JOURNAL OF BORDERLANDS STUDIES
https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2024.2394046

The Politics of Emotions, Bio-Political Border Practices and the Question of (In)security on the Turkish Political Territorial Borders

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ABSTRACT

This paper conceptually and analytically delineates the operation and employment of discourses and the political emotions of fear and anxiety in the making, conception, and cartographic imagination of the contours of modern Turkey's political territorial boundaries. This study posits that the emergence and formation of the Turkish political territorial borders after the traumatic and violent experience of the cataclysmic shrinking, collapse and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire continue to influence discourses, emotions, practices and policies of border security and policing. Borders and borderlands are not only sites where the state performs, exercises and displays its sovereign will and power in protecting national security, dignity, pride and honor, but also sources and harbingers of fears, anxieties and ontological (in)securities. In the context of the highly publicized immigration influx of Syrians, Iraqis, Afghanis and others into Turkey, this paper argues that discourses and emotions of fear, anxiety and hate regained new currency and have become consequential in the state's eliciting of consent from the masses in instituting border walls, fences and harsh border policing practices and policies on the borderlands and in cities across the country.

KEYWORDS

Nation-state; emotions; (in)security; political borders; borderlands; Turkey

Introduction

The history of the formation of the modern secular Turkish nation-state and the processes of formation of its territorial political borders can be better analyzed and understood by scrutinizing how emotions have been employed, sustained, enhanced and constantly fabricated as powerful tools embedded in the state and statist politics, policies and discourses. Today, there is a growing passion among modern nation-state authorities for erecting security walls and building more fences on their political territorial borders as a result of waves of immigration, flow of refugees, smuggling, transnational oppositional political movements and networks of both internal and international terror groups (Aras 2020; Gülzau and Mau 2021; Rodríguez 1996; Wendy 2010). These social phenomena have triggered diverse problems in the social fabric and led to new crises that disconcerted the forms and institutions of the

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modern nation-state. In this process of systematic political interventions and remaking of political territorial borders, emotions – in particular fear, anxiety and hate – are employed by diverse state apparatuses and they have become very effective in the vocabularies, grammars of violence and *modus operandi* of the state and in statist discourses all over the world.

In the contemporary period, the question of how the state gains the consent and maintains the support of the public in the process of remaking strategies and policies of the state on the border and borderlands requires a closer look. In other words, the questions of how these emotions are operating in the public sphere and how they are being transformed into the creation of hegemonic discourses on legitimization and the making of the borders and the "Turkish security wall" will be interrogated in this paper. Indeed, a genealogical exploration of the roots of this fear in the minds and hearts of the state authorities can be traced to the late Ottoman Empire era and the early republican period after the fall of the Empire. Political and social discourses regarding national sovereignty, state existence, immigrants and territorial political borders in Turkey are predicated on a collective traumatic memory of the collapse and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, colonization of its large territories across three continents and the attempted colonization and partitioning of Anatolia by the European colonial powers after World War I.

Consequently, border policies and policing and immigration have been contentious and sensitive issues throughout the history of the modern Turkish republic and have been rendered issues that concern the nation's ontological existence and sovereignty. While Anatolia received Muslim immigrants during the tumultuous Balkan wars, soon after the foundation of the Republic in 1923, Turkey became suspicious and worrisome about mass immigrations. In the context of Bulgarian Turkish immigration which intensified during the late 1980s and the early 1990s, Ayşe Parla documents how sentiments regarding "ethnic kindred" immigrants shifted into anxiety and hostility. She observes how:

> The mass exodus of 300,000 Turks to Turkey, who did not suspect that the nationalist and ethnic zeal, instigated by the opening of the Turkish border to these "ethnic kindred," would be short-lived. When the number of immigrants reached 300,000 the Turkish prime minister, who had opened the border with much political bravado, abruptly closed it. Those who were able to make it in confronted marginalization by the locals, this time for being "Bulgarians." (Parla 2003, 567)

Today, Turkey has approximately 4 million Syrian migrants[1] and continues to receive immigrants from Afghanistan, the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and Sub-Saharan African countries. This immigration influx and its consequent socio-economic impact have re-ignited debates about border policies and policing, *beka sorunu* (survivability of the state) and national identity, leading to discourses and emotions of fear, hate and violence against immigrants. This paper conceptually and analytically delineates how the political emotions of fear, anxiety and hate are constitutive in the making of the Turkish political territorial borders and how discourses such as *beka sorunu* (survivability of the state), *hudut namustur* (border is honor) and *etrafı düşmanlar ile çevrili vatan* (the homeland surrounded by enemies) which are dominant in the media landscape in the context of the migrant influx inform, shape, orient and

structure emotions, politics, opinions and policies about immigration, migrants, borders and border security.

Emotions such as fear, anxiety and hate permeate the day-to-day political discourses in societies through media such as televised news, social media, print and digital newspapers, films, documentaries, and events such as political rallies, political speeches, demonstrations and religious gatherings. The linguistic and narrative elements of these discourses shape, mould and structure opinions, emotions, sentiments, views, responses and actions regarding social and political issues. In their seminal text *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky theorize from a Foucauldian and Gramscian perspective how the media shapes, forms and disseminates public opinions, discourses, attitudes, political emotions and sentiments, employing diverse narrative and discursive tools and methodologies (Chomsky and Herman 1988). Media has become a powerful tool in shaping opinions and political emotions. And with the emergence of social media, discourses and political emotions reach a wide audience. Numerous empirical studies have established how media discourses impact and have consequences in election voting patterns, public opinions, discourses and political behaviors (Chouliaraki 2000; Enjolras and Steen-Johnsen 2017; Ladd 2010; Schroeder 2018; Verma and Sardesai 2014; Yerlikaya and Aslan 2020). Hence discourses that are dominant, trending and circulating in the media shape and inform political emotions, attitudes and feelings. By following a similar line, we aim to provide an analysis of these discourses and emotions and how they are being generated and reproduced by different apparatuses and in diverse mediums by both state and non-state actors.

The Genealogy of Fear and Ontological (In)Security in the Making of Turkish Borders

Borders and borderlands have been a source of ontological insecurity, fear and anxiety for nation-states since their emergence in the eighteenth century. Benedict Anderson's conceptualization of the "imagined community" and the rise of contemporary nationalism and the nation-state are predicated on the inherent violence and ontological insecurity formative in the emergence of nation-states (Anderson 2006, 1–4). For Anderson, states emerge through a traumatic "birth" of violence, wars, invasions, colonialism and resistance, as in Anderson's study cases of Vietnam, Burma and Cambodia and in the context of the nationalism of colonial "Creole pioneers" (Anderson 2006, 47). Anderson argues that "nation-building policies of the new states seemed a genuine, popular nationalist enthusiasm and a systematic, even Machiavellian" undertaking of violent state-formation (Anderson 2006, 113–4). Hence, state-formation and state-making are inherently violent undertakings. This is captured by Charles Tilly's famous political aphorism: "war made the state, and the state made war" (Taylor and Botea 2008, 27).

Moreover, due to ontological insecurities and fear of invasions, occupations, secessions and even territorial annexation, states resort to violence to maintain their "existence," especially during their embryonic stages. Violence against internal or external actors sustains and guarantees a state's ontological existence and sovereignty – at least from a nationalistic and statist perspective (see Thomson 1994; Tilly 1975, 1985). Furthermore, Brian Brown, Youssef Cohen and A. F. Organski posit that "Newly established

states are likely both to exacerbate old conflicts and to create new ones" (Cohen et al. 1981, 903) since borders and territorial claims and disputes are rampant in state-building processes. *Ipso facto* borders and borderlands have been envisioned by states as sources and harbingers of threats, insecurities and violence. And in the context of modern Turkey, given the background of the traumatic and violent dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, borders and borderlands have been coded as zones and sites of fear, anxiety and state ontological insecurity for the Turkish state and nation.

How did the current Turkish political territorial borders emerge? Under which context were the contours of the borders decided in modern Turkey? The formation and foundation of the modern Turkish Republic and its contemporary political territorial borders emerged from the cataclysmic and traumatic collapse and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, as discussed earlier. Consequently, embedded, formative and integral in the political collective memory of the newly founded Turkish Republic was the tragic downfall of the trans-continental Ottoman Empire which the new elites struggled, fought, negotiated and envisioned to salvage and carve from a new Turkish homeland as it shrank and lost territory. Doğan Gürpinar observes how the early political and military Turkish elites, who were mostly Roumelian-born, "had to domesticate and familiarize Anatolia as their new patrie (*Vatan*)" (Gürpinar 2012, 904). The manners and ways in which the Ottoman Empire gradually lost territories and shrank its territorial borders had lasting impacts and effects on how the Turkish republic has imagined, perceived and viewed its territorial integrity and political borders and boundaries discursively and politically.

The late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century were tumultuous years in the Ottoman realm as violent ethnic nationalisms and movements emerged that were seeking independence leading to communal violence and mass migration of Muslims from the Balkans to Thrace and Anatolia. These ethnic nationalistic endeavors, which were supported morally, politically and militarily by diverse Western imperial powers (Anscombe 2012; Bobroff 2000; Michail 2012, 220–30), led to the emergence of Turkish nationalism and republicanism (Turnaoğlu 2017) as the Ottoman Empire slowly but inevitably crumbled. The principles of Turkish nationalism – what Banu Turnaoğlu termed "the principles of Turkism" (Turnaoğlu 2017, 247) – were predicated and centered around *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish Homeland) and *Türk Ocağı* (Turkish Home/Heart) – two concepts that denote a Turkish homeland and territory in Anatolia. However, as the history of the Balkan wars, the war of independence and World War I indicate, *Türk Yurdu* was imminently, existentially and incessantly under threats of invasions, annexations and even colonial partitioning during the embryonic years of the Republic.

Nevertheless, Turkish independence and territorial boundaries were established through violent defensive wars and means. The Turkish Republic founder Mustafa Kemal, in his reflections on the Wilsonian commission during the Paris peace conference (1919–20) and the Treaty of Versailles (1919), stated in retrospect that "I defended boundaries which Turkish bayonets had already defended and laid down. Poor Wilson, he did not understand that lines which are not defended by the bayonets, by force, by honor and dignity, cannot be defended by another principle" (Rustow 1968, 800). Turkish cartographic imagination and the political boundaries of *Türk Yurdu* merged in the context of this violence and traumatic collapse of the Ottoman Empire

and the struggles of national independence and the subsequent foundation of a new Republic.

Violence, uncertainties and the emotion of fear, ontological and existential threats underlie the foundation of the Turkish political territorial borders. Ahmet Içduygu and Özlem Kaygusuz posit that "the final territorial, national and ethical-political boundaries of the modern Turkish nation state were established with an international act, the Lausanne Treaty on July 24 1923, before the establishment of the republic on 23 October 1923" (İçduygu and Kaygusuz 2004, 29). They indicate the Republican elites' priority and quest to establish and guarantee the legality of the political borders of the new Turkish Republic even before declaring the Republic. Still, Turkey has territorial disputes and tensions with its neighbors, especially with Greece and Syria. Armenak Tokmajyan and Kheder Khaddour delineate how Turkey and Syria had serious border tensions regarding the issue of Hatay despite the Ankara agreement between the provisional Government of Ataturk and colonial France (Tokmajyan and Khaddour 2022, 3).

Colonial powers' arbitrary, controversial, strategic remapping of the world during and after the fall of empires was based on a divide-and-rule mechanism that implemented seeds of enmity and hate between communities residing for centuries in these territories and thereby would to trigger internal and external disagreements and conflicts in those regions in the near future. In most cases, ethnic and religious communities were fragmented and exposed to partitions across these newly established nation-states which could be defined as new forms of colonies. Therefore, territorial integrity and border security have always been the biggest challenge to the security of newly founded modern nation-states. As a result, borders and borderlands have become a source of ontological (in)security for nation-states as human mobility continues – "legally" or "illegally" – across borders.

Furthermore, the existence of these partitioned communities facilitated a ground for the rise of waves of immigration, smuggling, human and drug trafficking, terrorist movements and trans-national political activism that become prevalent in the age of global "network society" (see Castells 1996, 2008) and digitalization. Contemporary nation-states have adopted diverse security measures to curb, limit or get rid of threats to their ontological existence and territorial sovereignty. In other words, modern nation-states are born with these fears and anxieties and still try to manage them by the invention of new strategies to feel more secure within their national boundaries. Gunhild H. Gjorv terms the mechanism and strategies of states in dealing with such insecurities "negative security" (Gjorv 2012, 839–40). Negative security involves laws, policies, strategies, and mechanisms that are inherently violent and deadly which are employed by states and their apparatuses in protecting state sovereignty and territorial political borders. Turkey's southern border with Syria and Iraq is a site where "negative security" policies and mechanism are employed by the state and predicated on political emotions of ontological insecurity and fears that are discursively widespread in the public and state institutions.

In her studies on the cultural politics of emotions, Sara Ahmed emphasizes the importance of the question of "what do emotions do?" rather than seeking an answer for the question of "what are emotions?" (Ahmed 2014, 4). Thinking in the same vein, we claim that emotions of fear, anxiety and hate have become strong components of ontological and epistemic existence of the Turkish nation-state, and they have been operative

in the process of making and remaking Turkish border policies and practices. The statist discourses of internal and external enemies and threats have provided a strong ground for that feeling of fear and insecurity to spread. That is why Turkey's border regimes have always been violent, via the implementation of diverse security apparatuses from the early 1950s to the present, in order to protect the newly created and "imagined Turkish nation" from external threats – where Kurdish political mobilizations and nationalist movements were seen as the biggest challenges and threats on the eastern and southeastern borders since the early years of the Republic (Aras 2020). In this context, it can be claimed that the Turkish territorial borders indicate an exclusionary character toward those on the other sides of the border and an inclusionary toward those inside, where a homogeneous nation based on the Turkish history, language, identity, and culture was intended to be created by any means necessary.

The state discourses embedded with emotions of fear, anxiety and hate toward the other – the unwanted and dangerous one living on the other side of the border – have been manufactured until the last few decades. The state-sponsored idea and myth of "*etrafı düşmanlar ile çevrili vatan*" (the homeland surrounded by enemies) was widely circulated in the public and was a powerful register in the nationalist discourses. In Turkish diplomatic history, Turkish governments had diverse relations with their neighbor countries depending on the ideological framework(s) of the ruling party or parties in power in different periods on both sides of the borders. The Turkish state's relations with each neighboring country were diversifying and need to be analyzed one by one; each case has its own complexities, patterns and (dis)continuities. However, it was the Justice and Development Party government that publicly declared its new "Zero Problem Policy toward Turkey's Neighbors" in 2004 (Davutoğlu 2008; Özcan 2012). They announced their desire to develop friendly relations with their neighbors, not only with Syria but also with Georgia, Armenia, Iran, Iraq, Bulgaria and Greece. As Ömer Taşpınar has discussed, this new policy could be described and understood as a new maneuver between neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism (Taşpınar 2008), but we think that there was an Islamist agenda also in this policy. Here, it is important to highlight that there is need for critical analysis of the history of the AK Party's foreign policy (Dalay and Friedman 2013), which we think has diverse and contradictory patterns. However, after the eruption of war in Syria in 2011 along with other political and economic crises in the surrounding region, Turkey also started to move toward more statist and "security"-oriented policies which end in the fortification of a security wall on the Turkish–Syrian border in 2016. After receiving around 3.5 million Syrian migrants, the AK Party government also decided to barricade the flow of migrants by thickening the border via the implementation of strict and violent control mechanisms.

In their work on the Turkish case, Ahmet Içduygu and Fuat Keyman argue that in the context of globalization and migration at the turn of the twenty-first century, Turkey faced diverse and new "security threats" (İçduygu and Keyman 2000, 384). In the words of Recep Onursal and Umut Adısonmez, these precarious and insecure political conditions pushed Turkey toward becoming a "strong, but anxious state" (2022, 61) since "the hegemonic discourse on the problem of state survival is a key element of politics in Turkey" (Adısönmez and Onursal 2022, 62). The question of survivability of the state (*devletin beka sorunu*) has been one of the fundamental ontological concerns in the history of modern Turkey. These state discourses have been very effective in maintaining

state power and its diverse forms of performance on the border and border regions. As it has also been stated in the context of ethnographic studies on cultures of fear, "Whether it occurs verbally or nonverbally, however, discourse can serve to organize and make intelligible fears that are latent, masked or unconscious" (Barker 2009, 268). Consequently, since it is located in a politically volatile geography and in the shadow of a traumatic and tragic imperial collapse, the discourses of the making and the un-making of the Turkish political territorial borders and its consequent border and immigration policies are imbued with the emotion of fear, ontological insecurity and an enduring state of anxiety that "produces" violent reflexes. No wonder the Turkish national anthem starts with the commanding phrase "*Korkma!*" ("Do not fear"), which can be interpreted as a crystallized state of the emotional condition of the Turkish state authorities, political elites, intelligentsia and the public.

Borders and Borderlands: Topographies of Fear, Threats and Anxiety

Geographical peripheries, borders, borderlands, boundaries and the un-inhabitable far away wilderness have always been the subject of human imaginations, myths, narrations, mysteries and mystifications. Borders and borderlands were realms and geographies that separated what is known from the unknown. They were zones, spaces and places that instilled uncertainty, fear, anxiety, hate and bewilderment to the soul. According to Henry Nash Smith, borders and borderlands have always been conceptualized as "the meeting point between savagery and civilization" (Smith 1950, 4). What is in the frontier lands and beyond the known borders and boundaries was dangerous, deadly, mysterious, feared and hated.

Moreover, in both classical myths and contemporary imaginations, peripheries, borders, borderlands and what lies beyond the known world are landscapes and geographies inhabited by savages, barbaric tribes, demons, vampires, vagabonds, bandits, smugglers, exiles, criminals and *haydut* (bandits) – they are lands where no law, sanity or civility is applicable or appreciated (Boozer 2013, 280–5). Anna Lucille Boozer (2013) and Peter Wells (2005, 55–69) document how the Roman Empire imagined and conceptualized its Egyptian peripheries and the Danube borderlands as zones of source of fears, anxieties and ontological insecurity; and the Empire would build forts and military garrisons to mitigate any looming threats of intrusion from these borderlands. For the Ottomans, Rumelia and Anatolia were the imperial center, while the other geographies were peripheries far away, perennially politically unstable and a source of uprisings and ontological insecurity. Hence, our imaginations and discourses of borders, frontiers, and borderlands are informed by a collective subconscious marred with emotions and sentiments of threat, fear and anxiety of the unknown that exists in beyond the borders and in the borderlands.

For instance, in the Turkish context, the southeastern part of the country (the Kurdish region) is feared, considered dangerous and unpredictable geography that has been conceived as a place for punishment, a place for exiles. For decades, young soldiers and newly recruited state employees such as medical staff, teachers, and other state officials dreaded and feared being posted to the southeast. In the Turkish film *Mucize* (2015), directed by Mahsun Kırmızıgül, the wife of Muallim Mahir (a teacher) laments tearfully at the train station as he travels from the city of İzmir (located in the western part of the country) to

the border city Kars (located in the eastern part of the country on the Turkish–Armenian border) and warns him to be careful of *eşkiyalar* (bandits).[2] The trope of the "dangerous" southeast is widespread in Turkish literature and cinema. The Kurdish region is considered a no-go zone full of unpredictable dangers. More recently, a plethora of films and popular television series such as *Al Sancak* (2023), *Dokuz Oğuz* (2023), *Savaşçı* (2017), *İsimsizler* (2017), *Teşkilat* (2021), *Söz* (2017), *Dag I* & *II* (2012 and 2016, respectively) and *Kurtlar Vadısı: Vatan* (2017) have all been imbued with tropes and motifs that the Kurdish southeastern peripheries are geographies populated by terrorists, traitors, bandits, smugglers, immigrants and "untrustworthy" residents. While many Kurdish films such as *Güneşi Gördüm* (2009), *Hükümet Kadın* (2013) and *Ekşi Elmalar* (2016) challenge these militarist, nationalist and even racist cinematic stereotypes, in the popular Turkish imagination the southeastern borderlands remain feared, despised and avoided. In their article "Media and Violent Conflict: Halil Dağ, Kurdish Insurgency, and the Hybridity of Vernacular Cinema of Conflict" (2016), Kevin Smets and Ahmed Hamdi Akkaya stipulate how the Kurdish "vernacular cinema of conflict" (Smets and Akkaya 2016, 77) pushes back against and challenges homogenizing and dehumanizing cinematic discourses and narratives. Borders and borderlands are sites of fear, anxiety and ontological insecurity for states; and in the case of Turkey, an existential threat. Furthermore, these perceptions of threat have been exacerbated by the Syrian, Iraqi and Afghani migrants' influx and a burgeoning Kurdish nationalism in Northern Syria.

Yet borders and borderlands are points of contact where societies, nations and civilizations "meet," intermingle, and interact. In her book *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, Wendy Brown formulates the concept of "paradoxes at the border" (Wendy 2010, 20) to capture and explain both the inhibitory and facilitating nature of borders and borderlands: borders are boundaries that separate but also nodes and nexuses of interactions. Borders are "membranes across which cultures, ideas, peoples, religions, goods, violence and politics have traversed and moved" (Hagen and Diener 2010, 189 quoted in Kalmoy 2021, 79) throughout history and in our contemporary age. Borders and borderlands are zones where two or more social, political and economic systems and entities (non-state actors, states and their diverse apparatuses, communities, cultures, networks and even world systems) come into contact, interact and overlap. In this context, Eric Vanhaute argues that "history is made by permanent shifts in and between frontier zones … Borders and frontiers modulate world historical processes via political expansion, human migration, economic exchange or incorporation, cultural assimilation and religious dissemination" (Vanhaute is cited in Vleuten and Feys 2016, 31). Borders and borderlands are consequential in histories of societies, nations and civilizations.

Turkish political territorial borders have been rendered markers and spaces where the state exerts its sovereign, legitimate violence and ontological existence and presence. The territorial boundaries are imagined and held as the contours of *Turk Yurdu* that was safeguarded, to use Mustafa Kemal's words, "by bayonets, by force, honor and by dignity" from enemies and invaders and later from secessionist movements. In Turkey, territorial wholeness and borders are such sensitive matters and they are discursively, politically, and emotionally conceived through the lenses of identity, state survival and protection of national honor and dignity. One such phrase that captures this nationalistic conception of borders in Turkey and the political emotions that fuel territorial sovereignty is "*Hudut Namustur*" ("border is honor"). This phrase is constantly repeated in the state

and other nationalist discourses in relation to felt fear and insecurity. Furthermore, it is inscribed on the walls of military buildings, visible and central points in the cities and even on the rocky mountains in large letters that can be seen from a great distance in the border cities, particularly in the eastern and southeastern parts of the country.

Hudut Namustur: The Biopolitics of Border Security in Turkey

The question of inter-relationality among the concepts of power, state, individual and society has been addressed by diverse thinkers and ethnographers from different perspectives in the history of social thought. One of the most groundbreaking approaches of this inter-relationality has been theorized by Michel Foucault in his conceptualization and deployment of the concept of biopolitics to analyze and theorize how the state and power govern and micro-manage both individual and collective social and political life, not only in their epistemic and ontological and territorial boundaries but also in demographic and migration managements and policies. However, in this study, we focus on the biopolitical state strategies and mechanisms involved in the governance, control, destruction and management of life and death in the borders and borderlands in the context of immigrants and migration.

"Life as an object of politics" (Lemke 2011, 23) is always under the sway of power. Our personal lives and experiences are shaped by power and politics. To this end, a biopolitical perspective is a powerful conceptual tool in analyzing and delineating diverse contemporary issues in the social sciences. Thomas Lemke observed how the concept of biopolitics "is used to discuss political asylum policies, as well as the prevention of AIDS and questions of demographic changes" (Lemke 2011, 1). Foucault's conceptualization of biopolitics imagines the biological body in relation to power and politics; Lemke posits that "Foucault's concept of biopolitics assumes the dissociation and abstraction of life from its concrete physical bearers. The objects of biopolitics are not singular human beings but their biological features measured and aggregated on the level of populations" (Lemke 2011, 5). Hence, in the biopolitical framework, power and politics come together to manage, control and categorize populations' health, growth, mobility and movements.

Biopolitics captures how power "make[s] it possible to analyze processes of life on the level of populations and to 'govern' individuals and collectivities by practices of corrections, exclusion, normalization, disciplining, therapeutics and optimization" (Lemke 2011, 5). In the context of borders and migrations, biopolitical practices, strategies and mechanisms employ diverse bureaucratic tools and discourses to "manage" demographic changes and population movements. "The biopolitics of security" (Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008, 271) in our contemporary world emphasizes "the aleatory biopolitical economy of populations," and this has consequences for immigration, border policies and identity politics. Didier Fassin documents how in the "governmentality of immigration" violent and dehumanizing biopolitical border policing strategies such as barbed walls, watch-towers, deportation camps and detention sites in borderlands and also in urban areas are justified in the name of security and maintenance of social harmony (Fassin 2011, 215–20).

Security-, nationalist- and statist-oriented biopolitical discourses justify deadly, violent and inhumane biopolitical border policies and anti-immigrant bureaucratic strategies. Through fears, threats, racism and hatred of immigrants and "others," biopolitics

also renders citizens of a country docile, fearful and anxious of these immigrants and "others." Power becomes the only guarantor of peace, life and harmony; power then reigns over the frightened docile bodies, opinions, discourses and minds of the citizens. In her article "Constructing America: Mythmaking in US Immigration Courts," Margot K. Mendelson delineates how biopolitical immigration policies and laws engender the discriminatory selection of asylum seekers and harsh border policing and contribute to American exceptionalism that has to be protected and sustained at all costs (Mendelson 2010, 1023–9). States and politicians employ the emotions of fear, anxiety and hate to gain approval and support from their masses to deploy biopolitical border and immigration regimes and policies. Discourses such as "freedom" in the contexts of the United States and *hudut namustur* in Turkey reinforce such powerful emotions and can justify arbitrary arrest of migrants, detentions, killings, and inhumane operations in borderlands and even invasions of other countries to create buffer zones hindering migrants.

We already acknowledged and argued that borders and borderlands are geographic zones associated with fear, uncertainty, threats, anxiety, death, invaders, smugglers, bandits and "others" – enemies. But at the same time, they have been transformed into a disciplining mechanism by the state. In the name of security and protection, the state legitimizes the bordering strategies to protect its own citizens but at the same time govern them as obedient masses residing within national borders (*milli sınırlar*). On the other hand, the bordering mechanisms operate to control, prevent or destroy any form of illegal infiltrations of human and non-human subjects through borders. And when these biopolitical mechanisms are coupled with notions, ideas and concepts such as national pride, honor (*namus*) and ontological aspect of survivability of the state (*devletin beka sorunu*), which have emotional connotations, and coupled with a patriarchal feminine imagination of the nation-state (*ana vatan*; motherland) then immigrants are viewed as individuals who violate, denigrate, make filthy and impure and infiltrate the "sacred" imagined community. The result is xenophobia and violent racism against immigrants and "others" and "justified" more deadly border policing regimes and practices.

In the case of Turkey, given the historical legacy and collective memory of the Ottoman Empire, borders have become emblematic of national honor that ought to be protected and guarded. In other words,

> the territorial national borders were perceived as sacred entities and given a high value. As such, the security and protection of these borders also have been given a great importance as is constantly in the political discourses of the state authorities. (Aras 2020, 51)

The association of borders with honor and the protection of honor is a powerful emotional tool that elicits slogans and rallying calls such as *hudut namustur*. In the context of the Turkish culture, *namus* (honor) is highly valued and highly associated with the body and sexuality of women that must be protected until the time of a legitimate relation under the certificate of marriage with men. The national political borders are the lines on the surface of the body of the motherland, and therefore they must be protected in the same way as the honor and dignity of men and women. For this reason, any type of illegal infiltration is interpreted as violation, infiltration, contamination and abuse of that honor.

Immigrants are not only violating the law by illegally entering and "invading" the national territories, they also violate the nation-state's honor as it is imagined as a feminine body and entity. In *The Politics of the Female Body in Contemporary Turkey: Reproduction, Maternity, Sexuality*, Alkan et al. (2021) explain how there are correspondences between the female body and the ontological existence and imagination of the nation-state. The nation-state as the motherland is essentially imagined as a feminine entity whose existence, pride and honor ought to be protected and safeguarded at all costs; even when conceptualizations such as the "fatherland" are employed, there is a subtle "nurturing," "conducive" and homage feminine aspect to it. Consequently, immigrants are violating the "honor" and "purity" of the nation by illegally transgressing the boundaries of the motherland. Immigrants violate and transgress against the "body" and boundaries of the nation-state; they denature, penetrate and infiltrate the cartographically imagined *namus* of the nation. Hence immigrants are violators of and threats to the purity, harmony and serenity of the nation. The widespread fears of immigrant men as rapists and the disproportionate circulation of news and social media posts about immigrant men sexually violating and harassing "our" women can be understood in the context of imagining the nation and borders as feminine bodies, sites and surfaces. With such discourses prevalent in the society, the state is mandated to protect the national boundaries in this age of globalization, migrations and terror at all costs and casualties.

While many scholars argue that borders are vanishing in our contemporary age of globalization (Gülzau et al. 2021, 7), we argue that borders and border security strategies and mechanisms are becoming more sophisticated, enhanced, deadly and digitalized. In the case of the US–Mexico borderlands, Peter Andreas documents how both air (helicopters, planes and cameras) and land patrols employ sophisticated digital and biometric tools to control border passing and security (Andreas 2003, 89–92; Nuñez-Neto 2006). In his book *The Wall: The Making and Un-Making of the Turkish–Syrian Border* (2020), Aras documents the panopticon-esque strategies of the Turkish border security mechanisms and how tall, grim and towering watchtowers dominate the horizon and skylines of the borderlands along with the security wall on the Turkish–Syrian border (Aras 2020, 89). In a process of border wall thickening, during which diverse security apparatuses are being implemented, why have borders become so militarized and weaponized in our contemporary period? Gülzau et al. argue that nation-states have rendered political territorial borders as "territorial traps": borders function both in protection and in containment of populations and individuals (Gülzau et al. 2021, 8), which can be seen in the case of citizens placed under a travel ban by the state. How are these "banned" citizens different from those exiles and migrants denied access to the country?

Though national borders are related to the identity and territorial contours of a nation-state, borders have become more than that: they are biopolitical apparatuses that manage and decide on life; physical and digital interventions on landscapes; and influential subjects on national politics and collective emotions and discourses. Megan Galbreath analyzed how the political careers and success of politicians such as Donald Trump and Marine Le Pen are based on the fear of immigrants and "loose borders" that allow in "criminals," "rapists," "murderers," "jihadists" and drug dealers (Galbreath 2017, 8). Populist sovereignism (De Spiegeleire et al. 2017) and racist identity politics is based on discourses and rhetoric that calls for tighter and

more brutal and deadly border policing and the demonization of immigrants who cross the borders legally or "illegally."

Borders have become not only markers of territorial boundaries but also discursive and emotional instruments that crucially influence popular notions and opinions in politics. The discourses of fear and anxiety are fabricated constantly by the state, statist actors and institutions and operate within social fabric and thereby enforce reproduction of consent and obedience that has been one of the novel governing strategies of the modern nation-state. While writing on the politics of fear during the post-9/11 era in relation to the politics of fear in redesigning American politics, Sara Ahmed defines the emotion of fear "as a form of world making." She suggests that "emotions do not simply come from within; they are where others 'touch' or 'affect' us such that we cannot be separated from others" (Ahmed 2003, 386). The conception of the Turkish nation-state as a fearsome authority has always been widespread in the society, but on the other hand the same state mechanism constantly produced a culture of fear associated with subject around and beyond the national borders.

Turkey's borders policies, strategies and mechanisms are informed by nationalist and statist discourses that emphasize "state existence," sovereignty and security-oriented approaches to borders and borderlands (Altuğ 2013; Aras 2020; Aydıntaşbaş 2020; Beeley 1978; Çağatay 2001). Aras, theorizing the cartographic imagination of political territorial borders of Turkey after the Ottoman collapse, posits that in statist discourses of border-making "what is left is considered as the last castle, a small land remained of the previous, [which] has to be protected by any means necessary" (Aras 2020, 53). Consequently, Turkey employed a hybrid mechanism in border control and patrols: this included the use of barbed wire (Aras 2020, 72) as border fencing; building border walls in more crucial and vulnerable zones; the burying of landmines (Aras 2020, 78) in borderlands; and a sequence of watchtowers along the borders. More recently, drones with infrared cameras have been employed by border officials in operations against immigrants and smugglers in the borderlands.[3]

The concept of "*Son Kale Türkiye*" ("the Last Castle Turkey") has been frequently used and emphasized after the attempted coup d'état on July 15 in 2016 by the state authorities, particularly by the current president Erdoğan[4] and also by the leader of the right-wing Turkish nationalist party Devlet Bahçeli.[5] This populist nationalist discourse led to the production of other instruments (books, documentaries, films etc.)[6] in order to generate the emotion of fear among the masses who are warned about and given responsibility for the protection of *Türk Yurdu* (the Turkish Homeland) as the last castle left behind after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, which ruled and controlled large territories across three continents. The memory of and nostalgia for the past glory evoke stronger emotions and attachment for this land (Türkiye) that was rescued and protected from the violent occupations of the colonial powers during WWI. It is the same feelings that motive the state authorities to take required steps for securing this land. The Turkish political borders and their histories have been addressed, investigated, and analyzed by diverse academic and non-academic subjects and institutions. Turkish cinema has been one of these venues where different directors touched upon various issues and questions concerning the borders and borderlands.

For instance, in his film *Propaganda*, which was released in 1999, Turkish director Sinan Çetin has projected the tragi-comic aspects of border making practices of the

state and its local actors at the border region with Syria in the early years of the Republic in 1948 and narrated how the borders ruptured centuries-old cultural, economic, political and kin relations in the region.[7] On the other hand, other directors were more interested in borders as controlling and disciplining mechanisms. In his dystopian and mystical film *Buğday* (*Grain*), which was released in 2017,[8] Turkish director Semih Kaplanoğlu captured cinematically the horrors of border policing and crossings. In the film scenes, the borders are marked by tall, gigantic concrete walls with barbed wires; at interval distances they have watchtowers with dark screens; cameras are everywhere; and the border patrols are armed and equipped like military soldiers in a warzone or battlefield. Recent political, financial and environmental crises in different parts of the world have made biopolitical practices in border crossings and borderlands more militarized, weaponized and violent, particularly in the context of the EU borders. The practices of border policing in Turkey have also evolved from simple one-line bi-armed wires to the implementation of land mines and then to the erection of a security wall along with use of drones and powerful infrared cameras that can be used to police several kilometers in the contemporary period. To understand why borders have become so militarized and weaponized, we have to comprehend the political, social and emotional discourses in national politics regarding borders, migrants, human and drug traffickers, bandits, terrorists and smugglers.

The Political Emotions of Immigration and Borders

The recent nine-minute-long mini-documentary titled *Sessiz İstila*[9] (*Silent Invasion*) presented by Hande Karacasu, a member of the right-wing, anti-migrant and ultra-nationalist *Zafer Partisi* (Victory Party), captured media attention and generated heated discussions on immigration policies, migrants and border sovereignty, amid already simmering anti-Syrian sentiments and emotions in Turkey in 2022. The mini documentary was shared on numerous social media platforms, and it trended for weeks before the Turkish police initiated an investigation regarding its potential to incite hate crimes, xenophobia, and social provocation. The language, discourse, imagery, and subliminal emotive language of *Sessiz İstila* is part of and contributes to a larger political emotion – which is global in its trends and manifestation – on/about immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, insecurity of borders and identity politics that discursively and socially spread suspicion, hate, fear, anxiety, anger, and violence.

The emotions of fear, hate, anxiety, and anger and the subsequent violence toward migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers as "others" are socially, discursively and emotionally constructed, framed, performed and displayed under the rubric of what Sara Ahmed called "the organization of hate" (Ahmed 2014, 42). Ahmed conceptualizes and theorizes the genesis of "the affective politics of fear" (Ahmed 2014, 62) and how through discourses of language, stereotype, idioms, jokes, terms, naming and rumors, the emotion of fear is constructed about "hated bodies" (Ahmed 2014, 49) of Blacks, Jews, Muslims, migrants, women, refugees, asylum seekers, prostitutes and drug addicts in the context of majority white societies in the West. Soon, feelings of "disgust and abjection" (Ahmed 2014, 84) about migrants, and refugees and other "hated bodies" spread and become part and parcel of the cultural politics of societies and in daily discourses about politics, borders, immigration policies and elections. Eventually, these orchestrated

feelings and emotions could mobilize masses occupied by nationalist discourses, feelings and right-wing rhetoric and thereby lead to the eruption of diverse forms of violent attacks toward "the others," and can also have consequential impacts on political opinions and voting patterns during elections.

Emotions are powerful agents, registers and instruments in political and social discourses. Emotions are social, interactional, diffused, exchanged, shared, discussed and transformed individually and communally. According to Catherine Lutz, although emotions are

> something that rises and falls within the boundaries of our bodies, the decidedly social origins of our understanding of self, the other, the world, and experience draw our attention to the interpersonal processes by which something called emotion or some things like joy, anger or fear come to be ascribed to and experienced by us. (Lutz 1998, 5)

Hence, emotions – and the discourses that shape them – construct, organize, label and give meaning to our understanding of the world, politics and day-to-day life experiences and interactions. Our opinions, feelings and emotions about the world and its complexities are social, contingent, subjective, and contextual – and, more crucially, constructed, shared and spread through discourses. Why would you hate a migrant whom you have never met or interacted with? Why do you have negative sentiments and opinions at all? How do you acquire these sentiments, emotions and opinions regarding political, religious, or migration matters?

Lila Abu-Lughod (2005) captures how television as a medium played a crucial role in disseminating and spreading a variety of sentiments and emotions regarding the notion of nation and nationhood in the context of 1980s Egypt. She observes how "audiences were to be brought into national and international political consciousness, mobilized and modernized and culturally uplifted" (Abu-Lughod 2005, 11) through televised programs watched by the citizenry. These numerous television programs "carried," "planted" and disseminated discourses that crafted, created and molded Egyptian nationhood, nationalism and the norms, ethics, morals and mannerisms of urban elites who were in power. Following Abu-Lughod, we can argue that digital, print and social media platforms generate and diffuse discourses that have implications for emotions, sentiments and opinions on various spheres of life in our contemporary era. The short movie *Sessiz İstila* and many others are samples of how through cinema and social media platforms fear, hate and violence toward migrants can be justified, amplified and discursively spread to a larger audience.

Contempt, suspicion, hate and fear of immigrants is widespread and prevalent in post-Syrian civil war Turkey. Moreover, with the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, an influx of immigrants continues to arrive through the Iranian–Turkey borderlands. This has exacerbated the discourses and political emotions surrounding the issues of migrants, border security and the survivability of the state. Fırat Kurt argues that the AK Party government policies of "Islamist universalism" (Kurt 2020, 8) approaches and the discourses of *Ensar-Muhacir* (helpers-emigrants) have created an atmosphere of solidarity and communality for Syrian immigrants in Turkey. While Fırat's arguments are valid in that many Syrian immigrants were welcomed and assisted with open arms in Turkey at the beginning of the civil war, in the last couple of years, sentiments and emotions about immigrants in Turkey have shifted toward hate, hostility and even violent reactions.

Moreover, Turkish society's reactions and responses to the increasing immigration of migrants have been varied and sometimes contradictory. We argue that different segments of Turkish society have different threat perceptions of migrants and hence varied responses to the government's immigration policies. For instance, the mini-documentary *Sessiz istila* is a reflection of the fears and anxieties of a secular, right-wing and nationalist segment (more so, a political party) of Turkish society. To a certain degree, Turkish society's fears and anxiety about migrants and their responses reflect and correspond to their own ideological fragmentation. Secular segments of Turkish society have been worried about and disturbed by the religious and sect identity of Syrian migrants who are majority Sunnis and the political consequences they will exert on Turkish politics and society if integrated or granted citizenships.

Furthermore, Francesco D'Alema observes how Syrian migrants in Turkey have become politico-ideological "allies" of AK Party government in its Syrian "regime change" policy (D'Alema 2017, 6), further worrying secular Turks and nationalist Kurds. Turkey's "open door policy" toward Syrian migrants (Oktav and Çelikaksoy 2015, 412) has raised concerns not only in Middle Eastern countries but in Turkey itself, leading to anti-Arab racism and xenophobia. Conservative and nationalist segments of the society, following the policy orientations and cues of the ruling AK Party government, have perceived the migrants as *Muhacir* co-religionists who are fleeing a brutal and tyrant dictator backed by Iran (Kurt 2020; Şahin Mencütek et al. 2020). On the other hand, the Kurdish perception of Syrian migrants has been complicated by Turkey's military support for Syrian Arabs in Northern Syria and their resettlement in Kurdish territories. Anti-Syrian migrant feelings have been widespread, especially among secular and nationalist Kurdish populations, not only in the Kurdish regions in the east and southeastern parts of Turkey but also among the Kurdish populations in other parts of the country as well. During my observations and personal converstations with Kurdish people from diverse backgrounds in the Kurdish region, particularly in the cities of Mardin, Diyarbakır and Batman, and also in Istanbul, anti-Syrian discourses were very similar to those heard from right-wing Turkish nationalists. Furthermore, the Syrian Kurds who have migrated to Turkey from Northern Syria were mostly labelled as "traitors" who did not join the Kurdish political struggle in Syria.[10]

The prevalent and diverse fears, empathy and anxieties toward, and the perceived threat of, migrants in Turkey have led to reactions and responses that range from racist violence to an emphatic solidarity. Yet we argue that latent orientalist, supremacist and racist tropes about Arabs and Kurds have become widespread discursively, in the context of the Syrian and Iraqi migrants most recently. Bogdan Ianosev and Özge Özdüzen documented how in online platforms such as Twitter, the discourses about immigrants in Turkey are imbued and "dominated" by online "derogatory sarcasm" and xenophobic languages (Ianosev and Özdüzen 2022, 160). Racism, hate, xenophobia and calls for violence are prevalent in Twitter posts and comments. They conclude: "Our data showcases the ways cultural racism unfolds by tracing attitudes expressed towards the humanitarian crisis on online platforms" (Lanosev and Özdüzen 2022, 163). The popular discourse of *bizi arkadan vurdular* (they stabbed us in the back) and racist tropes of Arabs as inferior, backward, and untrustworthy are prevalent in the discussion regarding immigrants and border security. The circulation of these emotions of hate, fear and anxiety in social media platforms and rampant television news about immigrants

carried in lorries compound the political emotions regarding immigration, national existence and border security. Turkey is not the intended destination of these immigrants; Turkey is a transit route to Europe. If Turkey continues to "act" as "a buffer country," becomes a "border externalization" zone (Benvenuti 2017, 12) for Europe and hinders migrants' journeys, their population in Turkey will increase, and this will impact the political emotions regarding immigration policies, immigrants' lives, border security and policies – and even politics – in Turkey.

Conclusion: Where Is the Border Located?

The history and context of the formation of the Turkish political territorial borders are marred by the violent traumatic collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the attempted colonization, annexation and partitioning of Anatolia by Greece, Bulgaria, Great Britain, Italy and France. Hence, borderlands and borders are not only markers of the contours of the Turkish nation-state but also sites imbued with collective political emotions, narratives and discourses of vulnerability, fear, anxiety, heroism and self-sacrifice. These political emotions, discourses and narratives have become powerful tools in influencing both politicians and the masses in regards to border security policies, in issues of national ontological existence and in immigration policies and practices. And in the context of the Syrian civil war and the mass influx of millions of immigrants into Turkey, borders and borderlands have become sources of fear, anxiety and ontological (in)security for the state and the masses, leading to the emergence of political emotions and discourses of racism, hate and violence against migrants and "others."

The inpouring of immigrants into the country and the security apparatus' efforts to apprehend, detain and deport them from large cities like Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir raises the question: where is the border? Is the "border" located on the peripheral borderlands or within the cities where migrants are "hunted," arrested, and detained? Where are border practices "practiced"? The recent frequency of police officers asking for valid documents within the city squares, boulevards, train exits and entrances and bookshops in Istanbul and other cities is an indication that borders and border practices are shifting and changing. The border is not in the far-away periphery; it is in the city centers where border security is practiced on daily basis. Moreover, the practice of police officers stopping and asking for valid documents in boulevards and city squares under the watching eyes of citizens and tourists alike is indicative of border security performativity that contributes to the discourses of political emotions about immigration, border security and national existence. In today's Turkey, while migrants or international residents are asked to show valid documents by the police in the public places of city centers, it is very usual to hear voices and whispers of Turkish citizens saying "*bak bunları topluyorlar*" (look, they are collecting them). Border policing has "intruded" into the public spaces of cities**:** border policing practices are practiced, enforced and implemented in the cities' public spaces. Everywhere is a border and borderland.

Notes

1. For demographic distribution of Syrian migrants across Turkey, see https://multeciler.org.tr/eng/number-of-syrians-in-turkey/.
2. For more information see https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3138782/.

3. Sınırda İHA'lı göçmen operasyonunu TRT Haber görüntüledi, https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/sinirda-ihali-gocmen-operasyonunu-trt-haber-goruntuledi-709804.html (accessed August 29, 2023).
4. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's speech on November 10, 2016, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/58941/yuce-milletimizle-birlikte-engelleri-asacak-ve-muasir-medeniyetler-seviyesinin-ustune-cikacagiz.html (accessed August 29, 2023).
5. Devlet Bahçeli's talk on March 19, 2029, https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/mhp-genel-baskani-bahceli-pkkya-fetoye-tutunanlar-bilsinler-ki-son-kale-turkiye-cumhuriyeti/1420851 (accessed August 29, 2023).
6. See the news about documentary titled *Son Kale Türkiye* (The Last Castle Turkey), https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/kultur-sanat/son-kale-turkiye-belgeselinin-cekimleri-basladi-/988083 (accessed August 29, 2023).
7. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0216986/ (accessed August 30, 2023).
8. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4073682/ (accessed August 30, 2023).
9. *Sessiz İstila* (2022) can be watched via this link:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpPo5vjC2bE.
10. Ramazan Aras' personal observations and conversations on the subject matter among Kurdish populations, both in the Kurdish region in Turkey and in Istanbul, at various times in the summers of 2021, 2022 and 2023.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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