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Affective politics of migration control in Turkey: a postcolonial approach

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ABSTRACT

There is an increasing call for addressing the Eurocentrism of research on the external dimension of European Union (EU) migration and border policies and practices. A growing body of work attempts to remedy the discipline's Eurocentrism through postcolonial theory. This article argues that more needs to be done to unsettle the Eurocentrism of migration studies with regard to the question of non-EU political subjectivity. The article adopts an alternative conception of subjectivity, which looks at the "affective" dimension of international relations. Through a close engagement with postcolonial studies on the question of political subjectivity, the article underscores the significance of history and historical relationships in constituting an affective politics of borders and migration in the non-EU world. The argument is illustrated through an empirical focus on Turkey. Drawing on interviews with Turkish border officials, the article aims to contribute to the literature in two ways. First, it argues that affective attachments shape how Turkish actors perceive and attribute meaning to national borders and human mobility across the national territory. Second, and relatedly, Turkish actors' identification with and positioning towards the EU's migration control regime are products of affective attachments rooted in historical experiences and encounters with Europe.

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Introduction

There is an increasing call for addressing the Eurocentrism of research on the external dimension of European Union (EU) migration and border policies and practices. The argument is that academic research on the topic has so far focussed almost exclusively on EU institutions, policies and actors and bypassed the EU's interlocutors. In this respect, a rich scholarship invites us to extend the analytical and methodological focus beyond the EU by incorporating the perspectives, interests and motivations of non-EU states and non-state organisations in their diplomatic and political relations and day-to-day interactions with the EU and its border and migration regime (e.g. Cassarino 2014, El Qadim 2014, Frowd 2014, İşleyen 2018a, 2018b, Tsourapas 2019, Zardo and Wolff 2022). Meanwhile,

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a growing body of work attempts to remedy the discipline's Eurocentrism through post-colonial theory. These studies contend that there is absence in migration studies regarding the colonial origins and continuities in European border policing and asylum practices (e.g. El-Enany 2020, El Qadim 2014, 2018, Krause 2021, Mayblin and Turner 2021, Ould Moctar 2023).

This article argues that more needs to be done to unsettle the Eurocentrism of migration studies, Eurocentrism can be described "as a conceptual and philosophical framework that informs the construction of knowledge about the social world", whereby "Europe is historically, economically, culturally and politically distinctive in ways that significantly determine the overall character of world politics" (Sabaratnam 2013, p. 261). For Wallerstein, Eurocentrism within the social sciences manifests itself through five "avatars": "(1) its historiography, (2) the parochiality of its universalism, (3) its assumptions about (Western) civilisation, (4) its Orientalism, and (5) its attempts to impose the theory of progress" (Wallerstein 1997, p. 22). It is the fourth "avatar" of Eurocentrism; namely, Orientalism, which as I argue in this article, still very much characterises much of the academic work on EU migration and border studies, in particular with respect to the question of non-EU political subjectivity.

Orientalism is Eurocentrism's culturalist "avatar" (Sabaratnam 2013). As Edward Said puts it, Orientalism is "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in Western experience" (Said 1979, p. 1). This works first and foremost by means of the construction of the "Orient" and "Occident" as ontologically separate and different, which is then utilised to attribute a particular distinctiveness to the Orient, including its belief systems, motivations and behaviour (Bhambra 2014). The culturalist manifestations of Eurocentrism is entangled with ethnocentric conceptions of non-European agency within the broader field of International Relations (IR). As Pinar Bilgin puts it, IR theorising of non-Western agency is ethnocentric because it starts with an unquestioned belief that "we already understand" "their" behaviour by analysing "their" capabilities based on "our" assumptions regarding "their" intentions" (Bilgin 2016, p. 17). For Bilgin, rather than merely an individual researcher's bias, ethnocentrism results from security theorising "as a body of knowledge" (Bilgin 2016, p. 20), which starts with a set of prescribed assumptions about why and how peripheral states act and/or would possibly act. In taking the self's beliefs, calculations and expectations for granted, Eurocentric security studies hardly take non-European reasonings about security and international politics into account let alone question these in a substantive way.

This article argues that current migration research suffers from ethnocentrism in its examination of non-EU subjectivity. Sabaratnam points to a rationalist/masculinist bias through which IR approaches actors beyond Europe (Sabaratnam 2011). Accordingly, the assumption is that non-European subject's intentions, motivations, decisions and behaviour on the international arena are driven solely by utilitarian considerations and cost-and-benefit calculations. Masculinity, on the other hand, demonstrates itself when a state or group of states places "particular traits, such as strength, aggression, competitiveness" at the centre of their security conceptions and approaches (Hojtink and Muehlenhoff 2020, p. 367).

In migration and border research, the prevalence of rationalist/masculinist explanations is evident in that the EU's interlocutors are entrapped into two roles: either a collaborator or a trouble-maker, leading to the misdiagnosis of actors' perceptions, actions

and interactions (Cobarrubias *et al.* 2023). The article adopts an alternative conception of subjectivity, which looks at the “affective” dimension of international relations. Affects are understood here as those dispositions which “refer to the affective stance or attitude a person has towards specific objects and issues” (Eznack 2013, p. 555). Applied to the sphere of international politics, affects are historically cultivated feelings and emotions which impact on how states or other collective associations act towards objects, events and subjects (Eznack 2011, 2013, Hutchinson and Bleiker 2014, Ross 2006, Sasley 2010). Through a close engagement with postcolonial studies on the question of political subjectivity (Bilgin 2008, El Qadim 2018, Krishna 1999, Sabaratnam 2011, Shilliam 2009, Zarakol 2013), I underscore the significance of history and historical relationships (Bhambra 2014) in constituting an affective politics of borders and migration in the non-EU world in two ways. First, affective attachments shape how non-EU actors perceive and attribute meaning to national borders and human mobility across the national territory. Second, and relatedly, non-EU actors’ identification with and positioning towards the EU’s migration control regime are products of affective attachments rooted in historical experiences and encounters with Europe.

The argument is illustrated through an empirical focus on Turkey. Data has been generated through in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews with Turkish border officials. As such, the article builds on my previous work on everyday practices of border and migration control in Turkey at EU borders (İşleyen 2018a, 2018b, 2021). Multiple fieldwork visits were conducted between 2016 and 2020, each lasting at least six weeks. The fieldwork stays took place in three Turkish cities bordering the EU. The city of Edirne is Turkey’s land border with both Bulgaria and Greece, while İzmir and Çanakkale as the two other sites of data collection constitute the sea border with Greece and are in close proximity to the Greek islands in the Aegean Sea. Interview partners include the border police, customs officers, coast guards as well as police officers in the three cities under study. The methodological choice of Turkish and micro-level politics is explained in detail under the methods section of this paper.

The article pushes conceptual debates within scholarly work on EU external migration policy in two ways. First, it brings into focus affective politics as constitutive of practicing border security and migration control, thereby extending explanations about non-EU actions and interactions beyond a limited number of existing role conceptions tied to rationalist and masculinist assumptions. Second, the findings situate non-EU political subjectivity into wider historical relations and encounters, whereby Turkey’s present-day migration control and cooperation with the EU serves as another site, rather than representing the starting point or the cause, for positive and negative identifications with Europe.

Towards an affective politics of political subjectivity and migration control: a postcolonial approach

Analyses of non-European political subjectivity in the context of EU external migration control are marked by a rationalist/masculinist bias. Part of a wider trend in international security studies regarding underlying assumptions about why and how non-European countries behave in certain ways (Bilgin 2016, Sabaratnam 2011), migration studies understand and examine the beliefs, calculations and expectations of the EU’s interlocutors

primarily from the perspective of rationalism/masculinity. Baghat Korany wrote already in 1986 that two role conceptions are available for countries outside Europe/the West in security studies. Tied to the prevailing narrative that Europe/the West is where global politics happens, countries belonging to the rest are “assigned the role of junior partners in the power game. Otherwise, they are “trouble-makers”, thriving on “nuisance power”, fit for the exercise of techniques of counter-insurgency” (Korany 1986, p. 549). These two roles are also the primary lenses through which migration studies have so far explained non-EU state behaviour vis-à-vis the EU, including Turkey.

To start with, Turkey is often perceived to have the role of “Europe’s gate-keeper” (Soykan 2016), where geography has determined the country’s role as being “protector of “Fortress Europe”, a buffer zone to avoid the geographical proximity of the EU’s external border with a region as turbulent as the Middle East and North Africa” (Benvenuti 2017, p. 12). This gate-keeping role became particularly clear during the so-called “refugee crisis”, which “was important in terms of both the symbolic and actual demonstration of the indispensability of Turkey’s gatekeeping for the EU” (Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani 2016, p. 51). The events termed as the “refugee crisis” resulted in the infamous EU-Turkey Statement, with which Turkey agreed to take back all newly arrived Syrians and expressed its commitment to the strengthening of border control to manage irregular migration. The 2016 Statement is a policy of shifting “the space of Europe’s responsibility.” (Bialasiewicz and Maessen 2018, p. 211), whereby Turkey is a willing participant and a partner “keeping the gate to Europe” (Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani 2016, p. 56). This willingness is primarily driven by material interests (İçduygu and Aksel 2014), particularly financial transfers from the EU to the Turkish state, which has led Gerasimos Tsourapas to define Turkey as a “refugee rentier state”. Like Jordan and Lebanon, Turkey is a refugee rentier state “able to derive similar forms of unearned external income from a specific resource – namely, the presence of refugee populations” on its territory (Tsourapas 2019, p. 467).

Yet, neither Turkey’s partnership nor its role as gate-keeper is unconditional as observed during the summer 2015 events:

Turkey’s approach was to remind the EU continually that its immunity to the migratory consequences of the Syrian conflict were largely being contained thanks to Turkey’s gatekeeping, while sending a clear message that it was on the verge of giving up this role: a possible scenario with very serious consequences for the “unionness” of the EU. (Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani 2016, p. 55)

This brings us to the second role that existing migration scholarship sees as fitting for Turkish state behaviour: “the trouble-maker”. Far from being in contradiction with the first role, the Turkey-as-trouble-maker narrative reproduces the Eurocentrism of IR (security) studies regarding non-European state intentions, calculations and strategies. There are times in which the relatively stable relations between the EU and Turkey occasionally come to a standstill with one side expressing discontent and accusing the other about lack of commitment to previous agreements and promises. In these instances, Turkey moves from being a “partner” to a “trouble-maker” (Koumoutsakos 2020), whose actions are driven by the desire of “instrumentalizing migration flows to put European countries, the EU ... under pressure” to achieve its foreign policy objectives (Léonard and Kaurert 2022, p. 743). Turkey-as-troublemaker narrative quickly falls into an

Orientalist language, where non-European state actions, calculations and strategies are seen as emanating from uncontrolled masculinity, impulsive and aberrant action ruled by corrupt leaders. In its dealings with the EU, Turkey is portrayed as “blackmailing” the EU (Tsourapas 2019). The rationalist/masculinist bias reproduces the binary roles which non-European actors are ascribed to in security studies and precludes any investigation of alternative political subjectivity beyond the collaborator-versus-trouble-maker conceptions.

A focus on affect enables us to move beyond the two roles through which Turkey has so far been studied within migration research: the gate-keeper and the trouble-maker. What is an affect and what role do affects play in international relations? IR scholars interested in emotional dimensions of foreign policy and world politics (e. g. Gustafsson and Hall 2021, Ross 2006) identify affect as “one element of emotion” (Sasley 2010, p. 701), although they also argue that the two are not the same (e. g. Eznack 2013, Hutchinson and Bleiker 2014). For Hutchinson and Bleiker, emotions are “personal and often conscious feelings”, whereas affects “exist both before and beyond consciousness; they are a wide range of non-reflective and subconscious bodily sensations, such as mood, intuition, temperament, attachment, disposition and memory” (2014, p. 502). Similarly, Ross defines affects as “nonconscious and embodied emotional states – in world politics” (2006, p. 197).

Two further aspects are worthy of consideration when differentiating between emotions and affects. The first is that affects concern “an individual’s relatively long-term attitude or sentiment toward a particular object (affective dispositions)”. Emotions, on the other hand, denote to “the same individual’s emotion felt in reaction to that object at a particular point in time” (Eznack 2013, p. 556). The second difference is that affects go beyond the individual level and connect individuals through invocation of particular emotional reactions and attachments towards objects, subjects and events (Ross 2006). These “affective dispositions” (Eznack 2011, 2013) shape the ways in which individuals feel about and approach other individuals and form attitudes and stances on collective entities (Hutchinson and Bleiker 2014, Roos 2006, Sasley 2010).

Scholarship which approaches world politics from a perspective of emotions posits that states are guided by affects – or feelings in general. Apart from feeling emotions as individuals, state officials, such as decision-makers in the field of foreign policy, are part of a collective group (e.g. nation) whose members are united around the same affective dispositions, such as emotional attachment to a piece of land (Sasley 2010). State officials, “because of their roles as representatives of the state, and the identification process that it implies, not only act but also feel as the state” (Eznack 2013, p. 554). This shapes the way states formulate positions and policies vis-à-vis situations, events and other actors in international politics through such affective dispositions as anger and revenge (Ross 2006), guilt (Gustafsson and Hall 2021) along with like/dislike and friendship/enmity (Eznack 2013). Affects are historically embedded in the sense that present-day politics has the “capacity to combine already-existing affect with contemporary experience”, such as the evoking of Pearl Harbour memories in United States (US) reaction to 9/11 (Ross 2006, p. 214).

A postcolonial approach to affect enriches existing IR debates by means of foregrounding colonial and imperial history as constitutive of a state’s affective dispositions in world politics. It adopts a relational approach to affective dimensions of political subjectivity,

where the subject's encounter with and colonialism/imperialism provides "the intersocietal/geo-cultural context" (Shilliam 2009, pp. 124–125) in which individual and collective identifications are constructed and historically produced. Non-European subjectivity does not emerge in a vacuum but is constituted through historical experiences. This includes conceptions of (in-)security that are "generated by those experiences and their present-day shadows" (Bilgin 2016, p. 52). Nation-building is one central episode for constituting insecurities in the non-European world, where states develop what Sankaran Krishna calls "postcolonial anxiety" resting on a "discourse of danger" and a continuous search for state survival in the newly emerged post-imperial world order. For Krishna, nation-making cannot be dissociated from non-Europe's traumas in encounters with previous colonial and imperial powers. Krishna explains India's intervention in Sri Lanka from the perspective of affective politics rooted in the historical event of the formation of Bangladesh (Krishna 1999).

I argue that the affective dimension of migration control in Turkey is intertwined with a longer history of affects developed in the context of the country's encounters and experiences with Europe. While Turkey was never a former colony of Europe but its predecessor, the Ottoman Empire, was itself an imperial power ruling over European and extra-European geographies for centuries, its relationship with Europe rests on a liminal subject (Rumelili 2012). Turkey's liminal political subjectivity is rooted in the Ottoman/early Turkish republican past which shaped and continues to shape identification with the self and with Europe as well as self-positioning within the international system. Turkish affective attachments with Europe oscillate between feelings of desire/inspiration and anxiety/suspicion (Bilgin and Bilgiç 2012). As Paula Sandrin puts it:

on the one hand, these discourses are infused with desire (to be like Europe/the West, to be accepted as a full member of Europe/the West), admiration (of European/Western civilisation, politics, economy, rationality, science), suspicion (of European/Western hypocrisy, double standards, aggression, intrusiveness), anxiety (about being devalued and the consequences of devaluation) and resentment (for never achieving the recognition Turkey aims for). (Sandrin 2021, p. 227)

These seemingly contradictory and puzzling yet co-existing affects underlie Turkey's long-term determination and efforts to become part of European/Western institutions, such as the League of Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the EU (Zarakol 2013). The obstinate search for joining the EU – or at least upgrading relations with the latter – is accompanied by strong resentment towards Europe for not succeeding in this endeavour (Sandrin 227, Zarakol 2013), while feeling at the same time suspicious about a potentially hidden agenda of Europe and possible repercussions of fostering economic and political ties with the EU (Bilgin and Bilgiç 2012, Yılmaz 2011).

How do these histories matter for border and migration control in Turkey? Turkish history of nation-building is the outcome of processes intertwined with wars, territorial losses and human displacement. National memories of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire invoke narratives of the past, where European imperialism, particularly Europe's colonial ambitions in previously Ottoman-controlled lands in the Middle East, occupies a central place. These include

wars (the First World War and the War of Independence); and occupation and dismemberment of the Empire's territory through the Treaty of Sèvres (1920), which divided the land-mass of present day Turkey between the winners of the First World War. (Sandrin 2021, p. 234)

It is therefore not surprising that Turkish political subjectivity displays affective attachments towards Europe in border matters and carry symbolic meanings that are formative of how Turkey takes a particular position in international politics. Affects feature in Turkish border disputes and territorial conflicts with individual EU countries, such as Greece and Cyprus (Rumelili 2003).

This paper extends the analytical focus of affects and border histories in Turkey-EU relations to contemporary politics of migration control. Population management is a key aspect for the exercise of state sovereignty as it is about monopolisation of legitimate mobility. State authorisation and regulation of mobilisation can be conceptualised as a politics of affect as borders delineate between the "inside" and the "outside" and carry cultural and social meanings which are historically entrenched (Campbell 1998). Borders emerge through struggles over "nationally bounded places" understood as home (Paasi 2001, p. 23). All of these invite us to be attentive to the role of affects in understanding and analysing the underlying factors explaining Turkish state behaviour in its migration cooperation with Europe or lack thereof.

Methods

The methodological focus on the micro-level is in line with what Fisher-Onar and Nicolaidis (2013, pp. 289–292) term "engagement" as one key methodological strategy of decentering EU studies. Engaging with Europe's "others" aims at "uncovering the dynamics of migration from an everyday politics perspective and everyday resistance, and in particular, connecting established and marginalised perspectives" (Zardo and Wolff 2022, p. 688). The state-centric tendency coupled with the rationalist/masculinist conception of political subjectivity has meant that past research on Turkey-EU relations overwhelmingly looked at macro-level and meso-level politics (e.g. Gökalp and Mencütek 2018, İçduygu and Aksel 2014, Özçürümez and Şenses 2011, for some notable exceptions, see İşleyen 2018a, 2018, 2021, Karadağ 2019). The implicit assumption here is that political power works vertically, especially in contexts like Turkey ruled by a hyper-masculine leader causing nuisance for the EU with inconsistent and irrational behaviour. Turkish border security practices are then merely sites for the top-down and automatic translation of policies adopted at a higher political level. This marginalises and excludes the perspectives of those who have the most immediate, daily contact with the border and border sites, human mobility and the EU's migration control regime.

Interviewee partners for this research have the formal mandate as law enforcement authorities to carry out border security and manage irregular migration at EU borders. They exercise state sovereignty by deciding whom/what to permit/reject based on perceived securities/insecurities. Furthermore, border officials have the most direct daily encounters with neighbouring EU countries, in this case Turkey with Greece and Bulgaria. Understanding their perspectives and experiences – both in cooperative and conflicting terms – will therefore offer valuable insights into agency formed in relational terms by asking "how Europe matters" (Fisher-Onar and Nicolaidis 2013, p. 289).

Three broad questions were asked during the interviews. The respondents were asked how they made sense of irregular migration from Turkey into the EU, what they thought about Turkey's role in relation to the EU's migration and border regime and how they saw EU-Turkey cooperation on this matter. Data analysis draws upon Roxanne Doty's (1993) tripartite "Discursive Practices Approach". The concept of "presupposition" refers to the "background knowledge" through which certain meanings about subjects and relationships as well as objects and places are constructed as "true" (Doty 1993, p. 306). For example, the idea that states have different mentalities rests on particular presuppositions structured by a Eurocentric "reason/passion" binary in the definition of non-Western behaviour (Doty 1993, p. 313). "Predication" as the second analytical category is about constructing subjects and subject identities by assigning them particular features and qualities through the use of particular predicates, adverbs and adjectives. Lastly, "subject positioning" is about the discursive arrangement of subjects in relation to one another by means of, *inter alia*, "opposition", "similarity" and "complementarity", including hierarchical ordering (Doty 1993, p. 306). The concepts of presupposition, predication and subject positioning are well-suited for analysing data collected for this study around the three broad questions identified above. The three analytical categories are appropriate to bring into view how discursive articulations by Turkish border officials produce meaning around irregular migration through affect and how this meaning production at once constitutes Turkey and the EU as particular kind of subjects while attributing each side specific positions concerning the management of irregular migration.

Representation of the EU around irregular migration

Based on the conceptual framework and the methods chosen, the inductive analysis enabled to identify three main dimensions of affective politics in Turkish border officials' discourses on migration control at EU borders. The most recurring representation is *Europe as an unfair and paternalistic Other and a blame-maker, but ...*. The second salient representation is *Greece as the negligent and favoured Other* followed by the *Turkish Self as more humane* than Europeans.

Europe as an unfair and paternalistic other and a blame-maker, but ...

A repeated representation that came up throughout the interviews is the *reality/distortion* principle, which serves as a guiding frame for the respondents to give meaning to irregular migration (management) and to position themselves in relation to the EU. This presupposition can be observed in the following excerpts:

I can proudly say that we do a lot. I mean in the fight against irregular migration. Though we do a lot, Europe sees us as a country doing nothing. Look at the numbers (of border crossings into the EU) now! They have dropped! Migrants can't move freely now. It is thanks to our controls, our inland controls and our controls everywhere. If we stop these controls, well then Europe will see. (Interview with Police Officer, The Police for the Edirne Province, June 2018)

This year, a mission came here, ministers from Europe and some others. I think one mission was from Germany. They treated us as if we didn't do any work. You (the EU) can't prevent them (border crossers)! ... Someone in the mission asked me questions, as if interrogating. They¹ talked down to me. If you know it so well, why don't you put hundreds of ships in

Greece? We are not an EU member after all! (Interview with Police Officer District Police Department in Çesme, July 2017)

The *reality/distortion* frame through which the two border officials frame their understandings and interpret events and subjects, points to a disconnection between “facts” versus EU attitude towards the respondents. The Turkish Self is positively evaluated with reference to the hard labour that the country invests in the control of irregular migration to Europe. The decreasing number of crossings and restrictions on the onward movement of persons are given as examples to accentuate the “reality” regarding Turkey’s determination and efforts. The reality/distortion frame is entangled with affective dispositions through which Turkish border officials react to and formulate their stance vis-à-vis the EU. Affects feature through feelings of resentment, whereby the EU is seen as an unfair and paternalistic Other and a blame-maker. Resentment triggers negative feelings towards the EU’s evaluative claims on Turkey’s activities on the ground along with face-to-face interactions that the interviewees have with their EU officials. The EU is an unfair Other that takes little, if any, notice of the facts on site, while also acting in a paternalistic manner during individual encounters. The EU is perceived to be paternalistic by expressing superiority over the Self by means of its assumed treatment of the Turkish border officials as inferior in need of monitoring and assessment. Similar representations of the EU have also been observed in the Turkish AKP’s (Justice and Development Party) discourse on “‘Europe’ as a resented guardian” of Turkish politics (Alpan 2016, p. 23).

In the interview material above, the two excerpts rely on blame avoidance, again resulting from affects tied to resentment. Both border officials frame the EU as an unfair blame-maker and counter its alleged injustice with regard to the Turkish Self. In addition, the second respondent counters the EU through the shifting of responsibility in two ways. First, and in line with the *reality/distortion* principle, the interviewee engages in blame-shifting by rendering Europe as the one responsible for border security failures (“You can’t prevent them!”). Second, this representation involves a subject positioning with reference to responsibility. In attempting to counter the presumed claims of the inadequacy of Turkish border security efforts, the border official constructs the EU as a collective entity that the Self is not part of, thereby not being the one with the primary responsibility for irregular arrivals into the European territory.

The *Europe as an unfair and paternalistic Other and a blame-maker, but ...* representations demonstrate the limitations of explanations with a sole focus on rationalist/masculinist subjectivity and material interests. It rather shows the importance of relationally-constructed affects in shaping how Turkish border officials understand their positionality and relate to the EU and its migration control regime. The examples above point to the co-existence of the Turkish quest for recognition and resentment in the supposed absence of such recognition and even devaluation by the EU through the latter’s perceived paternalistic behaviour. Affects formed through historical encounters with Europe translates into a desire to be accepted as a partner fulfilling its sovereign duties to control cross-border mobility whereas reactions from the EU regarding such efforts are met with frustration that Turkey never achieves the praise it deserves in the eyes of the EU.

Greece as the negligent and favoured other

Past research has found Greece to be a prominent theme in negative representations of the EU in Turkey (Yılmaz 2011). Previous research has demonstrated that Turkey contested the EU through Greece on the grounds of differential attitudes towards inter-state disputes (Rumelili 2008). Data presented here points out novel contestations of Europe through debates on Greece, where affective attachments are constitutive of political subjectivity in Turkish border security. This is accomplished by a discourse of *negligence/responsibility*.

A repeated argument made during the interviews was that Greece puts little effort in stopping irregular border crossers:

The Greek side doesn't make much effort to stop the boats because they know that the migrants will be sent back. But most importantly, we as the Turkish coast guards are doing our job with serious commitment, and the Greeks know that and that is not why they are not bothered ... While Turkey has continuous patrolling at sea, Greece does it from time to time. Only periodically. (Interview with Sergeant, Turkish Coast Guard Command Station, Ayvacık, Çanakkale, July 2017)

I was here during the refugee crisis and saw the situation on the ground. It was indescribable ... Dozens of boats setting off at the same time as if having agreed to do so ... We did an extraordinary job then. Each of us worked overtime. But I have to say I rarely see a Greek coast guard ship in the sea. For the last two years, I have seen Greek ships three times at the most and that is for push-backs. Greeks are not that present ... Also, we have more forces in the sea than the Greeks. (Interview with Boat Commander, Turkish Coast Guard Command Station Ayvacık, Çanakkale, July 2017)

The findings here illustrate how the concept of responsibility features in affective dispositions through which interviewees communicate and act towards cooperation with the EU in migration matters. In the two excerpts above, Greece is constructed as the *negligent* Other juxtaposed against the Self as a *responsible* subject. The common presupposition is that Turkey does more than Greece to tackle irregular migration, and this binary dichotomy is achieved with the help of several indicators to constitute the two subjects. In the first excerpt, which briefly mentions the EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016 ("they know that the migrants will be sent back"), Greece is assumed to live off Turkey. Turkey's committed activities and determination in the sea are said to benefit the Greeks and also explain their disinterest of taking the trouble of controlling borders.

The second excerpt also underscores Turkey's dedication to the prevention of irregular migration in contrast to the level of energy invested by the Greeks. Both interviewees utilise time-related elements to support their respective arguments. Variation in professional commitment and effort is measured by the physical presence of officials at the borders. Positive self-representation is supported by expressions as "continuous patrolling" equated with responsibility as opposed to Greek officials who are said to be only present "from time to time" and "periodically". Individual encounters ("I have seen Greek ships for three times at the most and that is for push-backs") are used to foster the negative representation of the Other, whose difference from the Self is seen to be further evidenced by the varying quantity of forces deployed by each side.

Another instance in which *negligence* surfaces concerns irregular border crossings *into* Turkey rather than *from* Turkey to Greece. The issue of “push-backs” by Greek border guards was frequently raised by the interviewees at both land and sea borders:

There is now a reverse movement from Greece to Turkey because people could not find what they had expected in Europe ... These migrants can't enter Turkey through regular ways and therefore seek irregular channels ... They come to the border fence built by the Greeks. Under normal circumstances, the Greek side has the duty to come and take these people away. The Greeks, instead, turn a blind eye to these attempts thinking that “they are leaving my territory anyway”. They even give underhanded support to such irregular crossings. They wait for us to turn our back! ... We didn't give them any chance. We increased our patrolling activities, so such crossings have remained low. (Interview with Customs Officer, Pazarkule Border Crossing Point (with Greece), Edirne, May 2018)

The Greeks do not pay the necessary attention to crossings into Turkey. They do not show the same degree of sensitivity as we do in addressing irregulars. (Interview with Customs Officer, Pazarkule Border Crossing Point (with Greece), Edirne, June 2016)

The two excerpts are good illustrations of the affective politics of border and migration control in Turkey that cannot be wholly captured through a rationalist understanding of subjectivity. The kind of affects featuring in the above interview material are relational constructs rooted in Turkey's historical experiences of wars and territorial losses leading from an imperial past to a nation-state present, where Europe and its imperial objectives and said collaborators, such as Greece, are believed to have contributed to (Yılmaz 2011). This provides the background for Turkish border officials who call into question the actions of Greece.

On the one hand, a shared premise in the two examples relates to Greece's failure to act as a sovereign subject. This is evaluated by the effective management of borders to ensure that all crossings happen in a regular manner, which Greece, as the two respondents argue, has failed to do. Turkey's questioning of Greece's credentials of sovereignty cannot be dismissed as something tactical to shift blame to a neighbouring country. Instead, it is imbued with a sense of superiority, whereby Greece as a previous Ottoman imperial subject is not considered to be on a par with Turkey. Taken together with the two other representations above, sovereignty understood as territorial control is at the core of subject positioning through hierarchical ordering. The construction of the Self in relation to Other is realised through comparison, where Greece is perceived as not living up to state responsibilities, while Turkey's superiority as a “good” sovereign is taken for granted. On the other hand, responsibility is tied to the idea of reciprocity in the construction of subjects as “neighbours”. The second quotation points to Greece's lack of “sensitivity” when addressing attempts to irregularly cross into Turkey. The first interviewee goes further and ascribes intentionality to the perceived inattentiveness of Greece to irregular departures from its territories. Intentionality is associated with alleged practices to “turn a blind eye to” and “even give underhanded support to” border crossings of irregular nature into Turkey.

Moreover, the first interviewee invokes negative historical representations of Europe in Turkish national identity narratives through the hyperbolic expression that Greeks “wait for us to turn our back!”. The idea that Europe has the continuous goal of harming Turkey has wide acceptance among the Turkish elite and the public. This collective memory is reactivated at the border site to interpret present realities

of irregular migration. While the commonly perceived threats stemming from Europe are territorial partition, loss of independence and support for terror groups (Yılmaz 2011), it is the border crossing of the unauthorised migrant viewed as deception by Europe. Similar to the past, the Turkish self-hinders Europe's hostile plans by being alert through "patrolling" so as not to "give them any chance" of deceiving Turkey.

A further representation constructs Greece as Europe's "privileged" Other. Past studies showed how Greece is continuously referred to by the Turkish elite (Rumelili 2008) to construct the EU as an actor applying double standards in its dealings with Turkey, especially in the framework of enlargement. Similar representations are employed by Turkish border guards when communicating their views on irregular migration. This view has been particularly expressed in the two interviews below:

The EU spends a big budget for controlling its sea borders. Most money goes to Greece, we receive very little. Europe has provided us with a few ships but it is not enough. Whatever Turkey does, it does mostly on its own. (Interview Police Officer, District Police Department in Dikili, İzmir, June 2018)

Greece receives money from the EU all the time but who does the job? We do! ... When there were negotiations between the EU and Turkey, we expected to receive a good budget for the Turkish coast guard institution but this has not come true ... We buy new equipment continuously. The EU gives us a few ships. But most money comes from Turkey's own pocket. (Interview with Police Officer, District Police Department in Çesme, İzmir, July 2016)

Both respondents share the view that there is a noticeable variation in the EU's support for Greece and Turkey to the detriment of the Turkish side. This disparity is assessed by the degree of financial aid made available for each party to improve their respective technical capabilities. The first interviewed official, while acknowledging the EU's aid ("a few ships"), simultaneously predicates its insufficient amount ("little", "not enough") in comparison to what Greece is believed to receive. The second interviewee also represents Greece as a privileged Other, whose differentiated status is emphasised through the hyperbolic expression of "all the time" denoting to financial assistance coming from the EU. The same coast guard official voices disappointment about the outcome of high-level political dialogue between Turkey and the EU in the second half of 2015 and the first months of 2016. This official expresses resentment based on the assumption that EU support for Turkey is disproportionate to the latter's workload and labour ("who does the job? We do!"), which makes the EU an unjust actor allocating a large amount of its resources to its member state which does not do as much as the Self in the controlling of sea border crossings.

Lastly, a common presupposition in both excerpts is that Turkey is largely left alone in carrying the financial burden of border security ("Whatever Turkey does, it does mostly on its own", "... most money comes from Turkey's own pocket"). This has parallels with Turkey's ruling AKP's discourse on the Syrian refugees that negatively predicates the EU for its reluctance to assist Turkey by assuming (more) financial responsibility (Karakaya-Polat 2018). It also shows similarities with wider historical affects based on the notion of double standards in the way that Europeans have treated Turkey, which drives Turkish suspicion towards Europe's actions.

The Turkish self as more humane

The third dimension of affective politics in Turkish migration control concerns a *human/inhumane* frame through which the EU is contested on the basis of perceived differences in attitudes towards migrants, including the display of emotions. This can be discerned in the following interview material:

During the events in September 2015, journalists from European countries came to Edirne. They expected us to use violence against the refugees because this is what the police in their home countries do. Europeans are very harsh as we see on the TV. They (journalists) expected the same to happen in Turkey, I mean people with other intentions ... But no violence took place. The situation did not turn out to be the way these journalists were expecting ... But look at the Greeks and the Bulgarians. They are building fences to keep the refugees out. They use violence, we know how the Greeks are ... Europeans see migrants as a security problem. We are different, we show the migrants the compassion of the Turkish police by offering food, a warm bed, a hot drink ... (Interview with Border Police, Pazarkule Border Crossing Point (with Greece), Edirne, May 2016)

We see migrants first of all as human beings and treat them like that ... I know how FRONTEX and the Greeks intervene. They smash peoples' faces in. (Interview with Customs Officer, Pazarkule Border Crossing Point (with Greece), Edirne, May 2016)

The two excerpts above distinguish between two ways of behaving towards irregular border crossers during operational exercises. The different behavioural types are given meaning through a *humane-versus-inhumane* frame, which forms the positive representation of Turkish border officials in contrast to European counterparts. Subject positioning is established in relational terms on the basis of substantial and inherent moral differences between the humane Turkish Self and the inhumane European Other. On the one hand, the building of border fences by Greece and Bulgaria to stop migrants is framed as driven by a security logic and taken as an indication that the real concern of Europeans is their own safety rather than the needs and the well-being of border crossers. Different from the European perception of "migrants as a security problem", the Self is predicated positively for approaching migrants first and foremost as "human beings" and with "compassion".

On the other hand, the negative Other representation is built around descriptions depicting the violent nature of European border officials in their daily activities. In the interviewee materials, events are picked up from the past to reinforce the positioning of subject identities. Essential moral differences between the Self and the Other are said to have unfolded in the way each side approached identical situations. The portrayal of the Turkish attitude as free of violence comes together with the implicit assumption that European journalists present in Turkey during the 2015 events had the hidden agenda of equating the unequitable; that is, the non-violent and compassionate Turkish border official versus the violent European counterpart with a "harsh" attitude. Here again, anxiety and suspicion towards Europe constitute political subjectivity beyond rationalist/masculinist explanations.

Several interviewees challenged scenes of humanitarianism in European countries that found their way in the news. One of the examples given by a Turkish border official concerns the widely shared photograph of a Danish police officer and a Syrian girl playing together at the German-Danish border in September 2015², the following quotations feed into the *humane/inhumane* frame:

Television channels are showing the photograph of a Danish policeman playing a game with a refugee girl. Why this publicity? Why is there a need to show it? The kind, affectionate European policeman ... We do so much more but do we even mention it let alone chasing media coverage?. (Interview with Police Officer, The Police for the Edirne Province, Edirne, May 2018)

I saw the photograph of a Syrian child and the Danish policeman. The news says: "Europe welcomes the refugees." What is so extraordinary about this? Why put this in the news? If only they could see our attitude and behaviour ... If only we could show more ... (Interview with Police Officer, District Police Department in Dikili, İzmir, June 2018)

In their exploration of the emotional dimension of Sino-Japanese relations, Gustafsson and Hall (2021) observe long-term, recurrent interstate political struggles resting on "a distributive politics of emotion concerned with who gets to *feel* what, when, and how, and whose feelings matter" (2021, p. 973). In the interview data presented above, a similar discursive battle takes place in which Turkey assesses and compares the degree of public display of feelings of the Self and the EU Other in respective encounters with border crossers. Here, historical affects permeate Turkey's arguments about European hypocrisy with respect to the latter's refugee humanitarianism. Several interviewees identified humanitarianism as an inherent characteristic of the Turkish self-going back to the Ottoman times. Earlier studies have found that an Islamic language with references to the Ottoman past noticeably shapes Turkey's refugee discourse, especially in the context of the recent mass displacement of Syrians. Religious and Ottoman elements permeate debates within the Turkish parliament (Karakaya-Polat 2018) as well as representations of Turkish administrators in the area of refugee reception (Korkut 2016). These together produce a particular understanding of humanitarianism, whereby the Turkish Self is constructed as morally superior to Europe (Karakaya-Polat 2018). Islamic/Ottoman elements also find little resonance in articulations in everyday border security. In the above interviews, the superiority of Turkish border officials is attributed to their modest character proven by the lack of interest in media attention to their routine care and kindness for the refugees. The first respondent explained this modesty as a natural outcome of Turkey's long imperial history of charity, solidarity and generosity. A number of interviewees referred to the Ottoman welcoming of Jews persecuted in Europe, such as the expulsion of Jews from Spain, especially in the 15th and 16th centuries. Europe's humanitarianism, on the other hand, is contested for being pretentious – argued to be "chasing" publicity and showing off for something that is a mundane conduct by Turkish border officials. In de-emphasising the "gesture" of the European border official for being unexceptional, the two interviewees not only counter the exhibited humanitarianism of Europe. But they also express regret about the limited awareness by the outside world about the Self's compassion for refugees ("If only they could see our attitude and behaviour ... If only we could show more ... ').

Conclusion

Past migration research has provided valuable insights into how the EU's interlocutors view, debate, adopt and contest externally-promoted migration and border control policies and practices. In this paper, I argued that the kind of political subjectivity ascribed to non-EU countries in migration research remains Eurocentric in that it has not remedied the rationalist/masculinist account of political subjectivity. The Eurocentrism of

conceptualising non-European subjects lies in the two roles: collaborator and trouble-maker. Turkey as one of the EU's key partners in migration control has been studied through these two available roles, which are limiting as they prevent the investigation of alternative subjectivities beyond a focus on rationalism/masculinity.

The alternative approach developed here utilised postcolonial insights to understand and analyse affective forms of subjectivity. The paper's argument is that Turkey's present-day understandings and actions in migration control along with its positioning vis-à-vis Europe are embedded in affective politics produced through the country's historical encounters with colonialism and imperialism. Using data from interviews with Turkish border officials, three sorts of affective attachments were identified. The findings show Turkey's historically-embedded construction of Europe as simultaneously a desire/inspiration and a source of anxiety/inspiration manifests itself at everyday border security. Migration control is one other site for the mobilisation of long-term affects that the country has developed to identify with itself and Europe.

The findings have applicability broader than the case of Turkey and migration. As the literature review below discussed, the narrative of "gatekeeper", "trouble-maker" and "collaborator" is pervasive in existing migration research in defining the behaviour of the EU's interlocutors. Countries like Libya and Belarus are among the many who have, from time to time, challenged "Western democracies" by "weaponizing migration" for other ends (Greenhill 2016). Libya has a colonial history with Europe, whereas Belarus is in a rather liminal position between Europe on the one hand and Russia with whom the country has an imperial relationship. A postcolonial approach to security would help future research to go beyond the rationalist/masculinist frame to towards an exploration of an affective politics in international migration. Furthermore, the external aspect of EU security policies is multifaceted, ranging from civilian police missions to (post-conflict) state-building and gender mainstreaming. Europe's present-day geopolitical imaginations and security interventions in its neighbourhood and beyond display similarities and continuities with its colonial past (e.g. Hoijtink and Muehlenhoff 2020). A postcolonial approach to security with a focus on affective politics would shed new lights on how Europe is perceived, contested and countered in the target countries.

Notes

1. Turkish is a gender-neutral language, where the third person pronoun "o", refers to both "she" and "he".
2. "Danish Police Officer Shares Playful Moment With Syrian Refugee Child", *Huffington Post*, 17 September 2015, available online at: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/danish-police-officer-syrian-refugee_us_55f8d9d3e4b0b48f67013caf?guccounter=1

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