Fluid Frontiers

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"Proposed Radar Coverage."
RG 334 Entry 262, Box 4, Joint American Military Mission for Aid to Turkey; Decimal File 1947-1954, National Archives, College Park, MD.

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In June 1952, the US Air Force Group (TUSAFG) in Ankara, the capital of Turkey, reported, based on the latest top-secret radio intelligence, that "5,000 potentially hostile aircraft are now deployed on Turkey's northern perimeter [the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) territory adjacent to Turkey]."[1] The report claimed that "the geographic location of some of the potentially hostile air units permits them to operate against Iran, Greece, Italy, and perhaps Austria, as well as Turkey."[2] The Chief of TUSAFG in Ankara alerted the Pentagon that a war involving Turkey might begin on April 1, 1953.[3] Reflecting on increasingly alarming reports from TUSAFG, US Ambassador and Chief of the American

Cold War cartographies rebuilt Turkey's national territory. The U.S. Air Force-designed Aircraft Control and Warning System's radar maps (re)presented territory as a three-dimensional space, creating a new relationship between land

Mission for Aid to Turkey George C. McGhee also wrote to Washington that "both the Mediterranean and Middle East war plans should take Turkey into consideration and that Turkey's military strength should be increased as a matter of urgency."[4]

A couple of months before the anticipated war in 1953, engineer Morris Sayre prepared a comprehensive brief on Turkey's role in the United States' Mediterranean and Middle East war plans.[5] Drafted upon request by the US-based Mutual Security Agency (MSA), this brief underlined tidal shifts in Turkish nationalist rhetoric, vacillating between "abandoned traditional dreams of Empire" and "a new orientation toward the West."[6] The Republic of Turkey, founded in 1923, was politically a "young country…changing in decades the traditions of centuries"—or, shaking off "centuries of decadence" which, Sayre argued, had led to the Ottoman Empire's collapse.[7] He further emphasized: "The regions that comprise the Republic of Turkey were once the center of the Ottoman Empire, which was a great military power resting on extensive tributary possessions."[8] But now, those regions amounted to the "political and economic, as well as the geographic *frontier* [emphasis added] of Western Europe." [9]

Turkey's centrality to the United States' Cold War strategy stemmed primarily from the country's frontier position, with roughly a 1,500 mile coastline linking two regional contenders, "Western Europe" and "the Middle East."[10] This territorial legacy from the Ottoman Empire positioned Turkey on "the path of the Communist thrust" toward the Mediterranean, in Sayre's words.[11] He also portrayed Turkey as an "economic frontier" to be developed, being the poorest compared to its Western European counterparts.[12] Pointing to rising inflationary pressures from ongoing US aid in Turkey since 1948 and related social unrest, Sayre further warned that financial uncertainty would be the least desirable outcome of US efforts "to stabilize Turkey" as a vital political, economic, and geographic "frontier" for European security.[13] He then concluded: "The achievement of US objectives in Turkey requires that financial stabilization be attained by curbing consumption and investment rather than by reducing military expenditures, which comprise about 40 percent of the budget expenditures."[14]

As indicated in the TUSAFG air intelligence report, along with McGhee's letter and Sayre's brief, the military, diplomatic, and technocratic missions that the United States dispatched to Turkey after WWII collectively heralded the

and air, and recasting the drawing of national borders as an object of design at "the regional scale," thereby recasting the Middle East/Mediterranean region itself.

PROJECT

The Region: Architectural Histories of a Naturalized Concept

upcoming decades of Turkey's war-driven development. Initially supported by the Marshall Plan of 1948, loans and credits from the World Bank further bolstered Turkey's development-by-war. From the 1950s to the 1970s, military architectures and infrastructures—including airfields, pipelines, and highways—shaped Turkey's national territory into a spatial system for coordinating the United States' Cold War interests. "The Aircraft Control and Warning System" and its radar network (**fig. 1**), which this essay scrutinizes, were central to this spatial system.

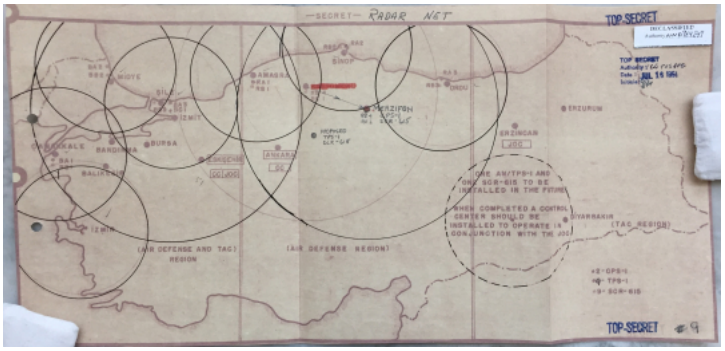

Fig. 1. Aircraft control and warning system. Map of "Radar Net," 1951.
RG 334 Entry 262, Box 5, Joint American Military Mission for Aid to Turkey; Decimal File 1947-1954, National Archives, College Park, MD.

The term "radar," which stands for "radio direction (and/or detection) and ranging," was used to describe a technology developed early in WWII to locate planes and ships in darkness, fog, or other poor visibility conditions.[15] The MIT Radiation Laboratory further integrated radar technology into the design of airborne early-warning surveillance systems.[16] The US Air Force employed radar systems during the Cold War to monitor and counter the scale of Soviet military activities.[17] Building these systems required outmaneuvering the "intrinsic limits" of territory—a historically bounded form, in this case, bounded by the sovereignty of a nation-state.[18] The MSA's role in modern Turkey was therefore to transgress Turkey's economic, political, and geographic limits, using the radar network to navigate the ambiguities of a third scale, namely "the regional," which corresponded to the Middle East more so than Western Europe.

The radar maps represented territory as a three-dimensional entity, creating a new relationship between the land and the air. In this representation, the borders of nation-states mattered only because they allowed air planners and engineers to outline the "shifting, overlapping, or otherwise indistinct borders" of historically constituted geopolitical

regions.[19] The expanding range of the Aircraft Control and Warning System from 1951 to 1954, displayed through radar maps, illustrated a story of US expansion through Turkey's airspace, surpassing the borders of the nation-state (**figs. 2**, **3**, & **4**). These maps further facilitated Turkey's integration into a trans-regional Western defense pact, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In negotiating NATO membership, Turkish delegates demanded that European and American delegates designate Turkey's territory as "*Orta Şark Komutanlığı* (Middle East Commandership)," aspiring to a regional form of sovereignty.[20] Examining the relationship between maps, infrastructures, and territory, along with the changing definitions of the region through a close reading of related air intelligence, reveals that Turkey's evolving state territoriality during the Cold War went hand in hand with a significant episode of American imperialism in the Middle East and its evolving cartography, an episode in which the Turkish government (1950–60) was deeply complicit.

What follows is a spatial, visual, and discursive analysis of that complicity tracing (1) how Turkey's infrastructural reconstruction as a US stronghold in the Middle East benefited from its territorial complexity still rooted in the frontier politics of the fallen Ottoman Empire, (2) how the Turkish state makers and their military apparatus, in turn, capitalized on the United States' Cold War infrastructures to advance their territorial ambitions and regional assimilation strategies, and (3) how, in the process, certain landscapes in Turkey, such as Çukurova (the Adana region—or ancient Cilicia), became logistically central to the global Cold War not only through their militarization via infrastructural development, but also through their inclusion in the public sphere of war literacy—especially through local newspapers' efforts to reproduce contested cartographies of war.

On Frontiers

Geographer Claude Raffestin argues that the twentieth-century use of the term "frontier" falls under the category of "limits," tracing its meaning back to the myth surrounding the founding of Rome.[21] According to this theory, the frontier as a limit (from the Latin *limes*: "a road bordering a field") refers to a linear representation—a borderline—where its power to delimit is paradoxically grounded in the act of transgression: border crossing.[22] The Turkish word *hudut* (from Arabic حدود – ḥudūd) similarly refers to limits or boundaries, like a country's borders.[23] The frontier as a

borderline indicates how divisive power operates by distinguishing "this side" from "that side," signifying both a "before" and an "after."[24]

In Raffestin's analysis, the linguistic category of frontier as a spatio-temporal limit further invokes semiotician Émile Benveniste's comparative study of the Indo-European notion of frontier as "the delimitation of the interior and the exterior," highlighting, in both religious and legal contexts, the separation between "the realm of the sacred and the realm of the profane," as well as "the national territory and foreign territory."[25] According to this semiotic genealogy of the frontier, the Latin verb *regere*, meaning "to rule," reflects the materiality and spatiality of delimitation: the act of "tracing out the limits by straight lines…on a given terrain"—a step that was "a preliminary to building [a temple or a town]."[26] In *The Birth of Territory*, political theorist and geographer Stuart Elden draws on this genealogy to remind that the contemporary disciplinary usage of the term "region" derives from the Latin term *regere,* "the commanded region."[27]

Military mapmakers used the term "Middle East" during and after WWII to carve an aerially commanded region from territories crisscrossed by imperial, colonial, national, and neocolonial frontiers, dividing this side(s) from that side(s) in the brutal acts of declaring before(s) and after(s). The partial representation of some of these frontiers on radar maps, combined with textual records of US air intelligence studies which suggest it was impossible to track these fluid frontiers, raises the question: *where* and *when* was the Middle East—especially considering Turkey's geopolitical role in designating it as an aerially commanded region? Addressing this question shows frontiers are not mere borderlines capable of creating clear ruptures in spatial and temporal continuities. The lines on maps often correspond to contested, ever-changing borderscapes, whether they are borderlands, border waters, or border regions.[28]

Geographer and Middle East studies scholar Michael Bonine demonstrates that the maps of the Middle East created by geographers, area studies scholars, and intelligence staff based in the United States referred to a constantly expanding and contracting realm between Europe and Asia.[29] In multiple iterations of those maps, the Middle East nearly always included the entire territory of modern Turkey, which constituted the northwestern frontiers of the region.[30] Cold War mapping of the Middle East's shifting frontiers became further entangled in the geopolitics of development discourse. For instance, in December 1954,

Feliks Bochenski, a World Bank economist, gave a speech to a study group investigating the conditions for advancing "a regional approach to development in the Middle East."[31] This speech, worth quoting at length, began with a deceptively simple question, "What is the Middle East?" and continued as follows:

> *[Th]e term "Middle East"* is far from being uniformly applied. In fact, it *seems to have a fluidity quite unexpected from such a barren and rocky territory; its limits seem to be shifting continuously. Depending on the period of history or on the vantage point of the external observer*, different countries have been referred to under this collective name… Rather than trying to propose a new answer to this problem into the solution of which enters a variety of geographical, historical, sociological and economic elements, I should like to mention as a curiosity that, according to the criteria applied by the Middle East Institute in Washington, the Middle East ranges all the way from Morocco to India and from Iran to Ethiopia and the Sudan. As we heard recently from a retired diplomat in the US foreign service, prior to World War I the Near Eastern Section included not only the entire Balkans but even the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This is another example [of] how time affects geographical terms. *Now, not only the Balkans but even Turkey, with the bulk of her territory in Asia Minor, like to be regarded as part of Europe rather than to be referred to as belonging to the Near or Middle east* [emphasis added].[32]

The "fluidity" in Bochenski's account posed a challenge for external observers such as the World Bank economists, as it referred not only to the contested inner and outer frontiers of a geopolitical construction, but also suggested that the question of "how to command the Middle East" predated the establishment of a US "vantage point." The challenge arose from what late nineteenth-century European cartographers termed "the Eastern Question," which referred to tensions among Anglo, Russian, German, and French imperial interests concerning the division of the Ottoman Empire's territories in the event of its collapse, particularly regarding the supply routes extending through Ottoman territory to British India.[33] As historian Abbas Amanat puts it, "Western geopolitical nomenclature that had divided the ancient East into the Near East and the Far East, by the early twentieth century also discovered a Middle East in between almost as

an afterthought."[34] Engaging this afterthought head-on, Bochenski's question "What is the Middle East?" suggested not merely a new quest for another neologism, but an urgent international plea for formulating financial metrics seeking to tame the region's fluidity.[35]

However, for the US Air Force (USAF), the central actor in this story, fluidity was the operative metric. Air planners and engineers used the USAF design criteria to exploit the fluidity of incommensurable, yet interlaced, territories of the Middle East where the radar installations were deployed to patrol the outcomes of regional development.[36] The air intelligence lexicon defined the metric of fluidity by the term "air value."[37] This referred to "essential facts of a transitory nature," describing air power and its present and future capabilities.[38] Assessing and estimating air value, quantitatively or qualitatively, required reckoning with regional uncertainties, for "this intelligence [was] generally subject to relatively rapid change" and it had to be "revised as often as circumstances required."[39] What the radar coverage maps showed regarding the infrastructural reconfiguration of Turkey's territory was thus a rapidly changing aerial construction of "an [invisible] physical barrier to [perceived] Soviet expansion to the southeast."[40]

This counter-expansion became evident beginning with the 1952 map titled "Maximum Theoretical Coverage" (**fig. 2**), where the radar coverage area grew from the country's northern frontiers to its southern ones within a year, surpassing the limits of the 1951 map (**fig. 1**). Such expansion exceeded the 1951 map space as the mapmakers reconceptualized the territory in relation to its constantly evolving air value within a larger regional framework. Therefore, the 1952 map significantly differed in its representation of air value, lacking the clearly visible bounding frame found in the 1951 version. The rectangular borderline that "announces [to the modern map user] the completeness and consistency of what is within that line and separates the map space from the surrounding space" was omitted.[41] The lines representing Turkey's borders, which were partially established by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, along with the partially visible borders of neighboring countries, floated on the map, constrained only by the contours of the paper. The absence of an inscribed bounding frame invited the map's users, primarily USAF personnel, to contemplate what existed around and beyond national frontiers, implying that these were not just border *lines,* but historically rooted and still disputed border *regions*.

Fig. 2. Map of "Maximum Theoretical Coverage," 1952. RG 334 Entry 262, Box 4, Joint American Military Mission for Aid to Turkey; Decimal File 1947-1954, National Archives, College Park, MD.

The history of these border regions, as shown on the 1952 Maximum Theoretical Coverage, reveals that they were not cropped arbitrarily; instead, they reflected the dynamic borderlands of the late Ottoman Empire. [42] A closer look also reveals that all of these borderlands intersected with the historical geography of cultural and political regions laden with memories of rebellions and wars. On the northwest, the areas labeled as Yugoslavia, Romania, and Bulgaria were under Ottoman rule, forming, along with Greece, part of the multiethnic, multi-religious Balkans region.[43] Starting with the 1804 revolt in Serbia, which later became part of Yugoslavia, a series of uprisings erupted in the Ottoman Balkan provinces and principalities, culminating in the 1828–29 and 1877–78 wars with Russia, during which the Ottomans lost their sovereignty in the Balkans.[44] The territory delimited by Greece's national borders was also under Ottoman rule until the Greek rebellion of the 1820s and the declaration of Greek independence in 1830, aided by Britain, France, and Russia.[45] The northeastern borders separating Turkey from the USSR on the 1952 map intersected another multiethnic, multi-religious region, the Caucasus.[46] This region, parts of which later became the nation-states of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, also witnessed sovereignty wars during the nineteenth century between the Ottoman and Russian empires.[47] Finally, to the south of the Caucasus, the borders between Turkey and Iran, Iraq, and Syria were located within the intersecting historical regions known as Kurdistan and Armenia. As historian Nelida Fuccaro states, during the Ottoman period, these border regions "were not demarcated by physical or clearly defined boundaries of military and political influence," but they functioned more as "fluid zone[s] of passage, warfare, and imperial administration."[48]

The 1952 borderlands of Turkey intersected with the Balkans to the northwest, the Caucasus and Armenia to the east and northeast, and Armenia and Kurdistan to the east and southeast, where rebellions and revolts against Ottoman rule had persisted into World War I. Anthropologist Olga Demetriou conceptualizes WWI as "originary violence," as it marked the solidification of ongoing boundary delimitation projects by establishing borders between "inside/outside" and "neighbors-enemies"—borders which the League of Nations would legalize.[49] In this context, the nineteenth-century massacres between Christian and Muslim communities in the Balkans were followed by post-WWI, state-sanctioned displacements known as "population exchanges," intended to create nation-states that were religiously and ethnically homogeneous.[50] On the eastern and northeastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire, this originary violence culminated in the Armenian Genocide (1915–16), orchestrated by late Ottoman and early Turkish nation-state officials.[51] The defeat of the Ottoman Empire also set the stage for the partition of Kurdistan among the emerging nation-states of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, a process that Ismail Beşikci, a sociologist and scholar of Kurdish studies, describes as the formation of an "international colony."[52]

The TUSAFG in Turkey operated within this context, where Turkish ethno-nationalism, backed by state racism, continued to convert fluid frontiers into violent borderlines of homogeneity. And to strategically circumvent this context, the TUSAFG framed the modernization of the Turkish Air Force (TAF) not just as a transfer of technology serving the client state, but as a spatial intervention attuned to the complex history of frontiers as border regions. This intervention deployed radar technologies to formulate a new territorial doctrine designed to maneuver above the violent disputes surrounding the border regions and benefit from those disputes when necessary. The expanding coverage of the radar network thus signified more than just a measurable increase in ground artillery range, as the entire territory itself was transforming into a weapon. In 1952, Edward H. Alexander, Chief of TUSAFG in Turkey, sent the Pentagon a top-secret message stamped "U.S. eyes only" and noted that

> The Turkish National Defense Forces … have been traditionally Ground Forces … Turkish General Staff regards the Turkish Air Force primarily as a new infantry support weapon, a means of extending artillery range, and as a Turkish defense tool. They

> have not yet learned *the value of exploiting the flexibility of air power* [emphasis added]. Nonetheless, Turkey is being supplied with Air Bases to permit such exploitation, and indoctrination in sound employment of the Air Force is being carried forward.[53]

The idea of reconceptualizing national territory through the flexibility of air power aligned with a pivotal moment in the global history of territory—a moment that historian William Rankin identifies as a shift in "geo-epistemology."[54] According to Rankin's analysis of evolving paradigms in cartographic knowledge production from the late nineteenth to the early twenty-first century, a type of "unbounded, dispersed, and politically ambiguous territory" emerged in the second half of the twentieth century.[55] Maps of unbounded territory communicated "American strategies of nonterritorial hegemony," which contested the more prevalent "tight relationship between geographic legibility and political authority."[56] The focus of these maps was not the sovereignty of the nation-state itself; rather, it was the transient, sometimes hidden or ambiguous regional expressions of political authority.[57] Geographer Neil Smith defines this shift as a "transition from visceral to vacuous geographies," which characterizes the contradiction at the core of the so-called American Empire—a "spatially constituted yet simultaneously spaceless" form of sovereignty.[58] The USAF radar coverage maps, which illustrate maps of unbounded territories, incorporated Turkey's air value into vacuous geographies. What bounded vacuous geographies were transnational and transregional landmarks like "NATO Infrastructures"—a still-evolving Euro-American "defense frontier" discussed in the next section.[59]

From the Border Regions to the Air Regions

The North Atlantic Military Committee's Western European Regional Planning Group defined the term "infrastructure" as "capital investment in permanent installations which, by their nature or purpose, [were] used for the build-up and tactical deployment of forces."[60] The Aircraft Control and Warning System in Turkey was an integral component of NATO Infrastructures. These infrastructures, some of which were mentioned in the radar maps' legends, included airfields, control towers, pipelines, fueling stations, radar training laboratories and schools, radio beacons, radio equipment for control towers, and telephone and telegraph

systems.[61] These diverse sites, buildings, and equipment together conjured distinctive "air [defense and tactical air control] regions."[62] Air regions were spherical zones, illustrated on the radar maps as two-dimensional circles using solid, dash-dotted, and dashed lines. The radius of the circles, centered around the names of cities with specific radar installations, indicated the radar range.

In the 1952 map (**fig. 2**), the dash-dotted air regions clustered around the cities of Izmir, Çanakkale, Istanbul, Amasra, and Ankara formed a northwestern aerial frontier, labeled in the legend as "Control Coverage" and surrounded by a thicker frontier drawn with solid lines, labeled "Early Warning." The air regions designated as Control Coverage were reported to be fully under the radar and communication network's control. The wider Early Warning coverage indicated the maximum space (and time) in which the Turkish and American Air Forces could likely detect intrusions and respond accordingly, which made it "theoretical coverage." Considering the warnings issued by American and British ambassadors to Turkey as early as 1945 about the rising power of Soviet air capabilities, the 1952 Control Coverage air regions notably secured the most valuable fluid frontiers of modern Turkey: the Straits (the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles), which were a minefield yet still vulnerable to Soviet airstrikes.[63] The Early Warning air regions contained the islands between Turkey and Greece, as well as parts of Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania to the west and parts of Syria and Iraq to the southeast (**fig. 2**). In 1953, the USAF expanded the Control Coverage air regions, incorporating new cities along the Black Sea coast to the east. This facilitated their growth into northeastern Turkey, eventually reaching the territories of the USSR and Iran. The Early Warning air regions were also extended into northeastern Turkey, reaching into the territories of the USSR and Iran (**fig. 3**).

Fig. 3. Map of "Radar Net," 1953.

RG 334 Entry 262, Box 4, Joint American Military Mission for Aid to Turkey; Decimal File 1947-1954, National Archives, College Park, MD.

Determining air regions' range depended on the type of radar technology, the relative position of an object in the radar antenna's path, whether an object was a missile or a plane, friend or foe, and local environmental and topographic factors.[64] Terms like "GCA" and "SCR-615," listed along with city names, referred to specific technologies designed for various radar missions and different environmental and topographic conditions. For instance, the GCA (Ground Control of Approach) enabled control officers on the ground to locate their own approaching fighter planes and assist them in landing during conditions of poor visibility.[65] SCR-615 was another type of fixed ground installation used to detect the altitude of aircraft. This installation was crucial to the overall GCI (Ground Control of Interception) operation, which aimed to provide controllers on the ground with a "continuous plan position and accurate relative height of enemy plane and friendly fighter plane."[66] A SCR-615 installation included a wooden tower specifically designed for uneven terrain, featuring an antenna along with transmitting and receiving components; a weatherproof building to protect the operating controls and presentation unit; and an additional building to accommodate the power units and switchboard.[67] The 1952 map (**fig. 2**) indicated three SCR-615 installations planned along the Black Sea in northern Turkey and one in the southeastern city of Diyarbakır at the heart of Turkey's Kurdistan, all of which were listed as completed on the 1953 map, along with six additional SCR-615 installations (Izmir, Istanbul, Amasra, Ankara, and Kars) (**fig. 3**).

The expanding radar network facilitated the incorporation of the frontiers of former Ottoman, Russian, and European imperialisms into what philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri describe as "the new Empire" and its open, networked sovereignty.[68] In 1954, the range of the air regions, which had already surpassed Turkey's land and sea borders, reached the tip of the Crimean Peninsula in the north, a place that was not labeled on the earlier radar maps (**fig. 4**). The inclusion of Crimea on the radar map coincided with a significant moment in the turbulent history of the Crimean Peninsula, marking its transfer from the USSR to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. This transfer followed a history of violence, settlement, resettlement, occupation, and displacement that spanned centuries, during which the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire had fought for sovereignty over Crimea, which the Ottomans

ultimately lost.[69] In the south, the air regions' range reached the Mediterranean islands of Cyprus and Crete (**fig. 4**). At the same time, the meaning of the dashed line changed to represent the "Probable Coverage for the U.S. on Crete and British on Cyprus," as indicated in the legend. This referred to a combined coverage area that the NATO installations under construction by the US on Crete and those located in the British-administered base areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia would maintain, the latter of which were reminiscent of the British colonial rule in Cyprus that began in 1878 after three centuries of Ottoman rule.[70]

Fig. 4. Map of "Proposed Radar Coverage," 1954. The Çukurova Region around the Incirlik Air Base is highlighted.
RG 334 Entry 262, Box 4, Joint American Military Mission for Aid to Turkey; Decimal File 1947–1954, National Archives, College Park, MD.

The radar network, extruded from NATO infrastructures, was to be recalibrated over time to continually deter the anticipated spread of communism via air. This cartographic polarity between intrusion and extrusion positioned Soviet imperialism as the aggressor ideology and US imperialism as the protector ideology, deliberately oversimplifying the region's complex frontiers and obscuring the territorial ambitions of local actors, such as the Turkish state, and their role in the emerging neocolonial agendas related to resource extraction. The next section therefore analyzes the radar coverage maps more closely as parts of a complex puzzle assembled by various agents with different spatial ambitions on the ground.

Developing the Ground

In an air intelligence report detailing Turkey's emerging air capabilities during the 1950s, officials at USAF Headquarters noted that:

> A free Turkey provides a buffer to Soviet expansion and helps to keep open the Mediterranean access of the free world to the oilfields of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran. The Turkish air facilities system is an important link in the chain of airfields stretching from Europe eastward to Pakistan along the southern periphery of the USSR.[71]

A free Turkey was not only a flexible air buffer, but also a link: a "scalable" ground in a Euro-American chain of aggression and extraction that extended through air facilities from Turkey to Morocco in the southwest and Pakistan in the southeast.[72] Nearly completed by the mid-1960s, this infrastructural chain signified a new frontier of control over routes to the oilfields of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran.[73]

The southern borderscapes of Turkey along the Mediterranean were particularly vital for securing these routes, with the construction of the Incirlik Airbase and Common Defense Installation in the city of Adana being central to this effort. (**fig. 4**, highlighted area).[74] The Incirlik Airbase was designed to meet both NATO requirements and serve as a key hub in the US military's Strategic Air Command (SAC) emergency war plan. The US military designers envisioned the SAC emergency war plan as the "ability to deliver a devastating retaliatory attack, regardless of time, place, or weather" in response to a nuclear attack by the USSR, which was argued would trigger "World War III."[75]

Fig. 5. Stills from *USAF Builds Air Base at Adana*, film (black and white, 35 mm), 1954.
RG 342, Moving Images Relating to Military Aviation Activities 1947–1984, National Archives, College Park, MD.

The Turkish and US Air Forces continue to use the Incirlik Airbase as a crucial hub in their present-day Middle East and Mediterranean war plans. This ongoing use was made possible by the transformation of the alluvial landscapes of Çukurova (meaning "hollow plain"), a sub-national urban and agrarian region of Turkey located at the intersection of the Mediterranean Sea, southern Turkey, and northern Syria, into a space composed of what geographer Deborah Cowen calls "logistics cities."[76] Logistics cities blend the architecture, infrastructure, and installations of war with those of corporate export processing zones.[77] The World Bank-sponsored reconstruction of export-import processing zones around the port cities of Mersin (the western frontier of Çukurova), Iskenderun (the eastern frontier of Çukurova), and Yumurtalık (the southern frontier of Çukurova), along with the Incirlik Airbase, enabled the USAF to project an air region onto the landscapes of a historical region.[78]

American military strategists, filmmakers, and photographers documented this projection as follows (**figs. 5**

& **6**):

> [The Incirlik Airbase], situated near Turkey's Syrian border, will become one of the largest airports of the Middle East […] Best sand of the surrounding area is to be found in a nearby river, [and] to make this sand accessible for big trucks and earthmoving equipment, a small dam was built within one day, and the river diverted. Where the new airstrip will be laid, soldiers of the Turkish company helping in the building operations are quickly harvesting wheat to save it from graders.[79]

Fig. 6. Images of the construction of Incirlik Air Base. "Photographs nos. 1295-1309, Turkey 518-1450," RC 286-MP, Box 80/90, Records of the Agency for International Development, Prints: Marshall Plan Programs, Exhibits, Personnel (1948–1967), National Archives, College Park, MD.

Turkey's development by war was a US-sponsored war by development that established a new relationship between the land and the air. The overnight construction of roads and camps, the haphazard diversion of rivers, and striking images of Turkish soldiers hastily harvesting wheat illustrate how the expanding aerial frontiers from north to south were transforming the meaning of land and shaping post-war urbanization. The construction logs from this process indicated that the entire Adana urban water and sewage system was renewed. The reconstructed ports of Mersin and Iskenderun, along with ancient harbors such as

Yumurtalık, were integrated into a comprehensive network of military extraction and transportation facilities, specifically designed for the transfer of petroleum, its by-products, and construction materials.

The Turkish state embraced these Cold War infrastructures to resolve its internal political contradictions on the ground. The initial segment of Turkey's national highway network, funded by the MSA, connected Incirlik Airbase and the port of Iskenderun, leading to the northeastern city of Erzurum where a radio beacon was installed.[80] This expansion of Çukurova's logistics cities toward the northeast gave the US and Turkish armies the shortest supply route, linking the Mediterranean ports to the northeastern air regions.[81] At the same time, this supply route directly aided the Turkish ground forces in their attempts to quell the ongoing resistance of Kurdish communities in Eastern Turkey against Turkish state violence.[82] According to political scientist Begüm Adalet's analysis, drawing on architectural historian Zeynep Kezer's work in this context, the US-sponsored highway network became "the latest infrastructural tool of assimilation and coercion," continuing early Republican Turkish state policies that used railway construction to suppress Kurdish revolts in northern Kurdistan (Turkey's south/eastern provinces).[83] In other words, the Turkish state implemented Cold War infrastructures to contain a transnational, multi-regional revolutionary struggle. The post-Ottoman frontiers of Turkey's Kurdistan thus functioned as a frontier of separation that racialized Kurdish citizens as "internal enemies" to be feared.[84]

The ethno-nationalist project of turning the territory "into an expression of Turkishness" was a spatial design project.[85] The Turkish Ministry of Construction (*Bayındırlık Bakanlığı*) declared the importance of the Çukurova-Erzurum logistics route in shaping the nation-state's spatial layout, arguing that this road "would socially and culturally develop eastern territories, especially the Tunceli region at the center of the East—a region that caused various kinds of unrest throughout history due to its isolated location."[86] This statement exemplified how Turkish state officials discursively embraced a colonial "civilizing mission."[87] The construction of the Çukurova-Erzurum supply route, promoted as part of a civilizing mission, further reinforced the divide created by an already existing, yet invisible "internal border," which separated Turkey's "acceptable citizens" from their internal enemies.[88] In conclusion, the development of an infrastructural frontier through USAF radar coverage not only buffered the Soviet threat to the

north and secured NATO's access to the oilfields of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran in the southeast but also buttressed the Turkish government's efforts to counter a growing Kurdish anti-colonial movement both inside and outside Turkey's borders.

Yeni Adana: The Frontiers of War Media

The process of transforming the territory into a state space composed of acceptable citizens, demarcated from "an unruly East," began earlier in the second half of the nineteenth century.[89] This process, which continued into the first half of the twentieth century and was bolstered by Cold War infrastructures in the second half, became associated with the controversial phrase "Kurdish problem" in both its secret intelligence and public media coverage.[90]

A secret report by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), titled "Kurdish Minority Problem" from 1948, admitted that "the delicate balance of the present Near East state system creates the possibility that a Kurdish revolt, by drawing on security forces and by stimulating other dissident groups, might lead to further disruption of the political and economic stability of that region."[91] The same report referred to "the almost three million Kurdish tribesmen of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria" as a "factor of some importance … by virtue of their tradition of armed resistance to the governments over them."[92] The CIA's primary concern was Soviet efforts "to stimulate and capitalize upon" this tradition of resistance, as those efforts could result in "a unified attempt to set up an independent state over the entire traditional mountain homeland of 'Kurdistan.'"[93] Or even worse, a Soviet-sponsored "Kurdish People's Republic," which briefly existed in Iran's Kurdistan during 1946, could be resurrected.[94] No regional polity other than a Kurdish communist one could have been more worrisome to anti-communist Turkish state officials.

The Turkish government's desire to steer NATO interventions in the Middle East had to do with this fear of a Soviet-backed Kurdish uprising along its eastern and southeastern borderlands. This fear shaped the populist narrative that the Turkish war media created. Local newspapers in particular served as a relatively accessible source of information for the rural masses and played a significant role in forming pro-American public opinion.[95] To create a community proficient in reading the global Cold War's regional manifestations, local newspapers mimicked the visual and textual rhetoric of McCarthyism by

translating and reproducing content from American media. They cultivated a unique brand of anti-communist hysteria intertwined with national chauvinism, particularly following Turkey's involvement in the Korean War.[96]

One such newspaper was *Yeni Adana*, which translates to "New Adana," published and distributed daily in Çukurova from 1918 to 2023. *Yeni Adana* employed new visual techniques in order to foster a culture adept at interpreting media representations of both real and virtual wars. While doing this, the newspaper's editors also exploited the fear of Kurdish and Arab uprisings along Turkey's southern frontiers. For example, headlines from 1951 mapped the geopolitical connections between three seemingly disparate events, accompanied by a photo captioned as "A red soldier [a soldier of the Red Army] taken hostage by Turkish soldiers" (**fig. 7**). These events were: (1) The Airfields: "The jet airbases planned for our city [Adana] and Diyarbakır will accommodate aircraft that carry atomic bombs. According to Syrian media, these new airfields are meant to protect the eastern oilfields, which could be atomized in the event of war;" (2) The Korean Front: "The resistance of the reds is increasing, particularly to the east of Seoul;" and (3) The Syrian Parliament: "Discussions hostile toward Turkey are occurring—opposition members are raising the Iskenderun [frontier] issue (!) once more." The editorial message linking these events was that the borders of the Turkish nation-state were consistently threatened by Cold War enemies, subsumed under the color "Red," and that the US-funded airbases were crucial for national defense (**fig. 7**).

Some of Yeni Adana's chronicles echoed the concerns in the 1948 CIA report and acknowledged that the stateless Kurds —whose Kurdistan was divided by European colonial powers into the national territories of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran —were key regional players not fully contained by any air power.[97] For instance, one news report from 1957 about the regional implications of an emerging civil war in Syria stated that a "diplomatic mission sent from Jordan to Damascus to discuss increasing Russian and Egyptian influence in Syria was detained by a group of seven agitators (acting on behalf of the Russian and Egyptian military) and two prominent figures (Shaykh-Commanders) from the Kurdish tribes … (representing local customary law)."[98] In these statements, *Yeni Adana*'s increasingly contentious representation of the Middle East aligned with the Turkish government's push to expand the Cold War's logistics space to confront Kurdish claims for self-determination. Simultaneously, other news reports deliberately concealed the Kurdish agency (and its power to shape the region's frontiers from within) behind

repeated claims like "the communists were penetrating the Middle East," which aligned with US official rhetoric that dismissed the power of local actors.[99] The suppression of Kurdish agency, the ultimate *other* to Turkish identity formation, was particularly revealing about the future of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. This attitude revealed how Turkish (war) media would increasingly become saturated with both contempt for and fascination with this internal enemy, whose fluctuating presence and absence in the media landscape has shaped the frontiers of politics in Turkey.

17 MART 1951 – Cumartesi

Yıl 33 - Sayı: 7838 – Kuruş 10

YENİ ADANA

HAVA LİMANLARI

Şehrimizde ve Diyarbakırda inşa olunacak Hava Limanlarına Atom Bombası taşıyan uçaklar da inip kalkacak

Suriye Basınına göre, bu yeni hava alanları doğu petrollerini korumak ve bir harp zuhurunda petrol sahalarını Atomlamak maksadiyle de kullanılacaktır

Suriye Parlâmentosunda

Türkiye aleyhinde yapılan konuşmalar

Muhalefet mebusları İskenderun işini (!) yine orlaya attı

BİR AÇIKLAMA

Askeri Kışlanın Komutanlık binası yandı

KORE CEPHESİNDE

Kızılların mukavemeti artmaktadır

Düşman Seulün doğusunda ciddî mukavemet göstermekte

Fig. 7. *Yeni Adana* (meaning *New Adana*), a local newspaper published in Adana from 1918 to 2023, showing headlines including notes on new airfields in Turkey, Turkish operations in the Korean War, and alleged anti-Turkish debates in the Syrian parliament.
Yeni Adana, March 17, 1951, cover page.

Manipulating the public's war literacy was just as vital for cultivating regional awareness—about Turkey's spatial position in the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean—as it was for promoting the transnational adventures of the Turkish military. *Yeni Adana*'s cartographic representations of the Middle East (*Orta Şark* or *Orta Doğu* in Turkish), especially those published from the 1953 anticipated war with the Soviets to the 1958 US intervention in Lebanon's first civil war, aimed to demonstrate how Turkey's airspace was vital in navigating a shifting regional scale. Like the radar coverage maps, these representations articulated Turkey's mutating frontiers. The main distinction between the radar maps that the military drafted for military communication and the schematic maps that *Yeni Adana* drafted as a medium for public communication was the latter's oversimplified graphics and accompanying overtly biased textuality. For instance, a regional map entitled "A Call Out to Neighbor Syrians: *Toprak* [soil, territory, or

land] can only be conquered by the bayonet, not by a pen" reproduced a map that was reportedly created and distributed by the Syrian Intelligence Bureau to Syrian newspapers (**fig. 8**, left).[100] This map showed Çukurova and certain parts of inner Anatolia as part of Syrian territory, extending Syria's northern frontiers into the Taurus Mountain range in Turkey.[101] Another map from 1956—more of an axonometric diagram—reported on the nationalization of the Suez Canal (**fig. 8**, right). Significant "natural" and "artificial" landmarks—such as "Lake Manzala," "Israeli railroad," "El Ferdan Railway Bridge," "The Road to Cairo," "Arabian desert," and "Lake Timsah"—were labeled on this map, covering a territory that stretched from the Mediterranean Sea (Port Said and Port Fouad) to the Red Sea (Suez and the Port Taofik). The accompanying provocative text argued that this territory, "now under the control of a dictator … was becoming a Soviet satellite."[102]

Fig. 8. Left: "A call out to neighbor Syrians: *Toprak* [soil, territory, or land] can only be conquered by the bayonet, not by a pen." Right: "A representational sketch illustrating the current geographical situation and vital points across the Suez Canal."
Yeni Adana, April 23, 1953; *Yeni Adana*, August 10, 1956.

The year 1958 was a crucial turning point in postcolonial efforts toward state formation in the Arab Middle East.[103] Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956, an essential shipping route for global logistics, was a daring anti-imperialist response to the United States' Middle East and Mediterranean war plans.[104] In February 1958, Egypt and Syria formed a temporary political union, the United Arab Republic (UAR). The creation of the UAR heightened tensions between the governments of Lebanon and Syria. The pro-Western Lebanese regime feared that the creation of the UAR would

catalyze Muslims in Lebanon, given their historical ties with neighboring Syria.[105] In May 1958, Lebanon saw the outbreak of civil war, prompting US-aligned President Kamil Sham'un to invite US forces.[106] The US military intervened in Beirut via both ground and air forces on July 15, nearly a day after a military coup in Iraq dismantled the monarchical vestiges of British colonialism.[107] The Turkish government, along with the regimes of Jordan, Israel, and Iran, supported US intervention in Lebanon due to their competing regional interests, all of which were obscured by a media campaign, mainly promoting opposition to Soviet influence and Arab unity in the Middle East.[108] For US foreign policymakers, however, the primary reason for intervention was tactical: since 1952, Lebanon had served as a key transit route in the eastern Mediterranean for transferring crude oil from Saudi Arabia and Iraq to Western Europe and the US.[109]

In this context, Turkish nationalist territorial imagery supplemented American imperialist aerial imagery. The spatial impact of radar coverage maps created by the USAF as a frontier-making tool to navigate the global Cold War became legible to the Turkish audience through the populist maps created by *Yeni Adana*, which reported on not-so-cold, regional wars. During the 1958 intervention in Lebanon, the USAF called for the deployment of a NATO-committed Tactical Fighter Squadron at Adana's Incirlik Airbase to be activated in 1959.[110] This development positioned Çukurova's logistics space as a key accommodation site for American troops headed to Lebanon, prompting *Yeni Adana* to produce schematic maps aimed at illustrating the war's progress. For instance, one map, dated July 22, 1958, depicted the flow of US-led military campaigns into Lebanon, following the simultaneous deployment of NATO aircraft from Germany and Italy, along with British paratroopers stationed in southern Turkey and southern Cyprus (**fig. 9**). Crusading to defeat the unknown—multiethnic and multi-religious regions—and navigate the known—logistics routes and oil fields—maps like this actively contributed to the spatial consolidation of the nation-state in public imagination. This spatiality, which cannot be reduced to the concept and borders of a national territory, was a response to the interplay among shifting forms of anti-imperialist nationalisms, pragmatic regional alliances, and anti-colonial resistance movements that kept Middle Eastern frontiers in constant flux.

Fig. 9. "Clashes reignited in Lebanon: American planes launched a psychological air operation."
Yeni Adana, July 22, 1958.

The fluidity of the regional scale proved to be a valuable metric, enabling the Turkish and American military forces to justify and hammer out strategic regions like Çukurova. This region is still interconnected with transregional NATO infrastructures through the Incirlik Airbase and its associated supply routes. Çukurova's transformation into a logistics space demonstrates the operationalization of Turkey's fluid frontiers, a remnant of the Ottoman Empire. These frontiers allowed the USAF to navigate the known, if not defeat the unknown. The latter remains an ongoing battle and negotiation, as no airpower could claim absolute control over those who hold their ground.

Coda

Writing amid and in response to a US-led ground attack against Iraq in 1991, philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy starts his ruminations with a fundamental question: "But what is War, really? What is it today?"[111] This question aims to build a conversation about identifying "the Sovereigns—whose titles we interpret in complex and contradictory ways—[that] are implicated [in a 'global' war]."[112] And after three decades, the question still remains valid, as we must protest the Sovereigns' violence and amplify the revolutionary struggles of the peoples seeking international, legal recognition of their stolen sovereignties over histories, languages, bodies, and lives that span across spatial and temporal frontiers.

We must ask, yet again, what is War, really? What is it today? And what does it do?

The wars unfolding today in the Middle East have deep roots in the infrastructural and cartographic techniques and

technologies designed during the Cold War to control territory through aerial warfare. Turkey is a case in point. It is where regional and transregional wars are negotiated or accelerated. Cold War infrastructures mapped Turkey's territory as a functional and contentious American frontier. Primarily an aerial frontier, bolstered by the accompanying ground installations, this territory has enabled invasions, including those in Lebanon, Kurdistan, Iraq, Armenia, Syria, and Palestine. Turkey's territory hosted (and still hosts) war criminals, victims, and refugees whose political fluidity, in turn, constantly sabotages the state's territoriality and subverts the nation-state's borders.

Wars extract oil. As I write, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline (a World Bank-IFC financed project) continues to carry crude oil between two fluid frontiers, from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea.[113] Extracted from Azerbaijan's reserves, oil is transported through the pipeline, surpassing subterranean Georgia and Turkey, to Turkey's Ceyhan terminal in Adana. It is then shipped from one of Çukurova's ports to Israel. This oil has been used by Israel's US-made tanks and warplanes conducting genocide in Palestine. The current Turkish government, despite publicly claiming otherwise, is backing the United States' military strategies in the Mediterranean and Middle East, allowing Israel to expand its regional dominance at any cost.

Oil makes wars. In 2020, Turkey, Israel, and Russia's advanced weapons systems (drones and air missiles in particular), in exchange for Azerbaijan's oil wealth, enabled the Azerbaijani offensive to suppress the longstanding Armenian-Artsakh resistance in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. In this geopolitical equation, Turkey's national territory operates as a regional conduit for the transfer of oil. New fluid frontiers are emerging from this narrative, blurring the boundaries between "before(s)" and "after(s)," while at the same time entrenching "this side(s)" and "that side(s)."

Wars beget infrastructures. In September 2023, the Turkish president and Israeli prime minister met to discuss a collaborative "energy drilling operation" at the natural gas field, "Leviathan," discovered approximately 130 kilometers off the shores of Haifa. Leviathan refers to a submarine pipeline to be built and operated by Turkey and Israel—an imagined infrastructure and frontier-making project. Gas would then flow through Turkey to Europe, eager to find alternative energy sources to reduce dependency on Russia, which is currently invading Ukraine.

Imagined or real, infrastructures recast scales. Cold War infrastructures mapped Turkey's territory onto a global logistics space indispensable to neocolonial wars. The fluidity of this space resists the common usage of the term "territory" as a demarcated political form and enables the Turkish state and military authorities to devise a "Turkish imperialism," evoking the Ottoman imperial legacy, to consolidate power, accelerate violence, and reclaim new frontiers within and beyond the nation-state's perceived territorial limits.[114]

In this vein, the current Turkish government is working to secure a defense agreement with Syria's transitional government following the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime. This agreement reportedly includes plans for establishing Turkish airbases in central Syria to expand Turkey's ground invasion of northern Syria, which has occasionally been accompanied by Turkish airstrikes against the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Kurdish Regional Government in northern Iraq.[115] The potential defense agreement is under negotiation as Syria's Alawite communities face massacres with the supervision of the transitional Syrian government, which is composed of Sunni jihadists formerly affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Al-Qaeda. Meanwhile, those with stolen sovereignties still hold their grounds. The SDF militia is working to sustain Kurds' political recognition in the ongoing state formation overseen by the US government, while the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) militia in Turkey is negotiating peace after decades of armed struggle against Turkish state violence.[116]

We must ask, yet again, what is War, really?

Wars present opportunities for Sovereigns, like the current Turkish government, seeking to expand their racialized borders of aggression. The military techniques for mapping the territory have not remained static since the Cold War. Neither have the local forms and norms of statecraft, nor the affiliated international actors, ideologies, and factions. However, the frontier-ness of the territory, whose infrastructural scaffolding was formed during the Cold War, has remained operative. The fluid frontiers tell a trans-scalar story of the Middle East woven through historical tensions and contradictions among imperial, colonial, national, and anti-colonial power struggles. The spatial politics of Turkey's national territory and its geopolitical role in today's wars become legible only when situated within this trans-scalar story of the region.

I am deeply grateful to the editors, Manuel Shvartzberg Carrió and Ayala Levin, who read, commented on, and edited multiple versions of this essay. Special thanks to Aggregate board member Elliott Sturtevant for a final review, Gray M. Golding for copyediting, and friends Leon Boykins, Zehra Hashmi, and John Cheney-Lippold for making sure I made sense.

✓ Transparent peer-reviewed

Seçil Binboğa, "Fluid Frontiers," *Aggregate* 14 (April 2026), https://doi.org/10.53965/SDGO6781.

1 "Turkish Jet Air Force Capabilities," 30 June 1952; "Reconnaissance Mission in Turkey," 21 November 1952, RG 334 Entry 262, Box 4, Joint American Military Mission for Aid to Turkey; Decimal File 1947-1954, National Archives, College Park, MD. This intelligence was gathered by US Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) through aerial reconnaissance—through "radar scope photography of U.S.S.R. territory adjacent to Turkey [with] a K-30 equipped C-54." ↑

2 "Turkish Jet Air Force Capabilities." ↑

3 "Aircraft Requirements for the Establishment of a Minimum of Two Turkish F-84 Groups by April 1953," 16 July 1951, RG 334 Entry 262, Box 5, Joint American Military Mission for Aid to Turkey; Decimal File, 1947-1954, National Archives, College Park, MD. ↑

4 "Chiefs of Mission Conference," March 13, 1951, RG 334 Entry 262, Box 4, Joint American Military Mission for Aid to Turkey; Decimal File, 1947–1954, National Archives, College Park, MD. ↑

5 "Sayre Policy and Briefing Papers," 1953 RG 469 Entry 1401, Box 5, U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948–1961, Mission to Turkey, Office of the Chief of Mission Administrative Records, 1948–1956, RANDALL-UN General Records of the Department of State, National Archives, College Park, MD. The Mutual Security Agency (MSA) elected Sayre to evaluate Turkey, one of the twelve countries receiving the most aid under the MSA program—the US postwar aid and technical assistance program. ↑

6 "Sayre Policy and Briefing Papers." The Mutual Security Agency (MSA) was established by the Mutual Security Act of 1951, superseding the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA), which had been founded in 1948 to administer the European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan). ↑

7 "Sayre Policy and Briefing Papers." ↑

8 "Sayre Policy and Briefing Papers." ↑

9 "Sayre Policy and Briefing Papers." ↑

10 "Sayre Policy and Briefing Papers." ↑

11 "Sayre Policy and Briefing Papers." ↑

12 "Sayre Policy and Briefing Papers." ↑

13 "Sayre Policy and Briefing Papers." By 1953, Turkey was completing its first five-year development program under the Marshall Plan. The rest of Sayre's report thus articulated the entwined yet contradictory impacts of military and civilian aid programs supported in the form of loans, credits, and technical assistance by a variety of international and (non)governmental agencies, including the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA), the Export-Import Bank of the United States, and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). Investments in the modernization and mechanization of agriculture, improvement of roads, expansion of energy production, and exploitation of subsoil resources created rapid growth from

1948 to 1952. Growth, however, did not necessarily yield financial stability. Workers' strikes at Marshall Plan-funded extraction sites, IBRD-funded construction sites, and during the completion of NATO airbases were prevalent from the 1950s to the 1970s. ↑

14 "Sayre Policy and Briefing Papers." ↑

15 Radar technology consists of ground installations that emit radio waves into the air, some of which are received when reflected back by objects in their path. As a surveillance method used in aerial warfare, this technology enables the detection of the position, distance, and height of both enemy and friendly planes. See: "U.S. Radar Operational Characteristics of Radar Classified by Tactical Application [FTP-217]," Produced by Authority of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, by the Radar Research and Development Sub-Committee of the Joint Committee on New Weapons and Equipment (Washington D.C., August 1943). ↑

16 Larrie D. Ferreiro, *Churchill's American Arsenal: The Partnership Behind the Innovations that Won World War Two* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), xii–xiv. ↑

17 See: Alfredo Thiermann Riesco, *Radio-Activities: Architecture and Broadcasting in Cold War Berlin* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2024). ↑

18 Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013) 3. ↑

19 William Rankin, *After the Map: Cartography, Navigation, and the Transformation of Territory in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 68. ↑

20 "Türkiye'nin dış politikası ve Amerikan yardımına dair belge," October 14, 1951, *Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi* [BCA] (Prime Ministerial Republican Archives) 30-1-0-0 60/378/8, Ankara, Turkey. ↑

21 Claude Raffestin, "Elements for a Theory of the Frontier," trans. Jeanne Ferguson, *Diogenes* 34, no. 134 (June 1986): 1–18. ↑

22 Raffestin, "Elements for a Theory of the Frontier." ↑

23 *Hudud-ı milliye* or *millî hudut* were the terms used for identifying "national borders" during the foundational years of the Republic of Turkey. See: Alexander E. Balistreri, "Revisiting Millî: Borders and the Making of The Turkish Nation State," in *Regimes of Mobility: Borders and State Formation in the Middle East, 1918-1946*, eds. Jordi Tejel and Ramazan Hakkı Öztan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022) 29-58. ↑

24 Raffestin, "Elements for a Theory of the Frontier," 1. ↑

25 Raffestin, "Elements for a Theory of the Frontier," 2. See also: Émile Benveniste, *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society*, trans. Elizabeth Palmer (Chicago: HAU Books, 2016). ↑

26 Benveniste, *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society,* 312. ↑

27 Elden, *The Birth of Territory,* 9. ↑

28 For a story that explores how the states of Turkey, Greece, and Bulgaria weaponize a shifting environmentally constructed frontier—a river (the Evros in Greek, Meriç in Turkish, and Maritsa in Bulgarian)—to control migrants' and refugees' movement and trap them, see: Ifor Duncan and Stefanos Levidis, "Weaponizing a River," *e-flux Architecture,* April 2020, https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/at-the-border/325751/weaponizing-a-river/.
For a story that traces how the state of Israel weaponizes a shifting climactically constructed frontier—the 200 mm annual isohyet—to displace and erase the Negev Bedouins' presence in their homeland, see: Eyal Weizman and Fazal Sheikh, *The Conflict Shoreline: Colonization as Climate Change in the Negev Desert* (Göttingen: Steidl, in association with Cabinet Books, Brooklyn 2015). ↑

29 Bonine first examines "the region" without immediately succumbing to the military implications of the term *regere*. He aims to define a somewhat coherent "world cultural

region" that can be used for discussing, understanding, or analyzing an area that is roughly united by specific social, cultural, and climatic features, despite the diversity of peoples, languages and customs. To this end, Bonine suggests using the widely accepted academic framing, "the Middle East and North Africa," as the most suitable designation. However, he cautions that the precise boundaries of this region have been and will always be ambiguous and contentious, as both the non-continental term "Middle East" and the continental term "North Africa" result from "overgeneralizations." See: Michael E. Bonine, "Of Maps and Regions: Where is the Geographer's Middle East?," in *Is There a Middle East?: The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept,* eds. Michael E. Bonine, Abbas Amanat, and Michael Ezekiel Gasper (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 56-99. ↑

30 Bonine, "Of Maps and Regions," 63–92. ↑

31 Feliks Bochenski, "The Role of IBRD in the Economic Development of the Middle East," Bochenski, Feliks - Articles and Speeches (1954), Folder ID (1651388), World Bank Group Archives, Washington, D.C. ↑

32 Bochenski, "The Role of IBRD in the Economic Development of the Middle East." ↑

33 Hüseyin Yilmaz, "The Eastern Question and the Ottoman Empire: The Genesis of the Near and Middle East in the Nineteenth Century," in *Is There a Middle East?,* eds. Bonine, Amanat, and Gasper, 11-36. ↑

34 Abbas Amanat, "Is There a Middle East?: Problematizing a Virtual Space," in *Is There a Middle East?,* eds. Bonine, Amanat, and Gasper, 3. ↑

35 For critical takes on how the World Bank forged new metrics for development planning from different locales across the global South, see: *Architecture in Development: Systems and the Emergence of the Global South,* ed. Aggregate Architectural History Collective (London: Routledge, 2022). ↑

36 The USAF design criteria for military architectures, infrastructures, and installations evolved in tandem with the NATO requirements after the North Atlantic Treaty. In this specific case, the design criteria referred to a wide variety of specifications, including building types, construction materials, size and length of landing areas, and the amount of water to be utilized and discharged by the installation community. See: "Construction Plan for Training Base to Accommodate the Turkish Flying School and Air War College," 25 August 1952, RG 334 Entry 262, Box 5, Joint American Military Mission for Aid to Turkey; Decimal File, 1947-1954, National Archives, College Park, MD. ↑

37 "Air Intelligence Study AIS 2-7/2 (Turkey): Air Capabilities of Turkey," December 1957, RG0341 Entry UD-WW 184, Box 2, Headquarters US Air Force (Air Staff) Department of the Air Force/Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff Intelligence, Intelligence Studies and Related Records 11/1943-06/1967, National Archives, College Park, MD. ↑

38 "Air Intelligence Study AIS 2-7/2 (Turkey): Air Capabilities of Turkey." ↑

39 "Air Intelligence Study AIS 2-7/2 (Turkey): Air Capabilities of Turkey." ↑

40 "Air Intelligence Study AIS 2-7/2 (Turkey): Air Capabilities of Turkey." ↑

41 J. B. Harley and David Woodward, "Concluding Remarks," in *The History of Cartography, Volume 1: Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean,* eds. J. B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 505. ↑

42 See: Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants, and Refugees* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009). ↑

43 See: Olga Demetriou, *Capricious Borders: Minority, Population, and Counter-Conduct between Greece and Turkey* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013). ↑

44 Betty S. Anderson, *A History of the Modern Middle East: Rulers, Rebels, and Rogues* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), 75-76. See also: Victor Taki, *Russia on the Danube: Empire, Elites, and Reform in Moldavia and Wallachia, 1812–1834* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2021). ↑

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47 Balistreri, "Revisiting Millî." ↑

48 Nelida Fuccaro, "The Ottoman Frontier in Kurdistan in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (New York: Routledge: 2012), 237. See also: Sabri Ateş, *Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary, 1843-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) and Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, "Extractive Colonialism and State Making in Early Modern Ottoman Kurdistan," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 123, no. 4 (October 2024): 665–687. ↑

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50 Aslı Iğsız, *Humanism in Ruins: Entangled Legacies of the Greek-Turkish Population Exchange* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018). ↑

51 See: Adnan Çelik, "The Armenian Genocide in Kurdish Collective Memory," *Middle East Report* 50, no. 295 (Summer 2020) and Ari Şekeryan, ed., *1909 Adana Katliamı: Üç Rapor* (Istanbul: Aras, 2015). ↑

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53 "Turkish Jet Air Force Capabilities," June 30, 1952, Joint American Military Mission for Aid to Turkey; Decimal File, 1947–1954, RG 334 Entry 262, Box 4, National Archives, College Park, MD. ↑

54 Rankin, *After the Map*, 2. ↑

55 Rankin, *After the Map*, 4. ↑

56 Rankin, *After the Map*, 4. ↑

57 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). ↑

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61 TUSAFG in Turkey procured some new and refurbished equipment and supplies from the United States and also transferred WWII surplus from an air communications depot in Germany. ↑

62 "Turkish Jet Air Force Capabilities," June 30, 1952, Joint American Military Mission for Aid to Turkey; Decimal File, 1947-1954, RG 334 Entry 262, Box 4, National Archives, College Park, MD. ↑

63 Craig Livingston, "'One Thousand Wings': The United States Air Force Group and the American Mission for Aid to

Turkey, 1947-50," *Middle Eastern Studies* 30, no. 4 (October 1994): 779. ↑

64 To determine the range, radar technology measures the time it takes for radio waves to travel at the speed of light from their transmission into the air back to their reception after being reflected by an object in their path. ↑

65 Charles A. Fowler, "Rad Lab, Luie Alvarez, and the development of the GCA Radar Landing System: A Memoir," *IEEE Aerospace and Electronic Systems Magazine* 23, no. 5 (May 2008): A1-A16. ↑

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68 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 160-182. ↑

69 Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 238–240. ↑

70 For a 19th-century history of fluidity in the case of Crete, see: Uğur Zekeriya Peçe, *Island and Empire: How Civil War in Crete Mobilized the Ottoman World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2024). For an anthropological account of the history of fluidity in the case of Cyprus, see: Yiannis Papadakis, Nicos Peristianis, Gisela Welz, eds., *Divided Cyprus: Modernity, History, and an Island in Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). ↑

71 "Air Intelligence Study AIS 2-7/2 (Turkey): Air Capabilities of Turkey (December 1957)." Original document is underlined. ↑

72 I borrow the term "scalable" from Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's "On Nonscalability: The Living World Is Not Amenable to Precision-Nested Scales" *Common Knowledge* 18, no. 3 (2012): 505–24. Tsing explains the term as a feature of precision design fundamental to capitalist development and its modular growth models that naturalize expansion. ↑

73 Robert P. Grathwol and Donita M. Moorhus, eds., *Bricks, Sand, and Marble: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Construction in the Mediterranean and Middle East, 1947-1991* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History Corps of Engineers, 2009). ↑

74 "Incirlik Common Defense Installation," 1970-1972, RG 0341 Entry P26, Box 14, Headquarters U.S. Air Force (Air Staff) Office of the Judge Advocate General/Office of the Director of Civil Law/International Law Division, National Archives, College Park, MD. ↑

75 "History of the Strategic Air Command," December 11, 1979, *George Washington University Nuclear Security Archive Online Collections*, accessed March 17, 2025, https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb336/doc01.PDF. ↑

76 Deborah Cowen, *The Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping Violence in Global Trade* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014) 163–195. ↑

77 Cowen, *The Deadly Life of Logistics.* See also: Laleh Khalili, *Sinews of War and Trade: Shipping and Capitalism in the Arabian Peninsula* (London: Verso, 2020). ↑

78 For environmental and political histories of Ottoman Çukurova, see: Meltem Toksöz, *Nomads, Migrants and Cotton in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Making of the Adana-Mersin Region, 1850-1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2010) and Chris Gratien, *The Unsettled Plain: An Environmental History of the Late Ottoman Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022). ↑

79 "Turkey Pix File," 1948-1967, RG 286-MP, Marshall Plan Programs, Exhibits, Personnel, National Archives, College Park, MD. ↑

80 Radio beacons are an integral component of the Aircraft Control and Warning System. They are navigation aids

located on the ground that transmit nondirectional signals to assist pilots in homing on the station. ↑

81 "Hükümetimizle ECA İdaresi arasındaki proje anlaşması gereğince İskenderun-Erzurum karayoluna harcanmak üzere Karayolları Genel Müdürlüğüne Bütçe Kanunu'na ödenek kaydedilmesi," September 18, 1950, BCA 30-18-1-2 126/46/3, Ankara, Turkey. ↑

82 See: Joost Jongerden, *The Settlement Issue In Turkey And the Kurds: An Analysis of Spatial Policies, Modernity And War* (Leiden: Brill, 2007) and Azat Zana Gündoğan, "Space, State-Making and Contentious Kurdish politics in the East of Turkey: The case of Eastern Meetings, 1967," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 13, no. 4 (December 2011) 389–416. ↑

83 Begüm Adalet, "'It's Not Yours If You Can't Get There': Mobility and State-Making in Turkey," *Funambulist* 17 (May 2018) and Zeynep Kezer, "Nationalizing Space," in *Building Modern Turkey: State, Space, and Ideology in the Early Republic* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015) 157–196. For a broader analysis of Cold War Turkish-American exchange of spatial, material, and architectural expertise, see: Begüm Adalet, *Hotels and Highways: The Construction of Modernization Theory in Cold War Turkey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018). ↑

84 For the conceptualization of "internal enemy" see: Ann Laura Stoler, *Interior Frontiers: Essays on the Entrails of Inequality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 20. ↑

85 Joost Jongerden, "Crafting Space, Making People: The Spatial Design of Nation in Modern Turkey," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (2009): 18. ↑

86 "Hükümetimizle ECA İdaresi arasındaki proje anlaşması gereğince İskenderun-Erzurum karayoluna harcanmak üzere Karayolları Genel Müdürlüğüne Bütçe Kanunu'na ödenek kaydedilmesi." ↑

87 Murat Devres, *Dersim as an Internal Colony: The Turkish Civilizing Mission (1927–1952)* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2024). ↑

88 For insights on the spatial design of an invisible "internal border" in Turkey, see: Zeynep Kezer, "Spatializing Difference: The Making of an Internal Border in Early Republican Elazığ, Turkey," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73, no. 4 (December 2014): 507–527. For a critical analysis of the social engineering of Turkey's "acceptable citizens," see: Füsun Üstel, *Makbul Vatandaş'ın Peşinde: II. Meşrutiyet'ten Bugüne Türkiye'de Vatandaş Eğitimi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004). ↑

89 Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire,* 18. See also: Yaşar Tolga Cora, Dzovinar Derderian, Ali Sipahi, eds., *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Societies, Identities and Politics* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016). ↑

90 The phrase "the Kurdish problem" (or "the Kurdish question") has been a discursive construct and is still used today, in both official and everyday speech. For Kurds in Turkey, it symbolizes the historical injustices they resist; it covers a wide range of social, political, economic, and cultural issues raised by Kurdish communities across Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, who have been fighting for self-determination amidst the human rights violations they face daily. In Turkish nationalist rhetoric, however, the phrase dismisses all injustices, issues, and violations by reducing the Kurds' diverse struggles to a single assimilation problem that the state and military are supposed to formulate and eliminate through force. For further information, see: Zeynep Gambetti and Joost Jongerden, eds., *The Kurdish Issue in Turkey: A Spatial Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2015) and Cenk Saraçoğlu, *Kurds of Modern Turkey: Migration, Neoliberalism and Exclusion in Turkish Society* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010). ↑

91 "The Kurdish Minority Problem," August 12, 1948, RG 263 ORE 71-48, Records of the Intelligence Agency 1894-2002, Intelligence Publication Files 1946-1950, National Archives, College Park, MD. ↑

92 "The Kurdish Minority Problem." ↑

93 “The Kurdish Minority Problem.” ↑

94 “The Kurdish Minority Problem.” ↑

95 Cangül Örnek and Çağdaş Üngör, “Turkey’s Cold War: Global Influences, Local Manifestations,” in *Turkey in the Cold War: Ideology and Culture*, eds. Cangül Örnek and Çağdas Üngör (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1–21. ↑

96 Turkey sent 23,000 soldiers to fight in the Korean War (1950–1953) as an ally of the US-led United Nations coalition forces. ↑

97 For a commentary on the contemporary legal meaning of this partition, see: Aslı Bâli, “Sykes-Picot and ‘Artificial’ States,” *AJIL Unbound* 110 (2016): 115–19. ↑

98 “Suriye’de iç Harp Başladı,” *Yeni Adana,* January 17, 1957. The translation is mine. ↑

99 A series of reports from January 1957 used similar iterations, reducing the complexity on the ground to the intruder (Russia)-defender (the US) dichotomy. For instance, see: “Amerika, Rusya’nın Orta Doğu’ya Sızmasını Önleyecek,” *Yeni Adana,* January 3, 1957; “Komünistler Orta Doğu’ya Sür’atle Sızmaktadır,” *Yeni Adana,* January 12, 1957; and “Ruslar Orta Doğu’ya Yakın Bölgelere Asker Yığıyor (Russian are Deploying Soldiers to Regions close to the Middle East),” *Yeni Adana,* January 16, 1957. ↑

100 “Komşu Suriyelilere Hatırlatıyoruz: Toprak, Kalemle Değil, Ancak Süngü ile Alınır!,” *Yeni Adana,* April 23, 1953. ↑

101 Political tensions between Turkey and Syria date back to the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923, when the Sanjak of Alexandretta (Iskenderun) became a matter of territorial dispute; in 1939, it was incorporated into Turkish territory, but tensions persisted into the second half of the twentieth century. ↑

102 See: “Mısır Diktatörü Nasser’ın Londra Konferansı Hakkındaki Görüşü,” *Yeni Adana,* August 13, 1956 and “Suriye Bir Sovyet Peyki Haline Geliyor,” *Yeni Adana,* November 27, 1956. ↑

103 Cyrus Schayegh, “1958 Reconsidered: State Formation and the Cold War in the Early Postcolonial Arab Middle East,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45, no. 3 (August 2013): 421–443. ↑

104 The Suez Canal Company had been owned and operated by a joint British-French enterprise since its construction in 1869. ↑

105 Schayegh, “1958 Reconsidered,” 422. ↑

106 Irene L. Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon and the Middle East, 1945-1958* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 6. ↑

107 Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 223–229. ↑

108 Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield,* 255. ↑

109 Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield,* 90–91. ↑

110 “Memorandum for the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Properties and Installations),” 1958, RG0341 Entry UD-UP 99, Box 28, General Records [Mission Records], Headquarters US Air Force (Air Staff) Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations/Office of the Director of Installations, National Archives, College Park, MD. ↑

111 Jean-Luc Nancy, “War, Right, Sovereignty, *Technê*,” in *Being Singular Plural,* trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O’Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 103. ↑

112 Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 102–13. ↑

113 As of August 2025 revisions. ↑

114 For a recent analysis, see: Dilar Dirik and Nancy Agabian, “Solidarity from Below from Kurdistan to Artsakh,” *Funambulist* 55 (August 2024). ↑

115 For a recent analysis, see: Samuel Dolbee, “The Jazira’s Long Shadow over Turkey and Syria.” *Middle East Report* 52,

no. 305 (2022). ↑

116 As of February 2025 revisions. ↑