Alexander E. Balistreri

Universität Basel, Switzerland
alexander.balistreri@unibas.ch

Mert Peksen

Universität Osnabrück, Germany
mert.peksen@uni-osnabrueck.de

Borders, Territory, and the Republic of Turkey

1. Introduction

Where do the borders of the Turkish Republic come from, what do they mean for citizens of Turkey, and how are they maintained? Such questions, it is true, might be asked about any nation-building project. Indeed, nations everywhere have been defined through modern practices of bordering, of claiming increasingly exact territory and extending uncontested sovereignty to its very limits. Yet, as editors of this special issue of *Diyâr*, we posit that questions of borders and territoriality exhibit unique features in the Turkish case. At its most basic level, the circumstances of Turkey's emergence after the First World War make it a compelling country to study borders and territoriality. Turkey comprises, like Austria or Hungary, the imperial territory 'left over' after the Entente was finished with the post-war restructuring of Europe. In charge of a rump state succeeding a polyethnic land empire, Turkey's leaders thus had to reconcile the drive to fashion a homogeneous nation-state with the reality of borders that were formed on an *ad hoc* basis.[1] What makes Turkey unique even among other post-imperial rump states, however, is that the future founders of the Republic had a more active role to play in the delineation of its borders. At times, they partially succeeded in imposing their vision of territory; at others, however, they were forced to compromise on borders with colonialist France and Great Britain and with the Soviet Union.[2] These processes entailed massive violence and deep disappointment, but they also allowed for a triumphalist discourse of territorial defence against all odds. The fact that Turkey's borders cannot be characterized as primarily 'natural' *or* primarily imposed generates a productive tension in discourse and in scholarship, one that we seek with this special issue to investigate further.

When it comes to borders and territoriality, however, there is much more to research when it comes to Turkey's borders than the oft-repeated story of their delineation. The Turkish border regime is embedded in a much longer institutional history of border production and maintenance that stretches back to the mid-nineteenth century, if not earlier.[3] Moreover, the contestation over their course continued into the mid-twentieth century[4] and beyond, particularly in the form of Kurdish secession movements. In this long-term institutional context, the ways in which the Turkish state and Turkish citizens ascribe meanings to borders, and maintain or contest them, also remain fasci-

1 Barkey 1997.
2 Balistreri 2022.
3 Gavrilis 2008.
4 Tejel 2023.

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nating (and less studied) avenues for research. In this brief introduction to the special issue of *Diyâr*, we use examples from the literature on Turkish borders – alongside our contributors' own texts – to highlight the *non-unitary nature* of these borders and the practices that maintain and reproduce them. Contrary to narratives that assume (or promote) an idea of a homogeneous border regime, the contributions to this special issue demonstrate that the history of emergence in the east, south, and west of the country are the result of different processes, while bordering practices today continue to differ in aim and scope all around the country. This 'fragmented' approach to Turkish borders reveals a number of 'productive tensions'-areas in which state image and practice do not match – that serve as areas for further scholarly exploration.

2. Contradictory Meanings Ascribed to Turkish Borders

Most scholars no longer see nation-state boundaries simply as physical markings or natural divisions of geographic zones or ethnographic collectives. Spatial concepts, like borders, are not static and given, but learned and shaped through interaction and discourse. Historians, geographers, and anthropologists of the Turkish Republic have recognized this as well. Some have focused on how the term *vatan*, or homeland, has been imbued with special meaning: a national territory to be defended with one's life. For instance, Sezgi Durgun wrote of a Republican project in which 'geography was turned into homeland' (*coğrafyanın vatanlaşması*) through discursive strategies, historical claims, geography conferences, and schoolbooks.[5] While Durgun's emphasis is on the way the state mobilized various conceptions of 'homeland' to achieve cultural and national assimilation, Behlül Özkan, in a similar work, focuses on how discourses of 'homeland' serve to 'legitimize and confer hegemonic status to the holders of political power.'[6] Both Durgun and Özkan locate the origin of Turkish Republican conceptions of territoriality in late Ottoman intellectual developments; the emergent 'imperial patriotism' of the late nineteenth century increasingly became a 'love for the state' after 1923.

Anthropologist Ramazan Aras, in a literature review on border and borderland studies in Turkey, takes what might be considered the opposite approach. Rather than looking at how notions of territoriality developed endogenously in Turkey, Aras views 'political boundaries' (*politik sınırlar*) as primarily imposed by 'Western hegemonic forces' through both colonialist institutions and colonialist notions of nation-statehood. 'Political boundaries,' writes Aras, are responsible for 'slicing into pieces the centuries-old societal, historic, religious, ethnic, geographical, architectural, and environmental fabric of the Middle East like a knife.' Aiming to 'disrupt or destroy long accumulated historical experiences and continuities,' such boundaries have resulted in 'serious harm to the societal fabric on which they were drawn.'[7] What is inherited

5 Durgun 2011, 15.
6 Özkan 2012, 9.
7 Aras 2014, 16; cf. Aras 2020, 21–48.

from the Ottoman Empire, according to Aras, is not nation-state notions of territoriality, as in Durgun and Özkan's view, but rather collective local memories of a shared geography. In other words, focusing on *vatan*, the geo-body, might show a continuity in hegemonic discourse of defensible borders and territoriality, while focusing on the site of boundaries themselves shows that 'various mechanisms of resistance' have also emerged to contest borders (at both the institutional and discursive levels). Whichever explanation we take as plausible – whether Turkish national borders are reinforced as post-imperial territory or imposed in a colonial context – it is clear that the territory inscribed by these borders is something that has to be *produced* in a political process to which Turkish citizens can either assent or (if they do not identify with the nation-state's claims on homogeneous territory and identity) one which they can contest.

Because of the tensions surrounding the origins of the Turkish nation-state as both an imperial successor state and an anti-colonial resistance project, the borders of the resulting polity continue to carry different political and affective meanings depending on how one relates to the state. For many, calling the political borders of the Turkish Republic into question (to say nothing of its unitary, homogeneous provincial administration) is *the* absolute taboo. Anatolia – along with eastern Thrace – are the inviolable homeland and contiguous with the Turkish nation. In this conception, borders are described as matters of honor-*cum*-purity (*namus*).[8] Starting with an impending influx of refugees from Afghanistan in the summer of 2021 and continuing through the presidential elections of 2023, the phrase '*sınır namustur*' (the border is 'honor') was revived as a kind of emphatic opposition slogan, critical of the governing party for opening the borders to those who might 'pollute' the purity of the national body. Yet the phrase also has long existed as a reminder of the need to defend territorial integrity as well; it is literally inscribed in large letters into the landscape near several border posts. The fear of border revision is so great that it has been described since the late 1990s as a society-wide pathology. 'Sèvres Syndrome,' named after the 1920 treaty which condoned the occupation of parts of Anatolia, is the name given to this phenomenon, a 'paradigm' or 'framework of fear and anxiety over the possible annihilation, abandonment or betrayal of the Turkish state by the West.'[9]

Others have diagnosed another widespread pathology: 'phantom limb syndrome.'[10] The continuous loss of former Ottoman territory, particularly those areas from which Muslims were expelled *en masse* during the nineteenth century, continues to generate feelings of longing, nostalgia, and resentment among other segments of the Turkish population. The boundaries of the Turkish Republic, in this view, are the result of a failed amputation carried out by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, and their redefinition remains an incomplete project. Though the 'loss' of territory at Lausanne has been

8 İşleyen 2018b; White 2014.

9 Göçek 2011, 98–184. The first use of the term 'Sèvres Syndrome' is unclear, though as early as 1995, then-Turkish President Süleyman Demirel used it to describe a *European* pathology of not being able to give up on the treaty.

10 Yerasimos 2005.

used as a touchstone for Islamists to criticize the Kemalist project,[11] ideologues of all stripes have envisioned a Turkish territory beyond its 1923 borders. Politicians following this view speak of a 'geography of the heart' (*gönül coğrafyası*), a broader geographical imagination of Turkish/Ottoman space which leaves open the possibility of future expansion and boundary revisions, or at the very least increased cross-border influence,[12] and which functions as a soft power diplomatic instrument.[13] Such an approach to boundaries comes in two flavors: a nostalgic neo-Ottoman version, sustained by visions of past Turkish glory in the Balkans and the Arab World, and a pan-Turkish version, which has emphasized an imagined Turkish geography that extends as far as Central Asia.[14] Notably, it is not only Turkish but also Kurdish nationalists who decry Lausanne's effects on territoriality; a century after its signing, many continue to consider the treaty and the subsequent League of Nations deal on Mosul as tantamount a partition of a Kurdish state-in-the-making.[15]

3. Border and Borderland Studies in Turkey: The State of the Field

Studies of borders and bordering are not confined to one discipline. Historians of politics and institutions have been broadly interested in diplomacy, the delineation of Turkish boundaries, and the effects of this process on securitization, settlement, and identity. Anthropologists, sociologists, and geographers focus on practices of bordering and multiplications of border spaces in a contemporary context. In this section, we provide a brief overview of the state of the field in each of these two broad categories, focusing primarily on histories of Turkey's borders and on the ways in which current borders have acquired multiple meanings and shapes in the contemporary domestic and (geo-)political context. The two fields are, as will be seen, not mutually exclusive.

3.1 Border Histories

There exists no synthetic work that treats the history of the borders of the Turkish Republic as a whole.[16] To our knowledge, the sole scholarly work which considers the establishment of all of Turkey's nation-state borders in detail is Stéphane Yerasimos's *Questions d'Orient: Frontières et minorités des Balkans au Caucase*.[17] Yerasimos's work, while impressive in its scope, is a fragmented collection of texts previously published, resulting in an anthology that does not lay claim to any one, unified argument. Indeed,

11 Gürpınar 2019; for the classic statement, see: Mısırloğlu 1965.
12 Yavuz 2020.
13 Atmaca and Torun 2022.
14 Landau 1995 [1981]; see Kıbrıs's contribution to this special issue.
15 Görentaş 2017; Radpey 2022.
16 Scholars have only very recently begun to compare delineation processes across various sectors of the Turkish border (Balistreri 2022; Oztig and Okur 2022).
17 Yerasimos 1993 (Turkish translation 1994).

it is hardly surprising that accounts of the history of Turkish borders have remained episodic; a synthetic analysis would have to be comparative and cover centuries of political, military and diplomatic history, as each segment of the boundary emerged in a different context. Moreover, borders' function as open or closed borders, and the perception of urgency in terms of their securitization, have fluctuated over time. The diversity of these border histories, as a result, is reflected in the variety of literature. To get a sense of this, we can take a succinct *tour des frontières* of the Turkish Republic, starting in its north-eastern corner and traveling clockwise across three broad sectors.

Turkey's borders with the Caucasus and with Iran emerged out of a *speedy* and *diplomatic* compromise between multiple *states that claimed the mantle of revolution* in the 1920s: Kemalist Turkey, Pahlavi Iran, Soviet Russia, and the Bolshevized states of the Caucasus. The leadership in all of these countries was interested in compromises on delineation that could shore up security along their common borders, freeing up resources for more pressing internal conflicts and struggles against Western imperialists.[18] Despite the deleterious effects on local populations – Adjaran pastoralists who lost their livelihoods, or Armenians who lost the right of return, for example – these top-down diplomatic solutions to the border generally held without much contestation. And despite Soviet intimations that it would demand a change in the border following the Second World War,[19] cooperation on the Turkish-Soviet boundary continued apace in the second half of the twentieth century, both with respect to water usage[20] or the delineation of the maritime and continental shelf boundary in the Black Sea in the 1970s. Like the Ottoman Empire's Caucasus border, though with much less fluctuation, Turkey's border with Iran was formalized before the establishment of the republic[21] and remained largely the same after its declaration. Minor border revisions resulted in a small exchange of territories in the mid-1930s.[22] In the case of the Iranian border, only a handful of oral histories[23] stand as exceptions to otherwise top-down studies of the history of borders in the Turkish Republic's eastern sector.

A second sector of the border, along Turkey's southern flank, emerged, by contrast, out of *drawn-out* negotiations with the region's post-war *colonial powers*. Jordi Tejel's recent work[24] covering this entire sector as a unit, shows that the status of Turkey's borders with Syria and Iraq – formally delineated after much violence by the late 1920s – remained in flux decades after the establishment of the republic. Irredentism was much more at play here than in the northeast, as were the effects of locals – traders, smugglers, pastoralists – who contested and adapted to non-settled processes of territorialization. Turkey's border with Iraq is the country's 'youngest,' formally delin-

18 Dumont 1977; Gökay 1997; Hirst 2013; Kılıç 1998; Forestier-Peyrat 2014; Yenen 2021; Yerasimos 1979.
19 Gasanli 2005; İşçi 2023b; Özkan 2017.
20 İşçi 2023a.
21 Abdulla 2010; Ateş 2013; Kashani-Sabet 1999.
22 Bournoutian 2015; see also Ceylan's contribution to this special issue.
23 Özgen 2003; Yüksel 2016.
24 Tejel 2023.

eated only in 1926. It has mostly been discussed in the literature on the establishment of Iraq, a field which frequently focuses on the question of that state's 'artificiality'[25] or on the Kurdish issue.[26] From the perspective of the Turkish Republic, most scholarship approaches the border through the lens of diplomatic history.[27] Moving west, Turkey's border with Syria is its most historically studied. Agreed upon in principle in 1921 and fully delimited by 1929, the Turkish-Syrian border has fascinated historians with its conjunctural definition along a railway bed, its deleterious effect on cross-border ethnic groups, and the way it has generated perpetual insecurity.[28] Unlike the generally mountainous and highland borders farther east, the Turkish-Syrian border has also been subject to more mutable border regimes, depending on economic or geopolitical conjuncture.[29] This border was also the site of the most significant territorial change experienced by Turkey: the independence of Hatay in 1938 and its annexation the following year. The redefinition of the Turkish-Syrian border not only entailed territorial expansion but also raised questions of ethnic identity and national belonging.[30] Here, too, most of the historical literature on the 'southern sector' is top-down and focuses on diplomatic aspects; Tejel,[31] however, seeks to reclaim local (mostly Kurdish) agency in shaping the development of the border regime.

The western borders of Turkey, including its land borders in Thrace and its maritime borders in the Aegean, are a third historical sector containing what are perhaps Turkey's most historically complicated borders – complicated because of their frequent changes and reversions in the wars of the early twentieth century, the hybrid involvement of both local states and Western European powers in their resolution, and the exceptional legal regimes that have been applied to them over the last century. Moreover, it was in this region that the post-war regime of international law dictated settlement; the population exchange following Lausanne forced Greek Orthodox and Muslim communities to submit to the given border and establish a new life in the nation-state assigned to them. However, since the course of the land border in Thrace was not subject to serious contestation during the last hundred years of the republic (the only change was the granting, at Lausanne, of Karaağaç and its railway station to Turkey), its historical development under the republic has barely been the subject of scholarly scrutiny. With the arrival of the 'borderland' perspective to Turkish Republican historiography, this is only now beginning to change.[32] Finally, control of the Dodecanese and Aegean Islands, along with the zone of control around them, is the

25 cf. Özcan 2003; Pursley 2015.
26 Ali 2001/02.
27 Coşar and Demirci 2006; Demirci 2010; Şimşir 2005.
28 Abrahamyan 2023; Altuğ 2020; Altuğ and White 2009; Aras 2020; Dolbee 2022; Güçlü 2006; Jörum 2014; Lange 2022; Mameli-Ghaderi 2002/03; Mizrahi 2003a, 2003b; Tachjian 2009; Tejel and Öztan 2023; White 2011, 101–20; Yamaç 2018.
29 Aras 2020, 191–216; Öztan 2020, 2022.
30 Akyol 2010; Micallef 2006; Shields 2011.
31 Tejel 2018, 2023.
32 Daniels 2022; see also Şen's contribution to this special issue.

major exception to the lack of literature on the history of Turkey's maritime boundary. The maritime boundary in the Aegean has been an issue which has dogged Turkish foreign policy since at least the signing of the Lausanne Treaty.[33]

3.2 Bordering Presents

Once delineated, borders do not simply become an indelible part of the landscape. They are alternately maintained or forgotten; they 'breathe' as membranes that open and close as necessary to allow (or prevent) the transpiration of people, animals, goods, and diseases.[34] Borderlands, too, become ecosystems whose inhabitants evolve to adapt to the particular conditions at that border, including increased institutionalization and securitization.[35] When it comes to the borders of the Turkish Republic, such questions have usually marked a disciplinary divide. While historians have mostly focused on delineation, anthropologists and geographers have focused on three major fields of inquiry on the continued life of borders: borderland economies, identities, and migration.

With respect to the first of these fields, nation-state borders divide not only political regimes, but also markets. As such, they generate pressures on – but also opportunities for – economic activities, both licit and illicit. One major example of this effect was seen in the increased opening of Turkey's border with the Soviet Caucasus starting in the late 1980s, and its full opening with Georgia and Azerbaijan in the 1990s. This change in the function of a political border carried with it an enormous economic potential. Anthropologists have studied the Turkish-Caucasian border partial opening's effects on commerce, tourism, labour migration, and property relations.[36] Another example is the semi-formal 'borderland trade' (*sınır ticareti*) which has taken place, to various degrees, mostly along Turkey's southern and south-eastern borders. Since the late 1970s, the Turkish government has allowed residents of border provinces to trade in goods meant to provide for day-to-day needs and the borderland market, bypassing normal import channels.[37] The extent to which such trade is allowed or tolerated is conjunctural, and borderland residents have to contend with constantly changing rules, sporadic openings, and increasing closures. Sociologists have documented the way in which both economic opportunities and border securi-

33 Barlas and Güvenç 2010; Pabuçcular 2020.

34 cf. Kaşlı 2014.

35 For an example of the literature on contemporary border institutions, see: Danış and Aksel 2014; on securitization cycles, see Ollier's contribution to this special issue.

36 Akat 2014; Atlı 2013; Forestier-Peyrat 2021; Hann and Béller-Hann 2009; Karabulut 2005; Karabulut et al. 2011; Özgen 2008; Pelkmans 2011; Toktaş and Çelik 2017; Yılmaz 2014.

37 Öztürk 2006; Sönmez 1995; cf. Rabo 2006.

tization have led to changes in community relations and social hierarchies in towns located near the border.[38]

While formal borderland economies expand and contract with the border, it is *illicit* trade which, historically, has constituted how those borders are maintained and perceived. Though it is a natural outcome wherever borders are drawn across a previously integrated market, illicit trade still polarizes the borderland: to the Turkish state, smuggling leads to lost income and leads to a loss of control over mobility across the border. To Turkey's Kurds, on the other hand, it has come to represent an economic lifeblood for regions plagued by chronic underdevelopment. By the middle of the twentieth century, the high cost of living and the lack of lucrative employment had 'made smuggling one of the pillars of the Kurdish economy'.[39] Indeed, it is in the Kurdish-populated border regions where scholars have investigated the issue of illicit trade most closely. Smuggling has been a continuous feature of the history of the Turkish-Syrian border, Turkey's hardest to defend, with illicit trade common in a variety of items that have ranged from woolen fabrics to entire herds of sheep.[40] Today, the most lucrative form of illicit trade, and its most studied, is the case of oil smuggling between Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. The anthropologist Fırat Bozçalı has used the case of smuggling in this region to destabilize the notion of a solid border. Referring to 'probabilistic borders,' Bozçalı demonstrates how notions of *imprecision* and *plausible deniability* have characterized the state's determination of whether the border has been violated.[41] Nevertheless, as Bozçalı and others have pointed out, 'uncertainty does not necessarily undermine modern state governance, however. In fact, modern statecraft relies on uncertainty.'[42] Illicit trade, smuggling, and trafficking carry important implications in our understanding of the last hundred years of development of the Turkish Republic and its role in the Middle East, since it is precisely in these domains that the state seeks to expand its administrative capacity, territorial precision, and disciplinary apparatus – and where some among the borderland population can develop strategies against these.[43]

A second field in studies of contemporary bordering examines borderland identities. By disrupting lifeways, dividing families, and demarcating the putative lines of ethnic belonging and exclusion, nation-state borders shape the identities of the people who live in their shadows. Such border effects can even be amplified over time through processes of collective memory formation. The breadth of work on such issues, carried out by anthropologists and oral historians around Turkey, demonstrates the vast extent to which the lived experience of borders and bordering have shaped the identities of the men and women of Turkey. For example, the violence inherent

38 Among many others, see: Arslan, Can and Wilson 2021; Şenoğuz 2014, 2019; Tejel 2016; Tekin 2014.
39 van Bruinessen 1992, 190.
40 Öztan 2020; Yıldırım 2017.
41 Bozçalı 2020; 2023.
42 Bozçalı 2020, 80.
43 Bacci 2017; Gingeras 2014; Oğuz 2023; Özcan 2014; Schayegh 2011.

in many border regimes – violence expressed in the form of forced migration, forced immobility through closed borders,[44] or extrajudicial killings – represents one of the most poignant and direct ways in which bordering shapes, or even 'breaks,' life stories. Women, such studies have shown, bear much of the brunt of border violence. Such effects have been documented by scholars around Turkey, including on the country's Bulgarian,[45] Greek,[46] Armenian,[47] Iranian,[48] Syrian,[49] and Iraqi[50] borders. But bordering also shapes identities and lived experiences in ways beyond the direct exercise of violence. It also shapes notions of family, by redefining what it means to be 'related' across borders, or by dictating a (gendered) division of labor within kinship structures.[51] Borders, where they foster exchange, also become sites of cultural sharing and syncretism – a phenomenon that has been most frequently studied in the case of Kurdish music and film.[52] Finally, the delineation of new borders can even transform ethnic identity. Such processes have been well documented in the case of Hatay/Antakya, where annexation by the Turkish Republic compelled residents to re-examine their ethnic belonging[53] or where the Syrian Civil War has made sectarian divisions politically charged.[54]

Finally, scholars have analyzed Turkey's borders and bordering practices in relation to the governance of human mobility. Recent academic debates, especially in the last decade, offer a shift in analytical focus away from the historical establishment and maintenance of borders, instead prioritizing an exploration of the *multiple* functions and geographies of borders and bordering in Turkey. These debates draw, to a certain extent, on contemporary critical border scholarship, which detaches the meaning of borders from national boundaries and expands the analysis to broader and diffused geographies of borders and the practices of bordering.[55] Scholars of Turkey have charted a map of the border which, likewise, transcends conventionally known geographies and highlights borders' existence at multiple scales, ranging from transnational and national, down to the regional, urban, and the body. This shift in analytical focus allows researchers of Turkey's borders to explore multiple phenomena: Turkey's position within the broader European border regime,[56] how Turkish territory turns

44 cf. Danış and Soysüren 2014; Yıldırım 2020.
45 Parla 2003; Parla 2006.
46 Demetriou 2022.
47 Neyzi and Kharatyan-Araqelyan 2010.
48 Özgen 2003.
49 Dağtaş 2018a.
50 Keleş 2023.
51 Akyüz 2017; Özgen 2005, 2007; Parla 2009, Parla 2011; Tekin 2016; Yıldırım 2013, 2015.
52 Aras 2009; Hamelink and Barış 2014; Stokes 1998.
53 Akyol 2010; Duman 2016.
54 Can 2017; Dağtaş 2018b, 2020. For a discussion of the case of Iraqi Turkmen, see: Büyüksaraç 2017.
55 cf. Walters 2002; Cooper 2019; Cuttitta 2015; Yuval-Davis et al. 2019.
56 Heck and Hess 2017.

into a terrain where the EU externalizes its border protection,[57] and how Turkey's borders are managed and reinforced by multiple state and non-state actors, ranging from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and provincial or district level state officers to private companies and ordinary citizens.[58] An emphasis on connections between processes at different scales and the multiplication of bordering spaces beyond the geographies of conventional borders helps scholars to trace the role of (large-scale) geopolitical power in (small-scale) everyday lives of people, and vice versa, and assigns an important role to the embodied experiences and spaces of control. Sabine Strasser and Eda Elif Tibet,[59] for instance, trace how Turkey's international migration agreements trickles down to the lives of unaccompanied minors, while Beste İşleyen[60] shows how the politics of humanitarianism at the border in the framework of the EU-Turkey relations influences the daily practices of the security personnel, thus shaping the mobility experience of refugees.

One of the key practices that transcends Turkey's borders geographically and that has created a multi-scalar border construction is the European Union's policy of border externalization in Turkish territory. Externalization, which aims to move border control and international protection into the territory of other, often neighboring, countries, has gained a significant place in migration management and diplomacy since the 1990s.[61] While the mobility of Syrian refugees in the 2015-'16 period made (for the European Union) the need for strengthened cooperation with Turkey more urgent and visible, there had been serious efforts by the EU to designate Turkey as the gatekeeper of the EU's south-eastern external borders even before the EU's recent refugee reception crisis.[62] Especially since the late 1990s, Turkey has been subjected to externalization of migration management,[63] with the EU directly investing in the management and securitization of Turkey's eastern and western borders with an aim to curb refugee arrivals.[64] However, scholars have also emphasized that Turkey is not simply a passive victim of EU externalization policies. Rather, it has responded to the demands of the EU with its own advantage in mind.[65] Turkey's responses to external pressure to control its borders more tightly, as well as its governance of refugee mobilities are often historically informed. As Zeynep Kaşlı illustrates in the example of the Turkish-Greek border,[66] contemporary borders and bordering practices that target

57 Karadağ 2019; Üstübici 2019.
58 Fine 2018a, 2018b; Pekşen 2022.
59 Strasser and Tibet 2020.
60 İşleyen 2018a.
61 Lavenex 2004, 2016; Menjívar 2014; for a recent critical examination of the concept, see: Cobarrubias et al. 2023.
62 Soykan 2017.
63 Ozcürümez and Şenses 2011; Üstübici 2019.
64 İşleyen 2018a; Karadağ 2019; Tolay 2012; Üstübici 2019.
65 Ataç et al. 2017; Ayata 2017; Heck and Hess 2017; Tolay 2012.
66 Kaşlı 2023.

illegalized migration are deeply embedded in the histories of migration, citizenship, and local geographies.

While Turkey's relations with the EU at the international scale have had a significant impact on the management of its external borders, within these borders, Turkey has created an elaborate internal border regime that aims to control the mobility of its refugee populations. Using policies that tie refugees' benefits to continued residency in provinces or the requirement to obtain a permit to travel within the country, Turkey pulls the border inwards into its national territory and re-spatializes the border at the provincial and local levels.[67] This policy turns Turkey's territory into a negotiated field of internal and international bordering. It also brings new agents into play, as local administrations, security personnel,[68] and private company employees[69] are now charged with enforcing newly relevant internal borders. The 'satellite city' policy, which obliges conditional refugees to continue residing in an assigned province, likewise, can be seen as an instrument to contain refugees in a certain internal geography by creating borders around provinces that are policed immigration and law enforcement and are visible only to the refugees.[70]

4. An Agenda for Border Studies of the Turkish Republic

Contrary to the image that nation-states project of uniform, natural, and equally administered boundaries, even this scant overview of Turkish border and borderland studies covering the last 100 years has instead revealed significant fragmentation. Despite depictions and assumptions of undifferentiated boundaries which wrap neatly around national territory (in conventional political maps, for instance, or in the official school curriculum), in practice, both historical developments and contemporary practices of border management differ considerably in the east, south, and west of the country. Fragmentation exists in the scholarly world, too, between scholars focusing on historical processes of delineation and more recent processes of border management and borderland formation. It is our hope that scholars of borders will begin to bridge the gap between historical studies of borders-as-institutions and contemporary studies of bordering-as-a-process. Scholars of contemporary bordering should become more aware of the long-term institutional development underlying today's practices, while scholars of history should be more skeptical about the notion of borders as 'hard facts,' keeping in mind critical border studies' notions of bordering as a continuous process – often taking place in geographies far from the political border on the map.

With this special issue of *Diyâr*, we are pleased to present work by four young scholars in the field of Turkish border studies, each contributing to their respective

67 İşleyen 2018a.
68 *ibid*.
69 Pekşen 2022.
70 Biner 2016; İkizoğlu Erensü and Kaşlı 2016.

fields while still decidedly attuned to the possibility of interdisciplinarity.[71] Sertaç K. Şen's highly original research examines the management of Turkey's border in Thrace during the 1930s. Surrounded by a demilitarized zone and an internationally sanctioned 'Straits Regime,' precarious Thrace was, for the young Turkish state, an alluring arena for intervention. Even after its formal delineation, Şen shows, Thrace's boundary remained an 'awkward' border that the Turkish government hoped to maintain through a simultaneous policy of settlement, development, and securitization. Tunç İbrahim Ceylan, in an essay on the Turkish-Iranian border revision of 1932, qualifies the depiction of Turkey's approach to borders between 1923 and 1936 as 'non-revisionist.' As early as 1930, Ceylan shows, several factors contributed to a willingness on the part of Ankara to demand by force an exchange of territories with Iran to resolve the Ararat Rebellion. Johanna Ollier's contribution likewise focuses on the Turkish-Iranian border but zooms out to cover the entire history of the Turkish Republic. Arguing against the established perception of historical stability in the Turkish-Iranian border, Ollier argues that the function and the meaning of the border has been reconfigured significantly by Turkey over the last century through a series of what she calls 'border securitization cycles.' Finally, Güldeniz Kıbrıs's research explores how national spaces and borders have been represented in historical Turkish movies produced in the 1960s and 1970s. In a detailed analysis of movies that feature (Turkish) heroes from various time periods, ranging from the fourth to the fifteenth century, Kıbrıs illustrates how movies imagine and create a Turkish national space that transcends existing borders. Though these movies seem to transcend time, Kıbrıs argues that the discursive production of borders and national space in movies can only be understood in the changing political and ideological context in which they were produced.

Naturally, one special issue can only provide a brief glimpse into the vast and only partially explored world of Turkish border studies. As such, we find it fitting to end this brief survey with some suggestions for scholars embarking on future research quests. First, many scholars of Turkey have enthusiastically embraced the 'spatial turn' in social sciences; accounts of mental maps, identity formation, and the like are especially abundant. Yet these represent only one aspect of border studies. Another, the development of boundary-regulating institutions, remains considerably more underdeveloped (with the very recent exception of migration and border studies). In some sense, it is easier to focus on discursive strategies of space-making and bordering when physical practices regarding border demarcation, defense, and maintenance remain concealed behind a discursive and institutional shroud of secrecy. In particular, we encourage scholars of Turkey's contemporary border regime to trace these institutions' historical roots. Such an endeavor would have the added benefit of allowing schol-

71 We would like to take this opportunity to thank each of our contributors for their research, diligence, and patience through the publication process. We are also grateful to Yavuz Köse, Julia Fröhlich, and the editorial staff of *Diyâr* for their constant support during the production of this special issue. Finally, we thank all of the peer-reviewers who offered their valuable time and expertise toward the improvement of our contributions.

ars of contemporary Turkey to approach borders from a longer-term perspective and avoid presentism in their research, a problem which has been identified (and combatted) in the work of Zeynep Kaşlı[72] and H. Neşe Özgen.

Finally, we also offer a suggested route for historians of Turkish borders. As we have established in this introduction, scholars of contemporary bordering practices in Turkey have succeeded in deconstructing the hegemonic place that the external nation-state boundary enjoys in our understanding of bordering. Historians, too, should be more sensitive to processes of bordering that transcend the nation-state boundary. One of these processes is the establishment of internal boundaries, a part of what Durgun calls 'the homeland-ification of the interior' (*iç mekânın vatanlaşması*).[73] The interior of the nation-state has, in fact, always been a key geography where new forms of bordering spaces are established and enforced, a notion explicitly picked up by a few historians like Joost Jongerden and Zeynep Kezer.[74] The historians Ramazan Hakkı Öztan and Jordi Tejel,[75] too, have been exemplary in applying the more recent findings of border and borderland studies to processes along Turkey's southern border decades after its delineation. At the same time, historians could look *beyond* nation-state boundaries to examine Turkey's maritime and air borders – not all of which have been delineated in international law. While the Aegean borders have been long contested, and researched, Turkey's other maritime borders are only now beginning to attract attention with the rise of 'maritime nationalism' (in the form of the idea of Turkey's 'blue homeland,' or *Mavi Vatan*)[76] and with the difficulties of Black-Sea trade caused by the Russian annexation of Crimea and the ongoing war in Ukraine.[77]

Anyone who seeks to compile an overview of Turkish border studies will immediately be confronted by the complexity of the task. It becomes obvious, for one, that the study of borders – as notions and institutions that are impinge on many aspects of daily life, state administration, community building, history, and identity – is not confined to one discipline. Inherent to the very definition of 'state' and 'nation,' borders and bordering can seep into essentially *any* research on Turkey in the last 100 years. As such, possible gaps in the coverage of a literature review are inevitable and (hopefully) to be forgiven. The hapless researcher undertaking this task will then be struck by the lack of any synthetic work covering Turkish borders as a whole, an unusual gap, considering the apparent richness of individual border studies. Indeed, studies of the border (whether historical or contemporary) are generally fragmented across various sectors of the country's boundary. As hapless researchers ourselves, we have tried to highlight this fragmentation and to make it 'productive' by using it to question the idea of a unitary border regime. Above all, we have sought to use the diversity of the field of Turkish border studies to inspire cross-fertilization: to encour-

72 Kaşlı 2023.
73 Durgun 2011.
74 Jongerden 2009; Kezer 2014; 2015, 157–96.
75 Öztan 2020, 2022; Tejel 2023.
76 Gürdeniz 2020; Suárez de Vivero and Rodríguez Mateos 2002.
77 e.g., Åtland 2021; Sanders 2017.

age historians to take note of bordering processes, and scholars of the contemporary border to embed their research within the border's complex histories.

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