

Words as Weapons in Turkey's Foreign Policy

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For a country that is a long-standing NATO member and aspiring (if fatigued) EU candidate, it may seem surprising that Turkey's president alternately refers to the US as sponsoring or harboring terrorists, and that he refers to Dutch and German leaders as fascists and Nazi remnants.¹ For those who study the deployment of populist narratives of "other"-ing, however, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's rhetorical use of fear-mongering and vilification is quite canny and not at all surprising. Nor, when considering the racist and Islamophobic riffs on populism evoked by presidential candidate and now US President Donald Trump, does Erdoğan's Us vs. Them imagery appear out place. To the contrary, when adding presidents Vladimir Putin (Russia),² Jacob Zuma (South Africa),³ Rodrigo Duterte (Philippines)⁴ and others to the mix, one could argue that the hyper-masculine nationalist strongman version of a polarizing leader is quite en vogue. Crucially, as we in the US are seeing in the fiery exchanges between Trump and North

¹ "Erdogan Says to Continue Making Nazi Remnants, Fascists" Remarks to EU," *VoiceofAmerica.com*, 4 April 2017: <https://www.voanews.com/a/erdogan-says-to-continue-making-natzi-and-fascists-remarks-to-eu/3795566.html>.

² Brian Tashman, "While Trump Champions the Alt-Right in America, Putin Spreads Its ideology through Europe," *Huffington Post*, 26 August 2017: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/brian-tashman/while-trump-champions-the_b_11698456.html.

³ Jackie Bishcof and Lynsey Chutel, "South Africans Know What to Expect when an Intellectual President is Replaced with a Populist One," *The World Post*, 14 November 2016: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/south-africa-president-transition_us_582795c9e4b0c4b63b0cfed7.

⁴ Adrien Chen, "When a Populist Demagogue Takes Power," *The New Yorker: Letters from the Philippines*, 21 November 2016: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/11/21/when-a-populist-demagogue-takes-power>.

Korean leader Kim Jong Un,⁵ the divisive style of populism that may be used to try to rally political support back home can have destabilizing and even devastating consequences when directed abroad.

Identifying the strategies by which leaders can invoke polarizing divides helps us to understand the ways in which populists can employ the delegitimization of others for their own personal and political gain. In another paper, I parse out three strategies that Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Development Party wielded in attempting to paint those participating in the 2013 Gezi Park protests as immoral hooligans whose impudent and destructive actions deserved to be met with a harsh response. The strategies of naming, blaming, and framing that I specify as forms of rhetorical vilification are at work not only in the domestic sphere, however. Applying these concepts to Turkey's foreign policies also helps elucidate the dynamics at play in its relations with the US and Europe. Closely examining these dynamics provides nuanced insight into why the potential for cooperation among these actors and Turkey to address the multiple challenges the Middle East currently poses is so fraught with difficulty.

In what follows in this paper I first outline the three strategies of naming, blaming and framing, and briefly demonstrate how the AKP employed these strategies to vilify its opponents during Gezi. Initially begun as a small-scale environmental demonstration against plans to convert a park in Istanbul's Taksim Square into Ottoman-style barracks that would include yet one more of the shopping centers many Istanbulers were coming to find trashy, nation-wide protests erupted overnight when images of peaceful protesters being beaten by police were shared over social media. Spreading to 80 of Turkey's 81

⁵ Choe Sang-Hun, "Kim's Rejoinder to Trump's Rocket Man: 'Mentally Deranged U.S. Dotard'," *The New York Times*, 21 September 2017: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/21/world/asia/kim-trump-rocketman-dotard.html>.

provinces, Gezi became an arena in which to protest the AKP's increasingly authoritarian usurping of power, as well as its legislative incursions into personal life with restrictions on issues like abortion rights and alcohol sales.

Just as the AKP named, blamed, and framed its opposition during the 2013 protests, its co-founder and indefatigable leader Erdoğan uses these strategies to lash out at countries that he believes have disrespected Turkey and, by implication, himself. In naming Dutch and German leaders fascists and Nazis, Erdoğan was able to express his rage at being challenged while also rallying nationalist support back home in the run up to the April 2016 constitutional referendum. Using a blaming strategy, Erdoğan places the failure adequately to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis squarely on the shoulders of European countries, thus absolving his own country of its role in fueling the Syrian civil war that created the crisis in the first place. Finally, Erdoğan frames the US as complicit in the July 2016 coup attempt and guilty of harboring exiled cleric Fethullah Gülen, whom Erdoğan blames for last year's upheaval. In placing blame on the US, Erdoğan is able to deflect attention from the domestic threats to his power and, once again, rally anti-American support among nationalists. The paper concludes with reflections on how these strategies of vilification complicate international efforts to address issues such as the fight against ISIS, the refugee crisis, and the Syrian civil war.

Rhetorical Vilification as Domestic Strategy

Identifying the Us vs. Them narratives that the AKP used during Gezi helps to understand not only how the government was able to marginalize and delegitimize Gezi protesters and their grievances, the "Them," but also how this rhetoric served to

consolidate and fortify the party's base, the "Us." In brief, the AKP literally added insult to injury to demobilize and discredit its opposition, not only during Gezi but also in rallying supporters to defend the government against the coup attempt. Applying a framework of rhetorical vilification that specifies naming, blaming, and framing strategies helps to parse out how the AKP was effective in communicating to its base the need to crush peaceful opposition with force. By naming, I mean the use of derogatory and belittling terms used repeatedly by AKP members and spread through government-influenced media outlets to identify Gezi protesters as a hostile "other" to be feared and condemned. This mechanism serves to criminalize the actions of protesters and thus justify harsh measures used against them, while fueling a societal polarization of "us" (good government supporters) versus "them" (bad opposition agitators) that would have lasting consequences.

The AKP's use of naming as a mechanism to delegitimize and "other"-ize those supporting the Gezi protests was quite explicit in its marginalization of the extent of anti-government opposition. AKP Istanbul Governor Hüseyin Avni Mutlu initially reacted to the uprisings on his watch as the works of a few "marginal people" (*marjinaller*),⁶ a theme Erdoğan repeated many times. By declaring the protesters to be marginal, the AKP was able both to reduce public perceptions of the number of people protesting and relegate their grievances to the category of minor or even illegitimate. The AKP's practice of naming protesters with derogatory language took many other forms, some of which directly engage Turkey's tumultuous history with terrorism. By calling anyone who went to the streets to express their discontent with the government a terrorist

⁶ İsmail Saymaz, "Gezi Park'ında Devlet ve Marjinaller: Erdoğan da Bir 'Marjinal' Değil Miydi?" *Radikal Gazetesi*, 12 June 2013: <http://blog.radikal.com.tr/gezi-parki-direnisi/gezi-parkinda-devlet-ve-marjinaller-erdogan-da-bir-marjinal-degil-miydi-25014>.

(*terörist*), a term most vocally applied by then-EU Minister Egemen Bağış, the AKP identified Gezi protesters as inherently dangerous to Turkey.

Blaming consists of focusing on and inflating rare occurrences of violence, or fabricating antisocial and even immoral behavior for which protesters must be held accountable. Blaming also places the responsibility for the outcome solely on one's opponent – in this case the opposition – effectively justifying a harsh response by a government merely defending its citizens and property. This strategy can be used effectively to paint all those engaging in anti-government opposition demonstrations with the vilification brush. Blaming Gezi protesters not only for damage done to storefront windows but also for the decline in these stores' business, Erdoğan declared that shopkeepers were legally justified in using violence against demonstrators.⁷ In one instance of false blaming much publicized by the AKP, protesters were accused of drinking alcohol in a mosque – behavior considered inexcusable and immoral for pious AKP supporters. *Yeni Şafak* correspondent Süleyman Gündüz, who was present at the mosque when the supposedly alcohol-consuming protesters sought shelter from the tear gas being used by police, countered this claim by stressing that not only was alcohol not consumed but that those entering “took off their shoes” as a sign of respect.⁸ Although the mosque's imam corroborated the journalist's story, the rhetorical damage was done for many who repeated the story long after the supposed incident.

Finally, the mechanism of framing enabled the AKP rhetorically to situate the behavior of the protesters into pre-existing frames with negative connotations. This

⁷ “Erdoğan: Esnafın Palalı Eylemi Hukuk Çerçevesinde,” *Yurt Gazetesi*, 8 July 2013: <http://www.yurtgazetesi.com.tr/politika/akp-esnafin-palali-eylemi-hukuk-cercevesinde-h38095.html>.

⁸ “Erdoğan ‘Camiye İçkiyle Girdiler’ İddiasını Tekrarladı,” *Hürriyet Gazetesi*, 10 June 2013: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/23468860.asp>.

further solidified beliefs in its supporters' minds that Gezi protesters were miscreants with ulterior, and often externally supported, anti-government motives. The government's strategic use of framing placed those who supported the Gezi movement in subversive company with foreign agents recognizable in Turkey as plotting the country's downfall. A common narrative stressed by AKP leaders was that foreign "lobbies" – from an interest rate lobby (*faiz lobisi*)⁹ to an Israel/Jewish lobby (*İsrail/Yahudi lobisi*)¹⁰ – were conspiring to prevent Turkey from becoming the powerful regional leader it deserved to be. In a country in which conspiracy theories are immensely popular (and often at least half-true), the idea that Gezi protesters – already named as hooligans and blamed for immoral behavior – could be organized and/or funded by scheming external forces proved too tantalizing to resist. Interviewees cited foreigners' presence during the protests – some of whom were deported – as evidence that Western agents were infiltrating Turkey in the hopes of creating enough instability to provoke a coup and thus unseat the AKP.¹¹ Given the U.S. involvement in previous cases of regime change in Turkey, the frame of Western-sponsored military coups proved an effective one in bringing the true motives of the protesters into question. Devastating economic crises exacerbated by currency speculators and the AKP's stoking of anti-Semitic flames during its rule in Turkey created plausible and logically coherent frames into which the opposition manifested during the Gezi protests could be placed.

Rhetorical Vilification as Foreign Policy Strategy

⁹ Barış Balcı, "Gezi' mi Faiz Lobisinden, Faiz mi Gezi'den?" *Hürriyet Gazetesi*, 11 June 2013: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gezi-mi-faiz-lobisinden-faiz-mi-gezi-den-23476867>.

¹⁰ "GEZİ Senaryosunu Yahudi Lobisi Yazdı, Yahudi Sermayesi Finans Etti," *Yeni Akit*, 13 June 2013: <http://www.yeniakit.com.tr/yazarlar/mehtap-yilmaz/gezi-senaryosunu-yahudi-lobisi-yazdi-yahudi-sermayesi-finanse-etti-bes-1803.html>.

¹¹ Author's interview with AKP official, Eskişehir, August 2013.

Just as the AKP wielded strategies of naming, blaming, and framing to delegitimize its opposition and rally its supporters around domestic incidents, Erdoğan employs rhetorical vilification in foreign policy to paint his adversaries – and even his allies – in a negative light. In his use of anti-Western vitriol, Turkey’s president satisfyingly sticks it to those who have criticized him for his increasing authoritarianism while also pleasing his nationalist base.

The most flagrant, but by no means only, example of naming is the comments made toward Dutch and German politicians referenced in the introduction to this paper. In one instance, which would come to be known as the “Tulip Crisis,” President Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavuşoğlu used insulting and inflammatory terms to refer to the Dutch following incumbent Prime Minister Mark Rutte’s decision not to allow Turkish politicians to enter the Netherlands to campaign ahead of Turkey’s April referendum. Perhaps fearing that he would look “soft” on Muslims in the run-up to his own national election in which he would vie against Islamophobe Geert Wilders, Rutte infuriated the AKP by refusing to allow Çavuşoğlu’s plane to land. The foreign minister responded with a reference typical of the AKP’s Ottoman Islamist identity: “Tulips were sent to the Netherlands during the time of the Ottoman Empire ... It seems those tulips couldn’t turn the racist politicians of the Netherlands into men.”¹² Erdoğan supported these hostile sentiments, claiming the Netherlands was made up of “fascists” and “Nazi remnants.”¹³ This language echoed insults he had hurled at Angela Merkel just two days

¹² “Uçuş İzni İptal Edilen Cavuşoğlu: Laleler İrkçi Siyasetçiler Adam Edememiş,” *BirGün.net*, 11 March 2017: <https://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/ucus-izni-iptal-edilen-cavusoglu-laleler-irkci-siyasetcileri-adam-edememis-150458.html>.

¹³ Turkish President Erdogan Calls Netherlands ‘Nazi Remnants, Fascists,’ *Reuters.com*, 11 March 2017: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-referendum-europe-erdogan/turkish-president-erdogan-calls-netherlands-nazi-remnants-fascists-idUSKBN16I0E7>.

earlier for similarly blocking Turkish politicians' attempts to garner referendum "Yes" votes among Turks in Germany.¹⁴

While some believed that Erdoğan would roll back from his aggressive rhetoric following the referendum, in which the Yes votes won by a tiny margin with massive electoral manipulation,¹⁵ the Turkish president's use of naming has only intensified, particularly towards Merkel. Resentful that Germany has refused to extradite what Turkey claims are Gülenists suspected of involvement in the coup plot, and incensed that Turkey's ambassador was summoned over the detainment of journalists and human rights activists who are German nationals, Erdoğan has doubled down on his Nazi naming. In what amounts to a spectacular case of the pot calling the kettle black, Erdoğan employed the term Nazi again in criticizing Merkel for politicizing Turkish relations in her own election campaign by asserting that Turkey's EU accession process should be terminated.¹⁶ Perhaps seeing that he did not have enough votes to win the referendum in a legitimate manner, Erdoğan decided to continue his rhetorical onslaught against EU countries in the hopes of rallying nationalist support for the next election in 2019.

To complement this strategy of naming, Erdoğan engages in blaming the EU for what he (and, to be fair, many others including myself as I have written elsewhere¹⁷) sees

¹⁴ Gardiner Harris and Victor Homola, "Merkel-Erdogan Dispute Ratchets Up before Turkish Referendum," *The New York Times*, 9 March 2017:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/09/world/europe/angela-merkel-recep-tayyip-erdogan.html?mtrref=www.nytimes.com&gwh=40B92697A24AAF32D4B4111030ED0851&gwt=pay>.

¹⁵ Patrick Kingsley, "Videos Fuel Charges of Fraud in Erdogan's Win in Turkey Referendum," *The New York Times*, 18 April 2017: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/18/world/europe/turkey-referendum-is-haunted-by-allegations-of-voter-fraud.html>.

¹⁶ "Erdogan Compares Merkel's Comments on Turkey's EU Bid to 'Nazism'," *Times of Israel*, 6 September 2017: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/erdogan-compares-merkels-comments-on-turkeys-eu-bid-to-nazism/>.

¹⁷ Rawan Arar, Lisel Hintz, and Kelsey P. Norman, "The Real Refugee Crisis Is in the Middle East, not Europe," *The Washington Post* (Monkey Cage blog), 14 May 2016: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/05/14/the-real-refugee-crisis-is-in-the-middle-east-not-europe/?utm_term=.2409143ef457.

as its shoddy handling of the Syrian refugee crisis. The Turkish president is quick to note that EU members have shirked their burden-sharing responsibilities – while Hungary closed its borders, for example, Slovakia declared it would only accept Christian refugees.¹⁸ Pro-AKP newspapers skewered what it called “disgraces of humanity,” putting the country’s claims to be acting on the basis of “volunteerism” in quotes to mock Slovakia’s unwillingness to host those who make up the vast majority of the refugee population.¹⁹ While the AKP has also taken steps such as pushing for safe zones to prevent greater numbers of refugees flowing into its own country²⁰ — and the consolidation of a Kurdish autonomous zone within Syria – the party emphasizes that the country exhibiting true volunteerism in the region is Turkey. Indeed, AKP leaders explicitly welcomed Syrian asylum seekers as their “brothers,” spending billions of dollars to set up camps to house them and even insisting that they should be offered citizenship.²¹ The government authorized the issuing of work permits to those who fulfilled the requirement qualifications,²² and ID cards facilitating access to free health care services were distributed.²³

Pointing to these humanitarian actions (while at the same time bargaining with the EU for money and concessions in return for agreeing to host Syrians who attempt to enter

¹⁸ Siobhan O’Grady, “Slovakia to EU: We’ll Take Migrants – If They’re Christians,” *Foreign Policy*, 19 August 2015: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/08/19/slovakia-to-eu-well-take-migrants-if-theyre-christians/>.

¹⁹ “İnsanlığın Yüzkaraları: Haçlı Slovakya, Hristiyan Olmayan Sığınmacı İstemiyor!” *Yeni Akat*, 20 August 2015: <http://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/insanligin-yuzkaralari-haclli-slovakya-hristiyan-olmayan-siginmaci-istemiyor-88154.html>.

²⁰ “Turkey Takes Measures against Refugee Flows from Syria, Iraq,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, 17 October 2016: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-takes-measures-against-refugee-flows-from-iraq-syria-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=105048&NewsCatID=352>.

²¹ “Erdoğan: Suriyeli Kardeşlerimize Vatandaşlık Vereceğiz,” *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*, 2 July 2016: http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/561675/Erdogan__Suriyeli_kardeslerimize_vatandaslik_verec_egiz.html.

²² “3,800 Syrian Refugees in Turkey Given Work Permits,” *Daily Sabah*, 22 May 2016: <https://www.dailysabah.com/economy/2016/05/23/3800-syrian-refugees-in-turkey-given-work-permits>.

²³ John Howe, “Medical Needs Growing for Syrian Refugees in Turkey,” *ProjectHope.org*, 11 February 2015: <http://www.projecthope.org/news-blogs/In-the-Field-blog/2015/medical-needs-growing-for.html>.

Europe's borders), Turkish leaders stake their claim as being ethical leaders on refugee issues. Seeking regional and domestic public approval of its actions, Turkey showcased its "open door policy" while blaming EU leaders for passing the buck. Ankara's willingness to take in the refugees has given the AKP a sense of "occupying the moral high ground" in the face of EU reluctance, while deflecting attention from the fact that Turkey continues to threaten to flood Europe with refugees if it does not fulfill Turkey's demands.²⁴ In the same speech in which he demanded that the EU be more forthcoming with the funds it promised Turkey in exchange for taking back E.U.-bound Syrians, for example, Erdoğan used this moral superiority to chastise the United Nations. He called the organization's 455 million euros in aid to Turkey "shameful" when the country had purportedly spent 10 billion on hosting refugees.²⁵

Erdoğan's criticism of international, and particularly Western institutions scores him significant political points at home, while underscoring his party's often conspiracy theory-laced narrative that the West seeks to undermine Turkey's aspirations as a rising regional power – a comment that veers into the framing strategy discussed below.²⁶ His wife Emine's speech to the Washington-based SETA Foundation while he spoke at a summit on nuclear security also staked Turkey's strong claim to moral high ground in the face of international reticence. She placed clear blame on the inaction of the West, stating that "those who died on the Mediterranean's shores did not grab the attention of the

²⁴ Benjamin Bilgen, "Leaked G20 Documents Reveal Blackmail, Bargaining, and Tension between the EU and Turkey," *IndependentTurkey.org*, 23 March 2016: <http://independentturkey.org/leaked-g20-documents-reveal-blackmail-bargaining-and-tension-between-turkey-and-the-eu/>.

²⁵ "Erdoğan'dan AB'ye Mülteci Krizi Tepkisi: Alnımızda Enayi Yazmıyor," *BBC Türkçe.com*, 11 February 2016: http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/02/160211_erdogan_omer_celik_multeciler_aciklama.

²⁶ Kristin Fabbe and Kim Guiler, "Why Are there So Many Conspiracy Theories about the Turkish Coup?" *The Washington Post* (Monkey Cage blog), 19 July 2016: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/07/19/why-there-are-so-many-conspiracy-theories-about-the-turkish-coup/?utm_term=.63de60ccaf36.

modern world, of human and women's rights organizations, sadly because they were Syrian. Please permit me to express my pride that, in such an environment, my country opened its doors to three million migrants without hesitating at all."²⁷

Frustrated with, and suspicious of the West in general — sentiments stemming from the stalled EU accession process and NATO's unwillingness to target the regime of Erdoğan's friend-turned-enemy Bashar al-Assad, to criticisms of the AKP's increasingly authoritarian behavior to the US' refusal immediately to extradite Fethullah Gülen— the issue of refugees became a convenient platform from which to blame Western actors for their immoral inaction. Casting international critics of Turkey in an unfavorable light also helps to delegitimize their influence over public opinion and rally support for the government back home.

Finally, in a strategy complementary to the practices of naming and blaming, Erdoğan uses framing to externalize opposition to his regime. In doing so, he grafts on to pre-existing narratives of foreign intervention in Turkish politics. From Allied attempts to carve up Ottoman territory with the Treaty of Sèvres to US and European support of Kurdish autonomy to beliefs about Israeli and interest rate lobbies fueling the Gezi protests noted above, Turks are understandably wary of intervention by outsiders. Conspiracy theories run deep,²⁸ some of which likely have some validity. The suspicion of foreigners that is omnipresent in Turkish society — juxtaposed somewhat incongruously with the hospitality (*misafirperverlik*) that Turks show to guests — lends weight to explanations of foreign meddling in Turkish affairs.

²⁷ "Emine Erdoğan, 'Suriyeli Mülteciler Krizi' Paneline Katıldı," posted on the website of the Turkish government, 30 March 2016: <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/41329/emine-erdogan-suriyeli-multeciler-krizi-paneline-katildi.html>.

²⁸ Fabbe and Guiler.

The framing of the 15 July 2016 coup attempt as putsch by outsiders to thwart the increasing power of Erdoğan and his “New Turkey” thus fits well onto extant, deep-seated beliefs in much of society about Turkey’s enemies. While the AKP has named Gülen as the prime culprit and has designated his followers as members of FETÖ – Fethullahist Terror Organization – party members also frame the US as complicit in, or at least cognizant of, the unsuccessful putsch. Justice Minister Bekir Bozdağ for example, claimed that the US’ denial about having any knowledge of the coup plot “ridicules the minds of people across the world and in Turkey” [sic].²⁹ In perpetuating the frame of external meddling, Turkey has detained foreigners the government believes to have Gülenist links. In addition to the German nationals mentioned above, US pastor Andrew Brunson has been in prison for nearly a year on charges on being a member of a terror organization. Pro-AKP media has embraced the ever-present frame in Turkish society that missionaries, academics, and other foreigners interested in Turkey must be spies; one headline proclaimed that if the coup attempt had been successful, Brunson would have become head of the CIA.³⁰ This frame of US involvement is highly useful to Erdoğan both in rallying anti-American and anti-imperialist sentiment in his political favor, as well as providing an excuse for why his ardent efforts to have Gülen extradited have continued to fail.

Complications for Action in the Middle East

²⁹ “Turkey Points Out CIA’s ‘More Evidence’ on Gülen,” AA.com, 19 August 2016: <http://aa.com.tr/en/politics/turkey-points-out-cias-more-evidence-on-gulen/631743>.

³⁰ Mevlut Yüksel, “15 Temmuz Başarılı Olsaydı CIA’nın Başına Gececekti,” Takvim.com, 20 May 2017: <http://www.takvim.com.tr/guncel/2017/05/20/15-temmuz-basarili-olsaydi-cianin-basina-gececekti>.

Given this powerful, multifaceted use of rhetorical vilification by Turkey's AKP against the EU and the US, it is unsurprising that efforts to coordinate action in the Middle East are plagued by rancor. To be sure, conflicting interests such as the US' military support of the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), whom Turkey views as a terrorist group inseparable from the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and Turkey's rapprochements with Russia and Iran also pose major obstacles to collaboration on issue areas such as the fight against ISIS and the fallout from the Syrian civil war. But words matter. While Trump does not yet seem to have grasped that Erdoğan has framed the coup attempt as being a product of US desires to see Turkey weakened on the global stage – indeed, the US president's bizarrely positive comment that the Turkish leader is “getting very high marks” indicates an utter lack of knowledge about the state of affairs in general³¹ – anyone who watched his recent speech at the United Nations General Assembly could imagine what chaos might ensue if Trump believed Erdoğan was criticizing him. Thin-skinned buffoonery aside, the naming and blaming targeted at the EU have tangible, detrimental effects on pressing issues that concern both sides. Potential solutions to the Syrian refugee crisis for example, a product of both of these conflicts, suffer from the growing hostility between Turkey and EU countries that hinders fruitful negotiations.

³¹ Abdullah Ayasun, “Trumps Praise for Erdogan Has Nothing to Do with Actual State of Relations,” *The Globe Post*, 24 September 2017: <http://www.theglobepost.com/2017/09/24/trump-erdogan-meeting/>.