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“POPPIES ARE DEMOCRACY!” A CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS OF OPIUM ERADICATION AND REINTRODUCTION IN TURKEY*

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ABSTRACT. Historical scholarship in traditional geopolitics often relied on documents authored by states and by other influential actors. Although much work in the subfield of critical geopolitics thus far has addressed imbalances constructed in official, academic, and popular media due to a privileging of such narratives, priority might also be given to unearthing and bringing to light alternative geopolitical perspectives from otherwise marginalized populations. Utilizing the early-1970s case of the United States’ first “war on drugs,” this article examines the geopolitics of opium-poppy eradication and its consequences within Turkey. Employing not only archival and secondary sources but also oral histories from now-retired poppy farmers, this study examines the diffusion of U.S. antinarcotics policies into the Anatolian countryside and the enduring impressions that the United States and Turkish government created. In doing so, this research gives voice to those farmers targeted by eradication policies and speaks more broadly to matters of narcotics control, sentiments of anti-Americanism, and notions of democracy in Turkey and the region, past and present.

Keywords: critical geopolitics, narcotics, opium poppy, oral history, Turkey.

This article addresses experiences of opium poppy eradication and reintroduction in early-1970s Turkey from a critical geopolitics perspective and as informed by oral history interviews collected from now-retired poppy farmers. A subfield of political geography, critical geopolitics emerged in the early 1990s and drew upon key works from both critical theory and alternatives to realism in international relations research (Ashley 1984, 1987; Campbell 1988; Walker 1987, 1988). As such, seminal critical geopolitics scholarship engaged especially in critiques of state-centered, positivist traditions within and beyond political geography (Ó Tuathail 1989, 1996;

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Dalby 1991; Dodds and Sidaway 1994). The subfield's common research themes thus far include studies of geopolitical discourse as reflected in: official narratives and ideas associated with institutions, policymakers, and the conduct of international and other politics; scholarly, journalistic, and other sources that seek to inform policymakers; and popular media and culture (for example, Dalby 1996; Sharp 2000; Dalby 2002; Gregory 2004; Smith 2004; Debrix 2007; Dittmer 2010). Moreover, as with Simon Dalby's *Environmental Security* (2002), critical geopolitics offers one avenue for bringing together the otherwise "distinctly separate tracks" of scholarship once found in political ecology and political geography (Robbins 2003, 641).

Although considerable work within critical geopolitics has thus far addressed imbalances conveyed in official, academic, and popular media through a privileging of particular narratives and frames of analysis, the subfield can benefit from an unearthing and bringing to light of alternative geopolitical perspectives as found among otherwise marginalized populations. Indeed, this is one way of moving toward a more "progressive geopolitics." In outlining the steps toward this alternative beyond geopolitics as merely an examination—and reaffirmation—of "violent relations between states," Gerry Kearns observed, "The first would be through a critique of existing theory and the other would be by redirecting our attention towards neglected practices, and critical geopolitics is now well established at least in the first of these respects" (2008, 1600–1601). Both incorporating "neglected" voices and reorienting our geopolitical focus accordingly, methodologies such as ethnography and oral history provide a means for identifying alternative voices and reimagining political options.

Employing the early-1970s case of the United States' first "war on drugs," in this article I examine the geopolitics of both the eradication and the reintroduction of opium poppies in Turkey. Although various histories dealt with U.S. antinarcotics policies involving Turkey and Turkish experiences with poppy eradication and reintroduction as matters either of Turkish-U.S. foreign affairs or of populism within Turkey (Zentner 1973; Wishart 1974; Spain 1975; Altindal 1979; Erhan 1996; Uslu 2003), local-scale connections emphasized in this study make it unique. In my research, I supplemented both archival and secondary sources with oral histories collected during a four-week period in the summer 2009 from forty retirees (twenty men and twenty women, with ages ranging from fifty-five to eighty-six years at the time of the interviews). Informants lived and worked as poppy farmers during the ban and in the years following its reversal. Their interviews and this study are part of a wider, multiyear research project devoted to the cultural and political ecologies and geopolitics of opium poppies in Turkey. As a geographical research method, oral history is of particular utility for reconstructing past societal and nature-society relationships, processes, and events and for analyzing the ways in which collective memories of particular experiences continue to be operative politically and otherwise (Perramond 2001; Robbins 2010; Evered 2011).

Through its incorporation of first-person accounts, this study moves beyond exploring the U.S. and Turkish political rhetoric of the period to analyzing how

farmers experienced antinarcotics policies and how they remember associated events and outcomes today. It thus renders a better understanding of the diffusion of U.S. antinarcotics policies into the Anatolian countryside and among its communities and the enduring impressions that the U.S. and Turkish governments created.¹ As such, this article not only gives voice to those first targeted in the “war on drugs,” it also speaks more broadly to sentiments of anti-Americanism in Turkey and the region and informs the present conduct of antinarcotics policymaking.

THE UNITED STATES’ “WAR ON DRUGS” AND TURKEY

U.S. consternation over narcotics consumption began well before the 1970s “war on drugs” declaration. Indeed, agendas for control date to the nineteenth century and have reflected through time continuities and connections with both the country’s prohibition movement and its racial politics (Ahmad 2007). Notably, such agendas contrasted strikingly with early U.S. involvements in international opium trade—for example, as facilitated by many New England clipper ships. Since the early twentieth century the United States has played a significant role in early efforts toward institutionalizing international regimes of narcotics control. This commitment was evident at the February 1909 Shanghai meeting of the International Opium Commission, with the International Opium Convention of 1912, and with the 1931 Convention for Limiting the Manufacture and Regulating the Distribution of Narcotic Drugs, as facilitated through the League of Nations (Booth 1998, 175–190; Musto 1999).

During World War II efforts toward international control diminished initially, but momentum had resumed by 1943. In this context, Great Britain and the Netherlands began to contemplate a postwar curbing of opiate production and consumption in their Asian territories. In these pre-1970s efforts, which spanned the transition from the Ottoman era to the republican era, Turkey was a focal point in attempts to restrict producing regions. In association with European intentions for a postwar order, as early as September 1944 U.S. officials engaged with Turkish authorities. In correspondence from the U.S. embassy in Ankara, Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt wrote of Allied intentions, the above-noted developments, and the purported Japanese source of Asia’s opium problem. Specific to Turkey and to a postwar arrangement, he indicated that the United States hoped “Turkey and all opium-producing countries [would] be willing to participate in a conference which is expected to be held after the war for the purpose of drafting a suitable poppy limitation convention, preparations for which were undertaken several years ago by the Opium Advisory Committee” (USDOS 1945, 63).

On 14 May 1945 Turkey’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a response to this initiative that recalled commitments to international efforts since as early as 1932—when Turkey ratified adherence to the 1931 Convention for Limiting the Manufacture and Regulating the Distribution of Narcotic Drugs—and expressed both interest in such a conference and concern regarding equality in applying any resulting international standards. In doing so, the ministry further articulated clearly its apprehensions

about how such measures might unfairly impact both local cultivators' incomes and ecologies and those states that were expected to enforce controls. In particular, it noted the ecological circumstances of Anatolian peasants in terms of their economic and dietary dependence on the poppy and the absolute lack of alternatives (USDOS 1945, 69). This issue of the local cultivator—and the fact that Turkey was still a largely agrarian country with a ruling party that relied on its rural electorate—continued to limit Turkish compliance with demands for absolute bans as articulated by the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s (on pre-ban ecologies, see Evered 2011).

The United States persisted in its engagement of Turkey on the question of opiates from that time through the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson, but President Richard M. Nixon radically redefined the focus both on drugs as an issue of concern and on Turkey as a site of production. Even prior to his presidency (20 January 1969–9 August 1974), Nixon's first-term campaign team constructed the question of illicit drugs and associated moral decline as vital political issues as they sought to appeal to Nixon's "silent majority." In his rhetoric Nixon targeted social unrest and criminality as problems afflicting the nation—problems that, he claimed, the purportedly growing rates of drug abuse exacerbated substantially.² However, I contend that powerful reasons exist to suggest that much of the so-called problem, especially its definition and framing for the U.S. media, was invented by Nixon, his campaigns for election and reelection, and his presidential administrations. In this regard, an approach based in a discourse-focused field of study such as critical geopolitics provides a useful means of analyzing how the United States constructed the problem in a manner that implicated singularly the poppy fields of Turkey.

Although both the Democratic and Republican parties indicated that drug abuse was a matter of national concern in their 1968 presidential election platforms, the Nixon campaign defined and made reference to it as a threat that warranted a greater, federal- and international-scale solution. Not long into his first term, on 14 July 1969, President Nixon announced before the U.S. Congress that drug abuse had "grown from essentially a local police problem into a serious national threat." That threat, he warned, demanded a response on a national scale: "A new urgency and concerted national policy are needed at the Federal level to begin to cope with this growing menace" (1969a).

Overall, voiced either directly by President Nixon or indirectly by his appointees, there thus existed a trend toward escalating the scope of both the problem and the measures necessary to surmount it. They represented the issue as an "epidemic," a "national threat," and a "public enemy"; and the means to prevail over it ranged from an "offensive," to a "crusade," and eventually to a "war." To heighten the urgency of this problem, instillation of alarm and apprehension was a theme common to the discourse that emanated from the White House.³ In July 1969 President Nixon indicated that American parents could no longer send their children to college, high school, or junior high school without substantial trepidation concerning exposure to drugs. As he further declared on 17 June 1971, at the close of the same

speech in which he first employed the “war” metaphor, “The threat of narcotics among our people is one which properly frightens many Americans. It comes quietly into homes and destroys children, it moves into neighborhoods and breaks the fiber of community which makes neighbors.”

According to Edward Jay Epstein, this rhetoric provided, on one hand, a means of blaming the United States’ social and economic ills on foreign powers and criminals and, on the other hand, a pretext for consolidating, expanding, and more thoroughly controlling law enforcement power under the ultimate authority of the executive branch of government.⁴ Citing numerous past examples of spurious narcotics-related charges by U.S. authorities against foreign enemies, Epstein wrote: “The charges were based more on the needs of propaganda against hostile enemies than on firm evidence of narcotics traffic.” He continued to contend, however, that, amid the Nixon-era expansion of the antinarcotics mission, the administration “decided to extend the war on drugs to friendly nations, which made easier targets” (1990, 81).

Though compelling, Epstein’s overall thesis falls beyond the scope of this article. His observation about the sites for engagement in the new “war,” however, is germane. The first target selected was Mexico’s transborder trade in heroin and marijuana. Involving a cast of characters that included Egil Krogh (presidential assistant and convicted White House “plumber”), Eugene T. Rossides (assistant treasury secretary), and G. Gordon Liddy (White House employee, aide to Rossides, and convicted “plumber”), among others, the administration implemented Operation Intercept on 21 September 1969. After witnessing a rapid deterioration in U.S.-Mexican relations and widespread criticism, the White House clumsily renamed the scheme Operation Cooperation on 10 October 1969 and then effectively abandoned the program within just twenty days (Nixon 1969b; Craig 1980; Epstein 1990, 81–85).

Despite the initial failure of its emergent “war” strategy, the Nixon administration continued along, promptly designated Turkey another initial site for dramatic engagement, and applied considerable pressure not only to Turkey itself but also to William J. Handley, the U.S. ambassador in Ankara from 1969 to 1973.⁵ For many Americans, this choice resonated in terms of the recent identification and toppling of the so-called French Connection; a term popularized in the public’s imagination by a 1969 nonfiction book and a 1971 motion picture starring Gene Hackman—both titled *The French Connection*. This linkage involving France was a rudimentary—albeit illicit—commodity chain; poppy cultivation and production of raw opium in Turkish villages (Evered 2011), processing and distribution of heroin in Marseille, France, and marketing and eventual consumption of heroin in New York City and beyond. In addition—and obscured by attention focused on the traffic through France to the United States, there existed a centuries-long trade in opium exported from Turkey to consumers in Iran, where numerous consumers smoked the drug “raw” (unprocessed into heroin).

To legitimate the urgency of a “war” on Turkey’s poppies, the Nixon administration also employed expert authorities and statistics.⁶ Indeed, media placement

of such experts and their testimonials and evidence is a key topic for analysis in some critical geopolitics studies. Public relations engagements at international, state, and public forums were especially common, such as Director of U.S. Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD) John F. Ingersoll's 28 September 1970 presentation to the U.N. Commission on Narcotic Drugs. At this Geneva-based meeting he declared, "Humanity has a right to expect that opium-producing countries will cooperate fully with the international community in restricting the supply of opium, even if that causes an economic loss to the governments responsible and to the farmers who plant the poppy" (p. 494). Likewise, Special Assistant for Narcotic Matters to the Secretary of State Harvey R. Wellman, in his 14 December 1970 address in New York to the American Turkish Society, stressed that, despite it being "hard for the Turkish Government and people to appreciate the death and suffering which come from use of and addiction to heroin," this policy was essential. He thus encouraged the society to "be a bridge of communication and understanding between the United States and Turkey in our drug control efforts." He also predicted that a decree would come on 30 June 1971 and that it would clarify the legality of poppy production in Turkey, which restricted cultivation to just four provinces for the 1971/1972 year (pp. 140, 145–146).

As a matter of statistical evidence, the administration also commonly employed percentage figures to convey how Turkish opium became heroin destined for the United States. As early as 1969 the Nixon administration began to state that 70 percent of the heroin consumed in the United States derived from Turkey, even though most contemporary sources indicated that Turkish production accounted for only between 7 and 15 percent of the world's supply of the illicit narcotic. By the early 1970s administration officials inflated and routinely cited this figure at either 80 or 85 percent. Apart from the fact that Turkish opium enjoyed a centuries-long reputation as the world's best, or most pure, no evidence validated this claim, apart from, perhaps, an assumption that American addicts recognized, demanded, and only consumed the best product available. These figures were particularly dubious because they omitted then booming scales of opium production and heroin shipments from Southeast Asia (as documented in McCoy 2003).⁷ Indeed, U.S. authorities never validated their statistics through presentation of sources, methods of derivation, or even the raw numeric data that enabled their assemblage and proclamation. Nonetheless, as Epstein wrote, such evidence had a way of being repeated endlessly as "journalistic 'fact'" (1990, 89).⁸ Although Turkey may have commanded the U.S. market at this scale, Epstein demonstrated that such estimates relied on unlikely assumptions regarding the percentage of Turkish opium grown that went into the illicit market, the need for all of this amount to result in heroin that went solely to the United States and the consequent absence of alternative domestic and international markets for Turkish opium (1990, 89). Apart from the absence of source materials substantiating Nixon-era claims and of statistical recognition of Southeast Asian shipments, these figures neglected to recognize both long-standing raw opium trade with Iran and Europeans' consumption of Turkish-grown heroin. Among other

points, this question of statistical propaganda constituted a major issue that Turkey's eventual Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit later recalled (his first brief, though eventful, term was 26 January to 17 November 1974) (1996, 11–14).

In addition to the economic distress forecast for Turkey's farmers and U.S. officials' obvious manipulations of Turkey's image and internal politics, a significant problem with targeting this ally involved the facts that the country was already engaged in reducing the scale of its poppy cultivation and that these ongoing efforts involved collaboration with the United States (as indicated clearly in Bryant 1970 and other BNDD reports). Indeed, Turkey reduced production to forty-two of its then sixty-seven provinces in 1962/1963, to twenty-one in 1967/1968, and to eleven by 1969/1970. The state further reduced this number to seven provinces—Afyon, Burdur, Isparta, Kütahya, Denizli, Usak, and four subprovincial districts of Konya—in 1970/1971, to just Afyon, Burdur, Isparta, and Kütahya by 1971/1972, and eradicated cultivation entirely following the 1972 harvest (*JT-AAM* 1971, i-1).

Although the will for absolute eradication of Turkey's poppy cultivation clearly existed among a growing and bipartisan number of U.S. politicians, the means for achieving such a goal did not exist until March 1971. Given the promises for drug control and the upcoming elections, profound pressure existed for—and was redirected by—the Nixon administration on this issue. Despite mixed histories of compliance and resistance to demands to diminish, control, and/or eliminate opium cultivation and/or sales, Turkey was in no position to resist following the 12 March nonviolent “coup by memorandum.” Carried out by the military and toppling the ineffective and increasingly unpopular rule of Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel, the military installed Nihat Erim as prime minister on 26 March.

With a military administration greatly dependent on its connection to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization during the cold war and on the West for military and other aid, the Nixon administration pushed for total eradication. Promoting this policy, the United States employed carrot-and-stick incentives, pledging monetary assistance to compensate Turkish farmers and other aid for eradication but threatening to withhold military and other aid if Turkey proved recalcitrant. Given its dependent international position vis-à-vis the United States and its own recent internal instability, Turkey acquiesced. Within the Turkish political landscape, however, this was an enormously unpopular development. In the eyes of an increasing number of critics of the military/Erim-led state, this move was seen simultaneously as an act of imperialistic U.S. pressure, often expressed in terms that compared the United States with the Great Powers and its imposition of capitulations upon the empire and the republic, as demonstrating the absolute lack of popular, democratic leadership in Turkey, and as outright victimization of poppy-growing peasants.⁹

WAR ON TURKEY'S POPPY FARMERS

Timed to coincide with Prime Minister Erim's pledge to eliminate cultivation within one year and news of an associated decree, on 30 June 1971 President Nixon congratulated the prime minister for his “courageous” and “statesmanlike” “contribu-

tion to the well-being of the world" (USDOS 1971b, 74). After negotiations and congressional approval, the United States committed \$35 million in aid to both defray national losses in licit trade in medical morphine and compensate farmers.¹⁰ President Nixon further recognized both Turkey's reliance on agriculture and its sacrifice, pledging U.S. technical support to identify alternative crops (p. 74).

To facilitate eradication and meet this pledge of technical aid, Nixon assigned Secretary of Agriculture Clifford M. Hardin to lead a mission of agricultural experts to Turkey. Their assignment entailed work with Turkish counterparts to ameliorate incomes of and opportunities for former poppy farmers. Informing the mission's work, the Turkish state commissioned a report to be completed by an appointed "Interministerial Commission on poppies" that compiled information from the seven leading poppy-producing provinces. Oddly, given their assignment—and in contrast with official press releases (USDOS 1971a)—U.S. advisors had strict instructions to "not be concerned with an evaluation of the magnitude of the loss to the farmers and others from the banning of poppy production." Rather, their project consisted of identifying development opportunities and constraints in the region "in the absence of poppy production" (JT-AAM 1971, I-2).

In the introduction to the mission's published recommendations, Secretary Hardin recalled President Nixon's remarks about Prime Minister Erim's adoption of eradication and stated, "I am sure the Government of Turkey will give due attention to the [mission's] recommendations" (JT-AAM 1971, I-5–I-6). Although the report consisted of abundantly obvious recommendations applicable to most villages throughout rural Turkey, not just poppy-producing ones—electrification and road construction, among other suggestions—it also encouraged crop substitution. In particular, it identified sunflowers, sugar beets, wheat, barley, vetch, alfalfa, sorghum, and millet. At no time, however, did the study indicate the profound differences between income derived from poppies and that derived from the suggested crops, differences between the prices paid to farmers for products like sunflower seeds and sunflower oil, on one hand, and opium—legally sold for pharmaceutical industries or illegally for traffic in opium and heroin—poppy seeds, and poppy seed oil, on the other. Moreover, they also failed to address the costs of planting poppies in terms of what would be lost from the crop's other uses. Costs ranged from the use of seeds for baking and oils, of leaves for salads, of stalks for construction material and as a fuel source for stoves.

At the time, the national newspaper *Milliyet* reported significant disparities involving crop substitution. Based on calculations of the United States' suggested substitutes, for every Turkish lira equivalent of U.S.\$1.00 earned from poppies, a farmer earned only U.S.\$0.08 from wheat, U.S.\$0.16 from sunflowers, and U.S.\$0.25 from sugar beets (Oral 1972). Most of the retired poppy farmers I interviewed decades later confirmed that income derived from all marketable poppy products was at least double what they earned from any other crops, and not infrequently six to ten times as much. Additionally, U.S. congressional study missions' "roadside interviews" in the poppy-growing region indicated that this approach was not working

at local levels due not only to matters of income but also cultural preference; that is, taste.

One farmer illustrated the solemn independence and strength found in farmers throughout the world. Over 70 years of age, he worked his small fields every day assisted by his family members. He had grown poppies on those hills every year until 1972. He had, at the government's suggestion, grown sunflowers as a substitute for this, the third year of the ban. But he did not like the taste of sunflower seed oil. He also planted barley now as a substitute cash crop but it earned much less money than the poppy.

Did he want to grow poppies again? Yes, he said. . . .

His insistence, although expressed courteously to the foreigner, becomes a political fact in Turkey today. (U.S. Congress . . . 1974, 8)

Western policymakers and scholars sometimes recognized this profound problem of the crop's integral role in local food systems, not just in household incomes, something President Nixon even acknowledged in speeches—in his 30 June 1971 statement, for example. As James Spain wrote regarding the foreign policy dimensions of the "opium problem," "In some remote and impoverished mountain villages, the poppy was the only crop that made a subsistence existence possible. . . . The poppy meant at least as much as tobacco to Kentucky" (1975, 305). In most instances, however, political discourse reflected only the priorities of narcotics control and generally lacked any recognition of such on-the-ground realities.

In my interviews of now-retired poppy farmers, one elderly man responded, when asked about his and others' reactions to the ban, by speaking to the many ecological and economic dimensions of the crop and to the enduring impact of eradication in the collective memory. Appearing as if he was remembering a moment of utter devastation in the combined histories of his livelihood, his family, and his community, he replied, "They banned our bread! What could we do?" According to most informants, they first learned of the ban through their local headperson, an intermediary between villagers and state institutions. They also told me about the widespread distress that this news evoked throughout their families and communities. As one retiree related, "We were all brought together for an announcement from our village leader, and he then told us about the poppy ban. This news caused great sadness and worry."

Asked about their reactions to the criminalization of poppy cultivation and opium sales, one woman recalled, "Young people seemed most involved in reacting to the ban." Indeed, the 1970s were part of a turbulent period in Turkish politics with various cleavages ranging from ultranationalist/right-wing to leftist (commonly overgeneralized in Turkish as "Marxist"). The various groups, especially those in which the country's youth were involved, often clashed with each other and with the state and its security forces. In a cold war context with rampant state-held anxieties about activism and leftist politics, such dissent from and strife among the nation's youth was a major factor behind the military's 1971 coup. Though most

associated with university campuses and urban contexts, the wider political debates and struggles of the time pulled in community youth.

This draw upon local youths was especially common because most of them interpreted the ban as a function of U.S. influence on the increasingly unpopular military state. For most farmers, however, questions of reactions recalled experi-



FIG. 1—The specter of the United States' policies looms over the poppy fields of Anatolia on the front cover of a leftist pamphlet. *Source:* Info-Türk Ajansı 1974.

ences that they associated with utter marginalization, which deprived them of money, sustenance, and a way of life. This specter that the United States—and U.S. imperialism—represented in the lives of farmers emerged as a common image in both words and graphics (Figure 1). As conveyed in the words of Hikmet, an elderly grandfather, “Why was America against us?”

POPPIES, POPULISM, AND DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY

For his part, Prime Minister Erim was honored with an invitation to the White House invitation for late March 1972. His visit coincided with President Nixon's signing ceremony for the Drug Abuse Office and Treatment Act, during which the president reassured Americans that “the present Turkish Government is totally committed to stopping all growing of the opium poppy” (Nixon 1972). That evening, in

addition to toasting the past and future of Turkish-American relationships, President Nixon applauded Prime Minister Erim's commitment to Turkish sovereignty and democracy: "What is important is that you are attempting to build that future, despite great pressures that might be applied upon you, in the paths of independence and freedom, rather than succumbing to the great influences of dictatorship and oppression" (USDOS 1972, 601).

Despite the United States' accolades, Prime Minister Erim's popularity in Turkey was quite low. Only weeks after his visit—and following a parliamentary rejection of his proposed initiatives—he resigned his premiership. The military accepted this resignation on 22 May 1972 and installed Ferit Melen, who served until 15 April 1973, and then Naim Talu, who served until a return to democracy with the installation of Bülent Ecevit on 25 January 1974.

Throughout the early 1970s, the Turkish media—as noted by U.S. observers—voiced pitched, national-scale condemnation of eradication (U.S. Congress . . . 1974, 3). Regarding this public reaction to the ban and the United States' role, one political scientist later wrote, "This controversy brought the issue of interference and dependence to the forefront in Turkish politics" (Coufoudakis 1981, 187). Within this discourse, the ban represented at least five sources of vexation for Turks; in turn, Turkish citizens argued for its return as an expression of: anticolonialism/anti-imperialism, Turkish geopolitical and economic sovereignty, Turkish cultural integrity, and social justice. More than three decades later, most of the oral histories I collected conveyed these same concerns as retired farmers responded to broad questions about the period and its wider significance.

Reflecting long-held sentiments concerning the United States' role in the ban and the view that it was a form of imperialism, one interviewee stated, "America didn't want us to get stronger, and America still doesn't want us to [prosper]." Given past relations with the United States, which most Turks viewed as positive—supportive of the Truman Doctrine, for example—many farmers indicated a sense of betrayal. As one grandmother recalled, "Everyone was so sad, and we were angry that America had turned against us."

Other retirees regarded it as a beginning of the United States' unilateral subordination of Turkey in geopolitical/economic terms. In the words of one grandfather, "America put down a ban—just like with the [later quota on] sugar beets. America did not want us to [prosper]. Now they don't want us to grow beets, so that they can sell us their poor quality [cane] sugar." As seen through experiences of the ban, a presumed subordinate status vis-à-vis the United States represented real, negative impacts on local livelihoods. As one informant stated, "We wished that we could still grow [the poppy], but [the United States'] ban meant that we'd have to work for someone else."

Although some of my interviews indicated that compensation, once received, enabled a few villagers to "get rich"—by local standards—most complained about delayed payments, low payments, and even nonpayment due to inappropriate compensation calculations and flawed payment schedules. As one farmer recalled, "When

America paid, it was based on an average of a farmer's production over the past three years, but we were only paid a third [of what we were owed]." Another stated that her family received only a fourth of what the state owed. Regarding reimbursement calculations, one grandmother noted, "The greatest [cost] of the ban was for those who weren't going to grow [it] that year [that is, in one of the years used to figure compensation]. If they had planned to take a year off from growing that year and didn't plant, then they didn't receive any reimbursement for not planting after the eradication was announced."

Coupled with wider-scale views of the ban as associated with lack of democratic representation, informants raised issues that conveyed how eradication impaired the regular conduct of village life and economic well-being. Recalling the views expressed about crop substitution, something that the journalist Aytunç Altındal discussed as an attempted "Americanization" and "Westernization" of Turkish agriculture, informants also complained about how substitutes were entirely inappropriate, economically and otherwise (1979, 231). Throughout interviews concerning both the ban and the area's ecologies, interviewees indicated repeatedly how everything—except for a few items, such as tea from the Black Sea region or from abroad—was, and still is, produced and consumed locally and how the ban thus resulted in profound economic and household-level hardships. Some informants also stated that the lack of poppy harvests delayed anticipated marriages in their communities. Both this cultural dimension and the economic benefits associated with the poppy's reintroduction were evident in one retiree's comments on life after the poppy's return. He recollected with a smile, "People planted again, got money, got married, got land, and got tractors. We were happy again!"

In memories of most retired farmers, resumption of local livelihoods and ways of living would have been impossible were it not for Prime Minister Ecevit's actions. In truth, however, all of the parties involved in Turkey's first elections since the 12 March 1971 coup vowed to reinstate poppy cultivation, at least in some form. Nonetheless, many of the rural poor embraced Ecevit's campaign pledge and his subsequent actions. In the months that followed, the prime minister declared that the poppy was "not only a livelihood but also a way of life" that was "inseparable from the peasant's lifestyle" and that realistic alternatives needed to be identified. The consequence of not doing so left farmers "destitute and hopeless," so a national mandate existed to restore the poppy, albeit in a controlled manner (Milliyet 1974).

For retired farmers today, Prime Minister Ecevit remains a symbol of this return to democracy, Turkish sovereignty, humanity and social justice, and the poppy itself. In almost all interviews, retirees were animated in recalling the leader and his resolve. As one grandfather told me, after straightening his posture in his chair, "Ecevit said, 'My farmers' livelihoods rely on it, and we are going to grow it again!'"

Not only a champion of the farmers, many also remember Prime Minister Ecevit as a champion both of the Turkish nation and of decency. As another grandfather declared—also filled with pride, "Ecevit said, 'How dare America interfere with our farmers. We know what to grow.' So he said, 'No!' to America. Everyone was happy

again.” Recalling the other key international event that defined the prime minister’s first term, Zehra remembered, “He was a brave man, standing up to America—and also when the Greeks wanted to take Cyprus.” Although his coalition with the Islamist Necmettin Erbakan disintegrated shortly after Turkey’s intervention in Cyprus, Prime Minister Ecevit’s reinstatement of poppy cultivation resulted in his lioniza-

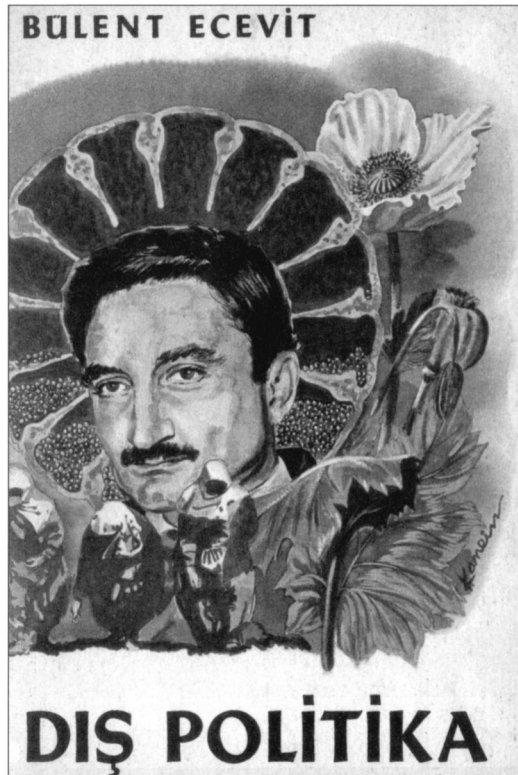


FIG. 2—The linking of Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit to the poppy and the poppy farmer. *Source:* Ecevit 1976, front cover.

tion among particular generations and cross-sections of Turkish society—an image his publisher clearly promoted in 1976 (Figure 2). Commenting further on the prime minister’s apparent empathy for farmers and his perceived ethics, Eflatun Bey declared, “Ecevit was the best president there ever was! He never mixed the holy with the sinful!”

To allay U.S. and international fears that Turkish poppies would again result in heroin, Prime Minister Ecevit guaranteed secure production. He did so by committing a security force of at least 400 to monitor cultivation and production—in addition to tasking Turkey’s omnipresent gendarmerie with enforcement—and by universally mandating the imminently policeable straw method of opiate extraction which involves whole capsules rather than lancing capsules for their “milk.” Despite great skepticism among U.S. officials, Turkish, U.S., and international moni-

tors shortly thereafter affirmed that Turkey had managed to reintroduce the poppy with no appreciable “slippage” into illicit markets (Milliyet 1975; U.S. Congress . . . 1975).

Since its reintroduction poppy farming has become a government-controlled enterprise benefiting both the state and licensed farmers. By all measures and by the oral testimonies of past and present farmers, reintroduction of the crop was profoundly successful at local and national scales. Ironically, though viewed as a symbol of national as well as rural independence, the regime of control through licensing—essentially a contract between state and producer—has enabled the state to insinuate itself far more into rural economies and livelihoods than ever before. Commenting not only on the Ecevit-era return to electoral democracy but also the ideal of democracy as conveyed through Kearns’s notion of a “progressive geopolitics”—the sort that enables not only voting but also having the means with which to live a meaningful life and raise a family—one current farmer told me, “Poppies are democracy!”

“WARS” ON DRUGS—OR DEMOCRACY?

Beginning with his 14 July 1969 classification of illegal narcotics use as a “serious national threat” before the U.S. Congress and culminating with his 17 June 1971 identification of drug abuse as the country’s principal “public enemy,” President Nixon established for Americans the rationale for a “war on drugs” (Nixon 1971). However, this declaration entailed far more than just increased vigilance and policing of illicit production, trafficking, and consumption and the July 1973 formation of the Drug Enforcement Agency. President Nixon’s pronouncement also initiated policy imperatives for the decades-long pattern of U.S. intervention in the affairs of other states that continues today. Although the popular and academic media viewed this orientation toward drug-abuse problems within the United States primarily as a matter of law enforcement and foreign policy, the “war on drugs” culminated in profound changes for rural communities globally.

Indeed, President Nixon’s declaration continues to reverberate differentially at multiple scales. In some contexts, as in Turkey, entire countries or regions were targeted with policies of crop eradication. In other cases, particular areas engaged in—or substantially altered existing modes of—cultivation of various crops in response to evolving geopolitics in drug enforcement, as in Egypt, for example (Hobbs 1998). As I have indicated, however, the motives behind and the impacts of this ongoing type of campaign are questionable at best.

For its part, Turkey is no longer viewed as a site of illicit production, although it continues to be implicated in international trafficking of narcotics. Instead, many Europeans regard the republic as a transit state, a “Colombia of Europe” (Robins 2007). Its history, however, gives both cause for concern and hope for alternatives as we look to ongoing calls to implement eradication elsewhere. In Afghanistan, where both anti-Americanism and democractization are problematic issues of immediate import, a more “progressive geopolitics” of narcotics policies remains to be found.

NOTES

1. For approaches to the local-scale impacts of cultivating opium poppies and other drug plants—and associated politics—see Steinberg, Hobbs, and Mathewson 2004.

2. Some histories of Nixon's approach chronicled an unequivocal stance vis-à-vis drugs, as in David Musto's *The American Disease* (1999, 248). However, Musto analyzed such motives with greater care in the second chapter of his later, coauthored book, *The Quest for Drug Control* (Musto and Korsmeyer 2002).

3. On Nixon's use of fear for political effect, note Rutherford 2000, 48–67. Also, see Sharp's brief though insightful discussion of cold war geopolitics, fear, and illicit drugs in *Reader's Digest* and other popular media (2000, 145–147).

4. Epstein's account is an indispensable source for any critical geopolitics study of the United States' antidrug "wars" due to its interrogation of both the language that proclaimed and the motives behind the Nixon administration's policies and the key actors he interviewed, including Krogh, Rossides, and Handley. Originally published in 1977, in a number of sections, his account also dealt specifically with the politics in Washington, D.C. that surrounded the designation of Turkey as a site for intervention—and some of the personal agendas at stake; for example, Rossides, an American of Greek Cypriot ancestry, was portrayed as rabidly anti-Turkish in even the years prior to the July–August 1974 Greek–Turkish conflagration over Cyprus. Epstein's questioning of the legitimacy of the "war on drugs" thus set it apart from other contemporary accounts, such as the *Newsday* journalists' Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Heroin Trail*, which, though informative, did not problematize meaningfully the broader dynamics behind or the implications of the "war's" politics but simply retraced the full route of the so-called French Connection (*Newsday Staff* 1974).

5. For an account of the Nixon administration's bizarre practice of intimidating the ambassador—including exchanges with Liddy and pledges to bombard Istanbul should Handley fail to achieve eradication—note Epstein 1990, 90–92.

6. On the politics of public opinion in the Nixon era, see Rutherford 2000, 48–67; and on the politics of public opinion and crime, note Marion 1994.

7. Senior Advisor to the Secretary of State and Coordinator for International Narcotics Matters—and, shortly thereafter, federal convict for tax fraud and perjury in a case of political corruption—Nelson Gross even asserted this point on Southeast Asian opium in his statement to the U.S. Senate (1972, 506–510).

8. This statistic is still repeated uncritically in otherwise solid academic sources, as in McCoy 2004, 47.

9. This sentiment was quite apparent both in Aytunç Altındal's and Çağrı Erhan's historical studies and in the interviews collected during the summer of 2009 for this article (Altındal 1979; Erhan 1996).

10. Although Nixon approved providing \$100 million for compensation to Turkey and its farmers over three years, according to Epstein, Rossides broke ranks with the administration and lobbied hard with Congress not to pay anything. As a result of his seemingly anti-Turkish inclinations and/or his views on compensation being a "ludicrous" idea, Turkey only received \$35 million (1990, 92).

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