001. Turkey and the European Union: The Long Road to Membership. In: Rubin, B & Kirişci, K (Eds.), *Turkey in World Politics: an emerging regional power*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 31-48.
- Harris, L., 2002. Water and conflict geographies of the Southeastern Anatolia Project. *Society and Natural Resources* 15, 743-759.
- Kaplan, C. & Alarcon, N. (Eds.), et al., 1999. *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State*. Duke University Press, Durham, NC.

- Kinzer, S., 1997. Restoring the Fertile Crescent to its former glory. *New York Times*, May 27: A4: 3.
- Kirişci, K. and Winrow, G.M., 1997. *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-state Ethnic Conflict*. Frank Cass, London.
- Kirişci, K., 1998. Minority/Majority Discourse: The Case of the Kurds in Turkey In: Gladney, D.C. (Ed.), *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, pp. 227-245.
- Kolars, J. F. and W. A. Mitchell, 1991. *The Euphrates River and the Southeast Anatolia Development Project*. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale.
- Kothari, U. 2001. Feminist and Postcolonial Challenges to Development. In: Kothari, U. and M. Minogue (Eds.), *Development Theory and Practice: Critical Perspectives*. Palgrave, Hampshire, pp. 33 - 51.
- Laurie, N. with P. Calla, 2004. Development, Postcolonialism and Feminist Political Geography. In: Staeheli, L.A., Kofman, E. and Peake, L., *Mapping Women, Making Politics*. Routledge, New York and London, pp. 99-112.
- Lloyd, D., 1997. Nationalism against the state. In: Lowe, L. and Lloyd, D. (Eds.), *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*. Duke University Press, Durham, NC, pp. 173-197.
- Martin, P. M., 2005. Comparative topographies of neoliberalism in Mexico. *Environment and Planning A* 37, 203-220.
- Mayer, T. (Ed.), 2000. *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*. Routledge, New York and London.
- McClintock, A., 1995. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. Routledge, New York.
- McClintock, A. 1992. The angel of progress: pitfalls of the term "post-colonialism". *Social Text* 31/32, 84 - 98.
- McDowall, D., 2000. *A Modern History of the Kurds*. St. Martin's Press, New York.
- McEwan, C., 2003. Material geographies and postcolonialism. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 24(3), 340 - 355.
- McFarlane, C., 2006. Transnational development networks: bringing development and postcolonial approaches into dialogue. *The Geographical Journal* 172 (1), 35- 49.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1997. Statement of the Turkish Government Regarding the Luxembourg Summit (Accession Negotiations with Greek Cypriots). Ministry of Information Affairs, Information Department, Republic of Turkey. 14 December 1997. <http://www.mfs.gof.tr/grupb/ba/baa97/december/02.html> (last accessed November 2, 2003).
- Moghadam, V. M., 1993. *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle*

- East. Lynne Rienner, Boulder and London.
- Mohanty, C., 1991. Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism. In: C. Mohanty, A. Russo and L. Torres (Eds.), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, pp. 1-47.
- Nash, C. 2002, Cultural geography: postcolonial cultural geographies. *Progress in Human Geography* 26(2), pp.219 - 230.
- Navaro-Yashin, Y., 2002. *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Power, M., 2006. Anti-racism, deconstruction and 'overdevelopment'. *Progress in Development Studies*, 6 (1), 24-39.
- Radcliffe, S., 2005. Development and Geography: towards a postcolonial development geography? *Progress in Human Geography* 29 (3), 291-298.
- Radcliffe, S., 1996. Gendered Nations: nostalgia, development and territory in Ecuador. *Gender, Place and Culture* 3, 5-21.
- Radcliffe, S. and Westwood, S., 1996. *Remaking the Nation: place, identity, and politics in Latin America*. Routledge, London.
- Radcliffe, S. and N. Laurie, 2006. Culture and development: taking culture seriously in development for Andean indigenous people. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24, 231 - 248.
- Ryan, J. 2004. Postcolonial Geographies. In: J. S. Duncan, N. C. Johnson and R. H. Schein (Eds), *A Companion to Cultural Geography*. Blackwell, Malden, MA, pp. 469 – 484.
- Said, E., 1978. *Orientalism*. Vintage, New York.
- Scott, J., 1998. *Seeing Like a State*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
- Secor, A., 2002. The veil and urban space in Istanbul: women's dress, mobility, and Islamic knowledge. *Gender, Place and Culture* 1 (9), 5-22.
- Sharp, J., 2003. Feminist and postcolonial engagements. In J. Agnew, D. Mitchell and G. Toal (Eds.) *A companion to political geography*, Blackwell, 59-74.
- Shiva, V., 1993. *The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology and Politics*. Third World Network, Penang, Malaysia.
- Sidaway, J., 2000. Postcolonial Geographies: an exploratory essay. *Progress in Human Geography* 24(4), 591 - 612.
- Simon, D., 2005. (Post)development and Postcolonialism: Separated by common ground?. *Forum for Development Studies* 2, 321-336.
- Sparke, M. 2007. Everywhere but always somewhere: critical geographies of the global south. *The Global South* 1(1), 117 - 126.

- Sparke, M. 2005. *In the Space of Theory: postfoundational geographies of the nation-state*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Spivak, G., 1988. Can the subaltern speak?. In: Nelson, C. and Grossberg, L., *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*. University of Illinois Press, Urbana, IL., pp. 271-316.
- Sylvester, C., 1999. Development Studies and postcolonial studies; disparate tales of the 'Third World'. *Third World Quarterly* 204 (4), 703-721.
- Ünver, I.H. Olcay, 1997a. Southeastern Anatolia integrated development project (GAP), Turkey: an overview of issues and sustainability. *Water Resources Development* 13 (2), 187-207.
- Ünver, I. H. Olcay, 1997b. Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP), *Water Resources Development* 13 (2), 453-483.
- Uzuner, B., 2000. *Mediterranean Waltz*. Remzi Kitabevi, Istanbul.
- Wainwright, J. Forthcoming. *Decolonizing Development: Colonial Power and the Maya*. Blackwell, London.
- Wainwright, J. 2005. The geographies of political ecology: after Edward Said. *Environment and Planning A* 37, 1033 - 1043.
- Yeğen, M., 1996. The Turkish State Discourse and Exclusion of Kurdish Identity. In: Kedourie, S. (Ed.), *Turkey, Identity, Democracy, Politics*. Frank Cass, London, pp. 216-229.
- Zürcher, E.-J., 2005. Ottoman Sources of Kemalist Thought. In: Ozdalga, E., *Late Ottoman Society: the intellectual legacy*. Routledge, London, pp. 14-27.