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### **Justification of Ethnic Violence in Turkey: Political Rhetoric at the Aftermath of the Peace Process**

*ABSTRACT: The article draws on the speeches made by the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan between the June and November general elections of 2015, to understand how ethnic violence was justified at the aftermath of the Kurdish Peace Process. Contrary to the expectations of the civil war literature, President's rhetoric depicts an explicit inclusiveness towards the Kurdish ethnic identity, refraining from inciting fear and hatred towards the ethnic group. The analysis demonstrates that violence was justified first through the treatment of nation as an affective community; and second, through the discursive framing of ethnic violence as national in essence. Agents who oppose government's policies and particularly the Kurdish Movement were gradually contaminated and identified as the nation's enemy through association with historically constituted existential threats. Borrowing the framework of "intelligibility" from affect theory, I argue these articulations were enabled and can be understood as part of a logical landscape shared by the community defined as the nation. Through the analysis of the President's use of the concepts: nation, state, and enemy, I sketch the relevant sections of this landscape. I find that the identification of agents in and out of the political community is both fluid and historically tethered: It depends on the assertion of unity and homogeneity within the community delineated as the nation; an absolute harmony between the nation, the state, and the government; and the conflation of various forms of dissent into one identity described as the enemy. While the references to popular historical narratives and the persistent ambiguity demonstrate how the violence fits into a larger narrative of the present, the entirety of the Turkish case suggests that the rhetorician may be enjoying more leeway than suggested in the existing accounts on the justification of violence.*

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## **I. Introduction**

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012, the head of the Turkish National Intelligence Organization paid an official visit to the Imralı Prison-Island, where Abdullah Öcalan, the symbolic leader of the Kurdish Movement in Turkey, has been detained for the last nineteen years. Öcalan was the founder of the PKK<sup>1</sup> with whom the country has been engaged in an armed conflict that produced substantial military and civilian casualties in the last 40 years. The meetings with Ocalan evolved into a series of negotiations between the government and the Kurdish movement. The years following 2013 came to be known as the Peace Process, during which both belligerents honored a ceasefire, and tangible steps were taken for further inclusion of the citizens with Kurdish ethnic origin.<sup>2</sup>

This period of ceasefire and dialogue came to an end after the June 2015 general elections, when the incumbent Justice and Development Party (JDP) failed to secure a single-party government. After the attempts to form a coalition government failed, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced the decision to repeat the elections in November. The end of the coalition negotiations coincided with the launching of a series of “security operations,” beginning with a nation-wide counter-terrorism operation on July 24<sup>th</sup>. The JDP government mounted a series of military operations and particularly with the establishment of “temporary military security zones” the violence escalated drastically: densely populated areas were shelled with heavy artillery, whole neighborhoods were razed, and half a million of citizens were displaced in the Southeast. By 2016, the number of battle related deaths exceeded one thousand.<sup>3</sup> Alongside the physical violence that was concentrated in the Southeast, the Kurdish political party, which then held 14.5% of the seats in the Turkish Grand National Assembly, was represented as inadequate and unworthy of parliamentary politics; and those who criticized the government from the media, academia, and the parliament were branded as traitors.

How was it possible for the government to justify its policies to its domestic constituents despite the lack of developments that warranted violence in the course of the negotiations? This question guides my exploration of the significant political and symbolic work that enabled the government to move away from the Peace Process and to justify broad acts of exclusion and violence between the June and November elections of 2015. The period after the July 24 security operation was characterized by the violent suppression of the Kurdish Movement in Turkey and a denial of basic constitutional rights to citizens living in the Southeastern regions, despite the discursive and material efforts of the Peace Process to provide the Kurdish ethnic identity an equal standing, and despite minimal armed conflict prior to July 2015. The memories of the civil war with the frequent bloody mass-civilian casualty attacks that had marked daily life until the end of 2012 were still fresh. Yet, the government's decision to restart the conflict was not countered with sweeping protest, and JDP increased its electoral support in the November elections.<sup>4</sup>

To make sense of this political shift and its justification, I examine the speeches of President Erdogan. Although Turkey was a parliamentary democracy at the time of these events with the prime minister as the head of the executive and the office of the president as merely the symbolic head of the state, President Erdogan was the most prominent figure in Turkish politics.<sup>5</sup> Having held the office of the Prime Minister as the head of single-party governments since 2002, he consolidated power at the expense of the ruling cadres of the JDP, and became the main interlocutor of both pro-government and opposition media. Furthermore, contrary to the civil war literature's claim that authoritarian leaders indulge in violent policies due to their low degree of accountability towards the constituents, Erdogan addresses the public frequently to frame recent developments and justify government's reactions.<sup>6</sup> As other forms of storytelling, these speeches provide the community's interpretation of the observed events, and provide the opportunity to understand how

the significant political changes and departure from normalized relations with the Kurds that have characterized the JDP regime after July 2015 made sense for the public. In order to conduct this analysis, I collected the speeches given by the President between June and November 2015 from the online archives, annotated 93 of these, and approached them as any other cultural text intended for an audience.<sup>7</sup>

I argue that violence is justified specifically for the members of an *affective community* through the invocation and reinforcement of an *interpretive framework* which can be unraveled through an analysis of the concepts: “nation,” “enemy,” and “state.” The assumptions regarding the meanings of these recurring concepts—observed in their use—are central to the specific interpretation of events that enable the justification of violence in Turkey.<sup>8</sup> My argument is twofold.

First, I argue that the nation in these speeches is represented as an affective community, membership to which is determined based on the agent’s partaking in the assumptions on the nature and the borders of the state, nation, and the enemy. To be exact, nation is not merely represented as an affective community for the manipulation of its members through producing a sense of solidarity or any other shared feeling: Nation becomes an affective community because membership itself is determined based on the agent’s participation in the interpretive framework. Here, membership does not indicate a natural or constructed identification of the individual; instead, it is an assertion based on the agent’s behavior that positions him within the borders of the nation or outside it. I use the concept “virtual” to define this mode of membership, as the identity—as a member of the nation or the enemy—is not fixed at the present moment that encompasses the speech. The speeches conflate actions into identities, as if the agent in question was already a member of the nation or the enemy at the original moment of action. This assertion itself is considered a revelation of what that agent’s true nature has always been, rather than as an

interpretation of the observed action, a claim on one's intentions, or a normative judgement.<sup>9</sup> The inability to participate into the shared assumptions on the nature and purpose of the political community voids the rhetoric of explanative traction, and as the acts of state—including the violence—are justified in the name of the nation, the inability to demonstrate the appraisal expected from a member results in the positioning of the dissenter outside the borders of the nation. This virtual configuration of individuals and groups on the nation-enemy pendulum has two cascading effects. First, it justifies violence towards certain agents by marking them as the enemy. Secondly, it delegitimizes those who dispute violent policies as interlocutors in the public sphere which is reserved for the members of the nation.

Second, I argue that violence which is predominantly ethnic—in terms of its victims and purpose—is nationalized in order to be justified. Erdogan's rhetoric does not exclude or incite violence towards the Kurdish as an ethnic group, and can even explicitly envelop Kurdishness within the borders of the nation. Instead, the rhetoric represents violence as the necessary act of a compassionate and vigilant state, carried out for the purpose of service and protection, exerted within the nation's ongoing struggle against its enemies. For this end, speeches conflate various acts of dissent ranging from parliamentary opposition to armed insurgency into enmity. Agents are identified as reasonable targets of violence through attribution of an innate identity—as a member of the nation or the enemy—based on the alignment of their assumed interests and desires with the policies of the government.<sup>10</sup> I liken this process to contamination, because benefiting from the considerable ambiguity and fluidity in the borders of the concepts, the rhetoric identifies the enemies through association with historically constituted commonsensical threats. This historicity inherent in the identification of the enemy also demonstrates that while there is an antagonistic relation between the nation and the enemy, this relation does not constitute the concepts on its own.

Both concepts carry significant symbolic work that is rooted in the interpretive framework, going beyond the contemporary performance of the President.

The effect of the president's rhetoric should be understood not as an act of persuasion or manipulation, but as a daily reinforcement of the *interpretive framework* that is shared by the members of the nation, and forging of creative associations through this network in line with the government's interests. In order to explain this dual process I draw from the work of the cultural theorist Lauren Berlant, who engages with *genres*. According to Berlant, genres "provide an affective expectation of the experience of watching something unfold, whether that thing is in life or in art."<sup>11</sup> This idea of genre-based expectations becomes much less obscure if we consider an audience's perception of a movie scene. The image of a man watching a jogger in the park, or a protagonist entering an empty room will be interpreted completely differently based on whether the genre is romantic comedy or horror. The audience, as observing the same scene will attribute different meanings to the scene, expect different events to follow, or not even consider the scene as an event in itself. Berlant further argues that "We assume our position as subjects in a world and therefore *it is in us* as a structuring condition for apprehending anything" and this reciprocity with the world shapes "what becomes our visceral intuition about how to manage living."<sup>12</sup> I draw from Berlant's theory to analyze the influence of the interpretive framework on judgement, for contrary to other branches of affect theory, she argues that the intuition is a trained aspect of human action, influenced by language, normative ideology, embodied practices of discipline, and any other form of history.<sup>13</sup>

The genre, or the interpretive framework, can be understood as a pattern of intelligibility shared by members of the affective community, which facilitates a way of making sense of the ordinary and moves individuals, without compelling them to act in a predetermined way.<sup>14</sup> In terms of the

Turkish case, those identified as members of the “nation” constitute such an affective community and share a way of interpreting the daily events.<sup>15</sup> These moments of interpretation can be conscious or unconscious, such as affiliation of various agents and actions with each other, construction of shared expectations or feelings of belonging, making sense of daily experiences through the same abstractions; and they can be observed through associations of concepts, widely acknowledged metaphors and metonyms, and analyzing how abstract constructions (such as the nation and the enemy) function.<sup>16</sup> These linguistic formulations are sediments of a past that influence the ways individuals are affected by new experiences, and being selected for the speeches that are intended for the “nation,” they reveal the structure of the interpretive framework its members are assumed to share.

The rhetoric of President Erdogan displays that within this interpretive framework, the nation and the enemy are used with a consistent ambiguity, as concepts without concrete borders, enabling the virtuality of identifications. Yet, the scopes of these concepts are not arbitrary either: The concepts hold the traces of a commonsensical, shared historical knowledge, and identification of an individual as a member of either group is through a particular work of interpretation based on these sediments. Through the analysis of the speeches made by the President, I hope to describe the logical landscape—the space both in which and through which thinking occurs, narratives make sense, and individuals are positioned as members of social groups. These speeches not only report or distort facts, provide a formal state narrative, and attempt to convince or manipulate the public; they also simultaneously invoke and contribute to the ongoing construction of an imagination, a way of thinking, of making sense of the events. Demonstrating the relation between these historical references and the ambiguous borders of the nation-enemy dyad is a central aim of the analysis, as it reveals how political rhetoric works without being essentially didactic.

Approaching the use of the concepts nation, enemy, and state in the discourse from the perspective of intelligibility, addresses a tension in the civil war literature between the two main lines of thinking on ethnic conflict: the ontological and constructivist arguments. The first—the ontological argument—puts forward that having a constitutive “other” defined around a certain difference (such as ethnicity or religion) is fundamental to any polity, as it marks the borders of the community. Developed by Carl Schmitt, and elaborated by Chantal Mouffe, the ontological argument gets translated into the literature on ethnic conflict in the form of ethnic antipathy arguments. These come either in the form of primordialism—the assertion that a group is the natural enemy of a people—or with the acceptance that enmity is historically constituted and leveraged in rhetoric strategically. In both forms, the “ethnic antipathy” arguments refer to an underlying mechanism of dislike intense enough to cancel the imagined fraternal ties to explain polarization.<sup>17</sup> In these accounts, if there is a space designated for the agency of the leader, it is not at the content of the binaries articulated and cleavages employed in the founding narratives, but in the intensity of the enmity’s mobilization within discourse.<sup>18</sup>

The second—constructivism—does not merely argue that the enmity is constructed at some point prior to the conflict. Such arguments that explain ethnic conflict on a broadly defined conception of culture and the following mobilizations in the rhetoric still fall under the ethnic antipathy approach. Expressed succinctly by Rogers Brubaker and David Laitin, constructivism argues that: “The ‘ethnic’ quality of ethnic violence is not intrinsic to the act itself; it emerges through after-the-fact interpretive claims.”<sup>19</sup> While initially emphasizing the responsibility of the social scientists in the study of ethnic conflict and the necessity of disaggregating the complex phenomena clumped as ethnic conflict in quantitative analysis, the constructivists end up arguing that ethnic conflict is ethnic only to the extent that the justification of the enmity or the violence is framed through ethnic



difference. Accordingly, states as well as non-state groups armed or civilian use ethnic categories to frame their actions and their purpose, making the conflict ethnic, reifying the borders and the distinctiveness off the groups.<sup>20</sup>

I would like to suggest that these perspectives engaging with ethnicity as an analytical category present a similar inability to suture the past with the present. The ontological account's explanation of conflict through various friend-enemy antagonisms take ethnic identification as a given at the moment of analysis; while the constructivist argument presents an understanding of ethnic identification with a relative disregard for the historical narratives and social constructions outlining the present moment, to the extent that ethnic identification appears as an arbitrary assertion of political agents. In the former, whether the identification of an individual or a group within the ethnic category is due to a natural distinction (primordialism) or a historical construct normalized within the hegemonic discourse, the identities are assumed to be fixed (in other words, "real"). Neither the determination of their scopes through the discourse nor the apprehension of the violence by the community are analyzed. Why would at a certain period in time a certain enmity gain traction for the community? And how would such a category of enmity justify violent policies that are directed to groups larger than the initial scope of the category? Conversely, the constructivist account argues that ethnicity as a category is realized only in its effects, functioning as a justification of inequality in itself. Conflicts are merely perceived or labeled as ethnic in various discourses. Are ethnic justifications of violence merely the choice of the governments made from a myriad of options? Furthermore, would not such an approach inflict another layer of violence over those who actually identify with the ethnic category? Particularly in the Turkish case, constructivism end up diminishing the selective use of violence in the Southeast and the Kurdish victims in Ankara and Istanbul.<sup>21</sup> Instead of the rigidity of the ontological argument and the

arbitrariness of the constructivist account, approaching the ethnic identification of agents considering the affective community's shared sense of intelligibility and the creative work of the political rhetoric offers an account that does not rule out the political and dynamic nature of the issue.

Secondly, I will argue that both approaches converge in an assumption of uniformity: their implicit argument is that members of the community understand the group distinctions in the same way, which disregards the plurality of perspectives within the political community. These perspectives may not be recited at the speaker's representation of events—which heavily assume uniformity—but they should be taken into consideration at the level of reception. Particularly in the Turkish case, the rhetoric is structured so that the borders between the friend and the enemy is based on individual's agreement with the government's narrative of the present: both its policies and their justifications. While there is no argument of causality I would like to make, the observation is that compliance and membership becomes synonymous, as those who do not comply reveal their essence as the enemy of the polity by doing so. Therefore, the analysis of the speeches should consider not only to the face value of the arguments but also the underlying assumptions about who constitutes the political community; what is the relationship of the state, the government, the ruling party, and the president to this community; and the function and use of the enemy. The borders of the political community are drawn around those who share these assumptions, hence acknowledging the lack of uniformity in perception is the first and most important step in understanding how groupism works. In the following section, I will analyze the use of the concepts nation, state, and enemy, to substantiate these arguments.

## II. Nation, State, and the Enemy: The Logical Landscape of Erdogan's Speeches

In this section, I will analyze the section of the logical landscape shared by the affective community that enables the rhetoric to justify ethnic violence without apparent recourse to inimical claims on the Kurdish ethnic identity. Violence was justified through the invocation—both in forms of restoration and initiation—of subtle relations between actions and arguments that curtail JDP's interests, and being an *enemy of the nation*. This broad contamination was possible first through the assumption of a unison between the political community -delineated as the nation-, the state, and the JDP government, observed in the form of ambiguous boundaries between these entities. The idea of the existential threat theorized within the ontological argument then appears in multiple forms, based on the historically constituted and familiar animosities of “the West”, the “terror,” and the threat of “division” the nation faces. Identification of agents as members of the nation or its enemy through the interpretation of their actions, justify the violence as the necessary protection of the nation by the state.

Critical to Erdogan's discourse is the political community labelled as the “nation” and its representation as a unified group which encompasses citizens of every ethnic background. Erdogan consistently and frequently declares that the “nation is a medley . . . with its Turks, Kurds, Lazis, Circassians, Georgians, Abkhazians, Romanis, Bosnians, no matter whom, we embraced 78 million, with the understanding ‘to love the one created for the love of the Creator.’”<sup>22</sup> The Kurdish citizens are not only included explicitly within the borders of the concept, they are listed among other ethnic groups as one among many, suggesting there is no need for differentiation. This inclination to absorb the ethnic identity within the nation and the disregard for the specific demands made by the Kurdish movement culminates in the declaration “Turkey does not have a Kurdish problem, it has a terror problem . . . of course, as all the ethnic constituents, my Kurdish brothers

as well, have troubles, expectations.”<sup>23</sup> Through this formulation, Erdogan not only certifies his acknowledgement of the Kurdish movement’s demands, he also de-constitutes them as an ethnic group, and remolds them from the frame of a distinct social group into an indiscernible collectivity within the “nation.”

In the construction of nation as a unified entity, another revealing formulation is the articulation of its members as “brothers.”<sup>24</sup> The use of brotherhood, and the possessive as well as familial formulation of “our [*or my*] Kurdish brothers” is frequent in the speeches, to the extent that the concept becomes a substitute for “citizen.”<sup>25</sup> Addressing the nation as a brotherhood aligns the grammar of the nation with the “family,” signaling a relationship that is natural (biological), undeniable, and ideally amicable. Through this formulation the nation is imagined as a family, bounded with feelings of love and intimacy towards each member of the union. The conflicts are in return represented as “fights between brothers”: unavoidable, but temporary and unnatural.<sup>26</sup> The understanding of the separatist civil war as a brotherly conflict brings forth additional implications: First, the unnaturalness of the conflict signals the influence of forces that originate outside the immediate family, setting brothers off against each other; second, the state appears in this conflict as a third party that becomes involved after the fighting has begun, as a patriarch that has no culpability in the emergence of the conflict but present only to restore peace and bring the brothers together. These functions then become influential in the understanding of the enemy and the state respectively, as the Peace Process is represented as the “sincere intention” of the state which was –regrettably– “exploited” and “taken advantage of.”<sup>27</sup>

In support of the understanding of the nation as a unified entity, and establishing its relation with the state is the attribution of feelings and desires to the concept, as if it is an agent. Accordingly, the nation desires peace, tranquility, welfare, and development; and it depends on the state to satisfy

these desires.<sup>28</sup> It has interests, which are not only fulfilled by the state, but in fact expressed by the state. Erdogan frequently iterates that these desires and interests become tangible through the elections, in which the nation gives its “consent,” and its “will” becomes apparent.<sup>29</sup> Importantly, there is no plurality in these emotions, interests, desires, or will, hence, there is no accounting for any dissent or opposition. The idea of unison is followed into two logical consequences regarding diverging voices: These individuals are either brothers set astray by outside forces; or they must be located outside the borders of the group understood as the nation.

At the beginning of June, 2015 there are only two such groups juxtaposed to the nation based on diverging desires and interests: the West, and the terrorist organizations (PKK, DHKP-C and ISIS)<sup>30</sup>. Yet, as the coalition talks after the June 7<sup>th</sup> election dwindles, the Kurdish political party in the parliament (PDP<sup>31</sup>) was also approached with increasing ambivalence. The nation appears as unconnected with the opposition parties in the parliament, and becomes amalgamated with the state, the JDP, and the president. While the PDP is represented as “the political party that leans on the terrorist organization,” and the main opposition Republican People’s Party on the “military tutelage,” the JDP is accentuated as the party that “leans on” and “finds strength from the nation.”<sup>32</sup> The days after the 15<sup>th</sup> of July exhibit the speeches in which Erdogan reports (literally as a spokesperson of the nation) that the “nation’s patience” is diminishing towards the PDP. Couple days later on July 24<sup>th</sup>, the morning after the night of the first large scale military operations, the Peace Process is officially declared “on halt” on the grounds that the “good will of the nation” and “the nation’s sincerity” has been “exploited.”<sup>33</sup> These operations mark a stark transformation in the representation of PDP, and the broad inclusion of the identities previously affiliated with the nation within the borders of the “enemy.” For instance, the media as a group was requested to demonstrate “sensitivity/ sensitivity,”<sup>34</sup> to “demonstrate unity and togetherness, to be supportive.” After the

protests on the July 24<sup>th</sup> operations, other groups appear to coagulate among the nation and get expelled through their juxtaposition with nodes of established animosity such as “terror”: “From the terrorists, to all the so-called politicians, so-called intellectuals, so-called NGO representatives; the state of the Turkish Republic has the power to bring everybody to account for the blood of our martyrs.”<sup>35</sup>

These formulations provide a first glance at the ambiguity of the concept’s borders, in terms of who is included and who might be considered outside. Hence the relationship of the nation and the enemy is at once given and in flux: agents are represented with already established identities in or out of the nation, but are also subject to re-identification within the rhetoric. This capacity of seamless reidentification, and the claim to legitimacy that remains undisturbed despite the exerted violence are predominantly enabled by the particular usage of the concept “state.” Reminiscent of Carl Schmitt’s prescription for a functioning democracy—read populism—unity is assumed to be both within the nation and between the rulers and the ruled, observed through the single “will” shared by the sovereign and the people.<sup>36</sup> Erdogan argues that the office of the president is the very symbol of this unity, on occasion responding to his critics as “the president is the nation.”<sup>37</sup> Here, the word for president in Turkish becomes useful to his account. The concept for the “president” in Turkish (*cumhurbaşkanı*) is a composite of the two words meaning “the people” and “the chief” or “president.” The latter word also has its roots in the word for “the head.” Hence, the concept designates not only a leader of the people quite literally, but makes use of an age-old anthropomorphic metaphor. Furthermore, this interpretation of presidency implicit in the language was reinforced through the 2007 constitutional amendment. Changing the method of election from parliamentary vote to direct vote, the Erdogan government emphasized the office of the president, which was a symbolic position up until 2007, as a seat of direct delegation. In accordance with this

new found source of legitimacy, in his 2015 speeches Erdogan frequently emphasizes his position as the first President of Turkey elected with the direct vote of the nation, and declares it his authority and responsibility to address nation's needs.<sup>38</sup>

Represented as an institution with paternalistic qualities, the state holds the duty to serve and protect the nation. Compared to the vulnerable nation who is under constant threat from its enemies, the vigilant state aspires for continuous development and amelioration of the nation's status.<sup>39</sup> While the source of these threats are kept as intangible as possible, the function of service is elaborated densely. As the nation desires peace, welfare, and development, the state aims to provide these through a continuous effort. This continuity of service then contributes to strengthening the association between the state and the JDP: The party's deeds during its term are emphasized, with the argument that JDP has been on a single "path" since 2002, the year of the party's first electoral victory. The preferred phrases stress movement and continuity such as "advancing," "walking," and "taking the steps towards," with a particular emphasis on "being determined."<sup>40</sup> These alludes are exemplified by frequently reciting the party's deeds since 2002, predominantly including narratives of economic development, infrastructure and construction projects, and the increased number of airports and universities across the country.

Through this emphasis on service, the JDP appears as the corporeal representative of the abstract "state" faced by the opposition whose objective is to halt the movement. Objections to the government policies appear meaningless and confusing if not essentially inimical, due to the exerted unison between the interests of the JDP, the state, and the nation. This essentiality is articulated further through the argument that demonstrations of the state's strength (such as violence or stringent foreign policy), causes the opposition parties to be "jealous", and the nation's enemies to become ever more spiteful. Accusing RPP with elitism and a failure to become one with

the nation, Erdogan argues that unlike RPP, JDP has not discriminated between the eastern and western regions of the country. These juxtapositions reinforce the link between the opposition and the enemy as a logical equivalence, and posit JDP on the opposite side of the pendulum with the nation.

The specificity of the services provided by the compassionate state is supported with juxtaposition of the Turkish state with several negative examples. The Syrian refugee crisis and discussions on foreign aid as philanthropy versus responsibility being central topics at this time, the increased amount of foreign aid<sup>41</sup> as well as the provision of further help to Syrian refugees in the form of accepting them as “guests” (clearly omitting the precarity of their legal status) find great detail in the speeches.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, particularly the Syrian refugee crisis transforms into a criticism of the West, stressing that unlike the Turkish state, they merely talk but never act. The 1.8 million refugees Turkey hosts at this date is compared to the 200,000 hosted by the West, emphasizing the charitable nature of the state vis a vis the cruelty of the West despite their humanitarian discourse. However, the representation of the West as the negative example was subject to change with the changing political climate. Once the military operations against the PKK and the security operations in the Southeastern regions start, the humanitarian aspect of the refugee crisis and the West’s inadequacy emphasized in the earlier speeches leaves its place to ISIS and the Assad government as the perpetrators of the civil war in Syria, for this time the interest of the government lies in requesting financial aid and intelligence from the same “West.”<sup>43</sup>

The comparison of JDP and Erdogan to the Assad regime who failed to protect its people from foreign enemies, supports the image of the Turkish state as a vigilant agent, and the necessity for vigilance itself. Together with the unity of the nation and the unison between the state, the party, and the president, the image of the vigilant state sustains several logical connections: the state



which is benevolent and selfless, cannot be corrupt or pursue interests that are not in line with the nation's; being on a steady path to protect the peace and welfare of the nation, it cannot desire war or inflict violence without due cause; as the agent of development and construction, it cannot destroy the same roads, schools, or hospitals. The close connection of the compassionate and vigilant state and the vulnerable nation provides a frame for interpreting the ongoing violence. In return, membership to the nation is through participating into this framework, having a certain common sense through which events appear as the state protecting the nation as it has always been.

The last node that considerably influences the particular identification of subjects and contributes to the justification of violence is the concept of the "enemy." The enemy in Erdogan's speeches is rarely identified with precision, accounting blame or inciting hatred towards specific social groups. Instead, as Carl Schmitt argues, it is defined as the existential threat to the political community which finds the form of "the nation" in the case.<sup>44</sup> As sketched in the previous sections, the enemy is not used in the leader's discourse as a static entity at the moment of discourse's articulation, in fact it lacks specific references on terms of time, location, and agency. This lack of specificity leaves the individual actions and intentions as represented within the rhetoric the central criteria for judging one's identity vis a vis the nation and the enemy. Hence, in talking of the enemies of the nation, Erdogan frequently uses metaphors and metonyms such as "external forces," "dark hands," "dark forces," "dirty ideals," "dirty organizations" and so on, ensuring that the collectivity branded with animosity is not defined or bounded.<sup>45</sup> The ambiguity and the fluidity of such formulations provide consistency to Erdogan's changing narrative of the nation-enemy distinction over time, enabling the gradual contamination of individuals and groups with the notion of enmity.

Around the fundamental desire to disempower the Turkish nation and the state, the enemy may be located both within the geographical borders of the country or outside. The internal enemy is

represented as one who refuses to work for the benefit of the nation, while trying to hinder the attempts of those who in fact have been doing such work, such as the political parties, journals and associations affiliated with the opposition. As the interests of the government evolve, the specific agents also change. The external enemy tries to shape the political landscape of the region Turkey is a part of, through both direct intervention and through the naïve “brothers” within the nation. Broadly, Erdogan refers to “terror” and the “West” throughout the speeches as embodiments of the internal and external enemy respectively. Yet, while they share the desire –as well as the method– of “dividing the country,” their exact configuration weave a complicated web in relation to the nation and the state.

While the construction of the enemy is both historical and circumstantial, its existence is not time-bound, which contributes to its ambiguity and enables the shifting identification of agents as enemies. The first indicator of this construction is the representation of conflict as “fights between brothers” as mentioned in the previous section. In accordance with theme of brothers, Erdogan frequently refers to Cain and Abel, emphasizing the ever-presence of enemies and claiming that the state’s responsibility is to minimize the negative effects.<sup>46</sup> In support of this ever-presence, the speeches deploy examples that range from the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, which is framed as the beginning of the Turkish presence in Anatolia<sup>47</sup>, far into contemporary Iraq and Syria, represented as war torn countries fallen prey to the plots of Western countries. The Western desire to divide the nation and disempower the state is ever-present, caused by historical grievances such as the Seljuk defeat of the Byzantines, and the former glory of the Ottoman Empire. The Western concern and fear of Turkey is represented as reignited in the face of the “new Turkey” under the tenure of the JDP, which is becoming more powerful every day with its steady economic growth, increasing volume of foreign aid, and strong voice on matters concerning its region. Therefore, the episodes

with increased attention from the enemy, including criticism of the government's policies from western European countries and international organizations, are represented as a source of pride, an indication that “we are doing something right.”<sup>48</sup>

As a result of the temporal and spatial effervescence of the enmity, the shared desire and method of “division” appears as an anchor that brings together disparate agents around the mantle. The emphasis on the act of “division” as the enemy's ambition, reinforces the assumed unity of the nation, positing the disruption of unity as an existential threat. In the earlier speeches during the coalition talks—while the main embodiment of “terror” was ISIS and not the PKK—the West presents a prominent source of this desire. It is represented as responsible in the rise of ISIS; and more broadly, it is represented as a puppet master behind the conflicts affecting the Middle-East. Frequent alludes to colonialism and recollections of the World War I with the Sevres Treaty which partitioned the Middle East and Anatolia respectively are used as evidence towards this representation of the West with the desire to divide the nations of the region.

As the armed conflict unfolds in the Southeast and the PKK acquires more traction as the enemy, West continues to appear in Erdogan's narrative in the form of a non-Muslim antagonist, an external power inciting violence, and provoking conflict among brothers, “as they have always done in our region.”<sup>49</sup> During a speech on August 12<sup>th</sup>, as the violence in the Southeast escalated into curfews which would eventually result in the depopulation of the area, Erdogan frames the threat of division posed by the West in the following way:

... there is a crescent that starts from Pakistan; moves through Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq; reaches to Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Libya, which then continues... What is the issue in all these places? The disuniting of the people living in these lands, their division . . . Those who live in these territories are brothers . . . this is the interesting bit; they make brothers strike one another. How? Through sectarian conflicts in some places. How is this possible? Yet, these things happen, they accomplish these, external forces accomplish these<sup>50</sup>

Erdogan's question is partly answered by the second node of enmity; namely, "terror." The work done through the concept "terror" is tightly related to "the West," both being in close affiliation with the act of division. Furthermore, the two nodes are tied through their shared contrast and hostility towards Islam. Not only the examples are selected from countries that are predominantly Muslim (excluding the East Asian colonial past), the target region is described as a "crescent," a symbol of Islam, while the actual locations of these countries do not constitute that geometry. Juxtaposed to the nation and state whose benevolence and compassion are frequently related to the Ottoman and Islamic traditions, the West is represented as Christians with a "crusader mentality,"<sup>51</sup> and terror with either atheism or a "misguided approach to Islam."<sup>52</sup> As previous enemies incited disunity in the "crescent" by provoking conflicts between brothers; the terrorist organizations that are either atheist or failed followers of Islam, continue the project of dividing political communities and inciting conflict in the region. Strengthening the integrity of "terror" as an agent, the shared antagonism with the proper practice of Islam as it is imagined is invoked to override the differences between the actual religious affiliations of individual terrorist organizations. PKK, DHKP-C, ISIS and the Gülenist Terror Group (FETÖ) are bundled together; further including the local government of the Iraqi Kurdistan and YPG, all distinct in terms of self-declared religious affinities as well as organizational and legal structures. Yet, it is frequently stated in the speeches that Turkey condemns terror in all its forms, and discerning in between terrorist organizations, such as condemning ISIS while supporting the Kurdish cause (equated with supporting the PKK) is criticized.<sup>53</sup> Hence, the distinctions among groups, their aims, and their origins are blurred. Terror is represented as a force that "assaults to the peace and happiness of humanity"<sup>54</sup> and constitutes an existential threat to the nation.

Being treated both as a method utilized by the West and with agentive qualities of its own, terror's desire to divide the nation and the state is reiterated in almost every speech after the July security operations. The act of division is embedded into the grammar around the PKK itself, referring to the group as the "Divisive Terrorist Organization."<sup>55</sup> The preference of the concept "divisive" instead of "separatist" is significant here. The corresponding Turkish concepts, *bölinmek* and *ayrılmak* have distinct connotations: While the former assumes an entity being divided in multiple parts through the influence of an outside force or the decision of the entity as a whole, the latter indicates a movement originating from a section of the entity to leave the whole. Since the "nation" is articulated as a unified community, with singular interests, desires, and feelings, a separatist movement originating from within the nation becomes paradoxical. Consequently, the political project of division becomes coded in the imaginary as a constant threat, and those who argue in line with a separatist movement are identified outside the borders of the concept "nation".

The problem of accounting for the agents arguing against the government's policies despite being citizens and part of the nation was resolved through their affiliation with the established nodes of animosity; namely, with the West and with terrorist organizations themselves. Building on the already ambiguous status of the "enemy," accusations of intending to divide the state or to disunite the nation are used to contaminate agents that would have otherwise referred to as the democratic opposition. Since an opposition within the homogenous and unitary nation is unintelligible, opposing the government's policies is equated with exhibiting a contradiction with the will shared by the leader, the state, and the nation. These agents who cannot be understood within the borders of the "nation" are identified as the so-called politicians, so-called intellectuals, and the so-called media, juxtaposed to the ones supporting the government, and hence, within the nation.<sup>56</sup> For instance, the Kurdish political party is criticized and accused of finding its support from the nation's

enemies instead of the nation itself, for paying visits to international organizations and making humanitarian cases against JDP's policy in the Southeast.<sup>57</sup> In this case, the thread between the Kurdish party, the West, and the enemy is the threat of division that spread to broader sphere as the government's policies attracted more opposition.

Through the end of the period covered in the speeches, as the conflict escalated, the large-scale violence in the Southeastern territories of the country became undeniable, and protests proliferated, the scope of the "enemy" increased considerably. Significantly, Erdogan starts to distinguish between "clean Kurdish brothers" and those that are "tainted" or "politicized."<sup>58</sup> The cleanness of the Kurds who are members of the nation and "brothers" are juxtaposed with those who has "dirt in their hearts" walking free with "bloody hands." In relation to the attempt to affiliate the opposition to the ever-present enemy, the vocabulary used to talk about the events of the day shifted, including the use of "terror" from as an abstract menace that is both inevitable and intrinsic to the region, to as a way of conducting politics. At the surface, violent events are recalled frequently, speeches are begun with the recent actions of the terrorist organizations and offering condolences to martyrs' families one by one, referring to each by name. The concept of "blood" is used to represent the way of manipulation and extortion engaged by the Kurdish political party, and a symbol of the party's desire to cause more pain to the nation.<sup>59</sup> Simultaneously, through alignment with "terror" and particularly with the PKK, the political party PDP is blamed for the bleeding nation.<sup>60</sup> Whereas the state and its leader are the beacon of the desire for the peace and the source of compassion to those who deserve, its opposition, precisely due to the multiplicity of voices it brings, is portrayed as the harbinger of violence.

### **III. Rhetoric and Intelligibility: Emphasizing Nation, Burying Ethnicity**

Erdogan differentiating among good and clean Kurdish “brothers” and the politicized Kurds with the dirty hearts already demonstrates the ambiguity embedded with the concept, that membership is not defined naturally or ethnically, but instead through an interpretation of the agents’ behavior. Would this mean that one can act his or her way out of Kurdishness? Or is the better question “Is it possible for a self-identifying Kurdish individual not to be perceived as an enemy?” While the first question exhibits the premises that reify ethnic groupism; the second is promising. Erdogan’s speeches suggest, a Kurdish citizen can in fact avoid being perceived within the category of the enemy. Arguing that our categorizations are not essential, I suggest keeping an open mind to understanding justification of ethnic violence, with the consideration that the nation-state-enemy configurations may play a more significant role in the rhetoric compared to the ethnic category.

The formulations on the Kurdish movement, the West, and the “terror” represented together around the desire of dividing the nation -as an existential threat- should be understood as intelligible due to the sediments of historical narratives around the Turkish nation-state. One line of affiliation between Kurdish identity, the West, and the threat of territorial division is formed at the moment of the Ottoman Empire’s transition from a religious community to a nation-state partly due to the Kurdish separatism and colonial empires’ alliances with the Muslim communities prior to 1918. A different shift was caused by the attempted partition of the Empire by the Allied forces after the World War I and the weakness of the prospective Turkish Republic; this time including the ethnic group into the nation opposing the West. Once the nation-state is formed and secured around the celebration of the Turkish identity, Kurdish ethnicity became a minority group with distinct cultural demands, which were predominantly overlooked for decades culminating in the movement’s recourse to armed insurgency.<sup>61</sup>

The speeches demonstrate that at the aftermath of the Peace Process, the government's decision to follow exclusionary and violent policies were not justified through the condemnation of Kurdishness with a selective reference to the shared history exhibiting a violent past. Despite the fact that the target of these policies were predominantly the Southeastern regions, it was not the "Kurds" as an ethnic group who were articulated as the government's target. Instead, the speeches identified agents (either individuals or organizations) as enemies of the nation, through the interpretation of their present activity vis a vis the government's policies. This creative work utilizing the existing frameworks of intelligibility also contribute to its entrenchment. The performances affiliated with the "enemy" migrate to the Kurdish movement, resulting in the continued prominence of the West, the terror, and the act of division in the specific ways they are formulated. Simultaneously, they reify the ethnic category and influence the way performances related to the movement are interpreted. In the case of the Peace Process, the Kurdish movement becomes closely related not with demands concerning Kurdish language or various peaceful practices such as celebrating Nowruz, while there is absolutely no essential link between the political behavior of the victims and the violent policies, apart from the significant symbolic work that provides meaning to the violence. The previous section attempted to demonstrate the foreground of this work through the relations within and between the concepts nation, state, and enemy.

At the surface, the exclusion and inclusion of individuals into the groups of nation and enemy, and the relationship of state to these groups "make sense" to those who partake in the nation, for the scope of the nation is already determined through sharing the desires and the will of the leader, the state, and the nation. Yet, what may appear simply as the delineation of a political community by standards of complicity is in fact a narrative interpretation intended for an affective community,



tailored for this community's manner of making sense of their place in the world and the events of the day. Importantly, in this instance when the said events are the violent policies, justification of government's actions was through offering of a narrative that was shaped day by day, to position the Kurdish movement as an existential threat to the nation.

I acknowledge the traction of the constructivist argument for the case of "Kurdish" exclusion, suggesting that the conflict and the violence should be understood as ethnicized after-the-fact through elite discourse. However the Turkish case of 2015 demonstrates the reverse, namely, the nationalization of a conflict that is ethnic in nature.

Firstly, while the violence was not limited to the Kurds as an ethnic category but those affected most severely were Kurdish: it spanned multiple Kurdish political organizations, the supporting media, and the Kurdish political party in the parliament. Significantly, the death and depopulation was predominantly confined to the Kurdish Southeastern regions of Turkey. One year after the period of the speeches it further spilled over to devastate the Turkish academics who signed a declaration requesting peace in the Kurdish regions.<sup>62</sup> While the association—or the lumping together—of the Kurdish movement with various terrorist organizations unrelated to the Kurdish movement (i.e. ISIS) and the West contributed to the ambiguity of the enemy and the eventual justification of violence, the victims of the actual violence were either Kurdish or supportive of the Kurdish movement.

Secondly, as the analysis in the previous section demonstrated, political rhetoric of the President represented not the ethnic category but the category of the "enemy" as the target of the violence, justified through the state's responsibility to protect the nation. Hence, the argument that violence was "ethnicized" through its representation does not hold. A more comprehensive category for the

framing of the violence is its “nationalization,” framing as in accordance with the desires and interests of the nation. The unity of the nation particularly in terms of homogenous constitution and unitary will/desire; the assumed harmony between the nation, state, and the government; and the latter’s’ function to serve and protect the former enables the representation of violence “in the name of the nation.” Through the strategy of nationalization the speeches not only justify the violence, but also bury the ethnic concentration of violence and the specifically Kurdish grievances that would have been part of the discussion if ethnicity were at the forefront of the rhetoric.

Thirdly, the ambiguity and fluidity within the scope of the “nation” demonstrate that agents are not identified in the discourse as inside or outside the borders of the concept through their categorical belongings to an ethnic group. Instead, identity is a result of positioning individuals through interpretation of their behavior. Hence, the fluidity of these identifications is not a result of changing hegemonic discourses or shifting alliances as the ontological argument would posit. Agents’ political behavior result in their affiliation with certain feelings, investments, desires, and alliances; and cause them to be labeled as a friend or an enemy regardless of their self-identification or actual thoughts and actions. In contradiction with the premise of Laclau and Mouffe’s argument on the possibility of change which limits creative work to the formulation of new hegemonic discourses,<sup>63</sup> the rhetorician finds the capacity to assert each subject’s status without monumental paradigm shifts. Agents can be members of the nation or the enemy at any moment, attributed through their behavior but represented as if this identification reveals an ontological category, as if the act is not a creation but a revelation.

Questioning the exact capacity of political rhetoric in identifying individuals within the borders of the nation or the enemy is beyond the aspirations of this article, and producing counterfactuals on other groups being targeted mistakes the discursive justification of events for the strategic decisions

of the government. While ascertaining the limits of the rhetoric is an important question, the speeches of the President demonstrate how the government policy was justified in the discourse in line with the escalating violence. Whether these policies were implemented in their exact severity taking into consideration of what can possibly be justified, would require additional ethnographic work with the officials themselves. This said, the speeches provide considerable insight into the process of attributing meaning to violence, and the logical framework presumed to be shared by the target audience. Hence, what is surfaced is not only the comparative importance of identifying agents as enemies of the nation over making claims on ethnic groups; but also certain abstract limits of the constituents' shared grid of intelligibility. While the political rhetoric invokes certain relations and identifies agents within the nation-enemy pendulum, it draws on the shared logical framework constituted in a longer time-span through a larger variety of cultural production. The idea that the nation is a unified, homogenous entity, bounded with familial relations, and vulnerable; as opposed to the patriarchal, vigilant, and compassionate state imbued with the authority and responsibility to protect the nation is not a construction invented within the leader's discourse in 2015. The ever-presence of the threats the nation faces, their crystallization around the desire of dividing the nation and the state, and the representation of the West as a source and supporter of these threats is again, not a production unique to either the end of the Peace Process, or to the JDP's tenure. These configurations surfaced in the analysis of the concepts nation, state, and enemy, provide the logical framework for the political rhetoric in 2015 to unfold upon.

These limits of intelligibility shared by the affective community reveal the presumed audience of the speeches and enable a reconsideration of how we think about complicity and membership under authoritarian regimes. As opposed to the claim that membership to the nation is based on primordial ethnic identity, how agents make sense of the present through situating themselves and the policies

in an ongoing historical narrative—their intuitions as conceptualized by Berlant—become significant. Consequently, opposition to the government's policies can be understood simultaneously as an expression of disagreement based on the agent's prior ethical and political convictions; and as a result of the perplexity experienced by the agent, who is unable to make sense of the narrative and his place in the world as it is articulated in the political rhetoric. Identification of the “members of the nation” and the “enemy” within the rhetoric as such, provides not only an incentive for complicity, but also polarizes the political community. In this space where opposition has no legitimacy in face of the government who claims to be the sole representative of the nation, the possibility for dialogue between agents is further curtailed as individuals grouped by their different senses of belonging tell different stories regarding the communal experience.

## **Conclusion**

Almost every single day, President Erdogan faces cameras in events ranging from dinner receptions to mosque openings to address the nation, and converse with all his imagined brothers who share his heart and mind for a stronger Turkey. These speeches provide a glimpse into the proper framework used to interpret these events, structured around specific nation-state-enemy configurations. Consequentially, the agents that are considered as members of the nation and the enemy are determined not through a pre-existing category or a relation of existential negation vis a vis each other; but through the interpretation of their actions according to their ability to partake in the grid of intelligibility members of the nation are presumed to share. Those who fail to comply due to their inability to attribute meaning to the government's policies and Erdogan's words, form the opposition, and precisely due to this failure are identified as the enemy situated outside the affective community. The political rhetoric need not mark the ethnic category of Kurdishness as an indicator of enmity, but only to leverage the dynamics of the affective space to contaminate

agents with existing nodes of enmity in the prevalent historical narratives, justifying violence and delegitimizing opposition.

Having the right intuitions, that is to say, thinking about the past in such a way that the circulating narratives of the present makes sense, is the discerning attribute of the individuals who share the affective space Erdogan's speeches invoke and reinstate. These speeches demonstrate not only how the exclusion of the Kurdish movement was justified but also how the violence that has escalated for years devouring disparate agents and a vast geography continued to make sense to the political community. One of the significant issues that surface in this account of violence and justification is the hardship of commencing dialogue between disparate social groups who make sense of themselves and their place in the world in different ways, convincing a polarized community in the legitimacy of each other's voices over the one they hear the most. Furthermore, The ambiguity and fluidity displayed by the speeches of President Erdogan in defining the scope of the concepts "nation" and the "enemy," and the identification of agents within these groups based on their ability to make sense of the government's narratives are prone to challenge how we understand the role of political rhetoric in authoritarian regimes. Future research on this topic may engage with the existing political theory literature, and significantly with the writings of Hannah Arendt, on the transformations of the public and discursive spaces in authoritarian regimes. The observations gathered on the case can further contribute to how we think about the freedom designated to agents' in their interpretation of events, and what competing truth claims in the public sphere may really indicate. I believe continued research on the Turkish case would truly illuminate how authoritarian regimes and political rhetoric function, both individually, and in conjunction.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Kurdistan Workers' Party (Kurdish: Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê)

<sup>2</sup> Some of the developments during these years include: Negotiations with Öcalan as well as other detained high-level insurgents; law on “ending the terror and strengthening social unity” (no: 6551) providing the legal infrastructure for future actions, particularly providing impunity to government’s negotiators; legalization of defense in courts in first language; formation of a commission composed of representatives from all political parties in the parliament; formation of a “Committee of Reputable Persons” composed of nine well-known artists from each geographical region, who would travel the country and discuss the initiative with locals; releasing of prisoners by both parties; promulgation of the laws that limited the scope of terrorist propaganda to praising violence; laws that relaxed the political parties code including legalization of propaganda in foreign languages, lowering the necessary vote threshold for government aids to flow to a party, facilitating political party membership, abolition of the obligation to hold party centers at every town; increasing the sentences of certain crimes including hate crimes; repeal of the laws banning the usage of Kurdish alphabet; legalization of education in every language at all levels of education; abolition of the daily flag and oath ceremonies in primary schools; repeal of the laws that changed the Kurdish village names into Turkish. Compiled from the law *Terörün Sona Erdirilmesi ve Toplumsal Bütünleşmenin Güçlendirilmesine Dair Kanun*, in Resmî Gazete no: 29062, Law No. 6551. (July 16, 2014); “Barış Süreci Kronolojisi”, *Hafıza Merkezi*, July 19, 2015; “İşte Demokratikleşme Paketi”, *NTV*, September 30, 2013; Yıldırım Oğur, “İşte Çözüm Süreci’nin Kronolojisi”, *OdaTV*, August 11, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> The figures provided are the estimates of the Council of Europe: “Counter-Terrorism Operations in the South East of Turkey Caused Widespread Human Rights Violations,” Commissioner for Human Rights, accessed June 3, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> The results of the November elections demonstrate that JDP votes increased from 40,87% to 49,50% in less than five months. While there was some contention to the validity of these results at the time particularly due to the military presence in the Southeast where JDP’s votes increased in certain districts. Yet, the results show that the political party that lost the highest amount of support was the Turkish far-right Nationalist Action Party (NAP votes fall from 16,29% to 11,90%) whose support in the Kurdish regions are negligible as expected. Contributing to JDP’s success more significantly was an increase in total valid votes cast: while the number of votes cast remained almost the same, the number of invalid votes were reduced drastically causing a 3% increase in the total number of valid votes. However, considering the lack of any condemning evidence and the monumental 8,63% increase in JDP’s votes, I find it safe to assert that the party’s support increased.

<sup>5</sup> Turkey gradually transformed into a presidential system by a series of amendments to the constitution that were passed 2008 onwards through heated debates. In 2015, Erdogan was the first president of the country that was elected by popular vote, yet the amendment that made president the head of the executive was not accepted until 2016. Before the referendum the incumbent prime minister already resigned, stating the decision was not his own. Jared Malsin, “Why Turkey’s Prime Minister Had No Choice But to Resign,” *Time*, May 5, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Examples include Jessica A. Stanton, *Violence and Restraint in Civil War: Civilian Targeting in the Shadow of International Law*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> A note on citation and bibliography: The speeches I use range from June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015, to November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. I seldom used transcriptions and reports in media outlets, and always compared the transcripts with online recordings of the said speech to ensure their veracity. When I refer to a pattern in the speeches, I provided at least three examples of the said pattern, citing the dates of the speeches in MM/DD/YYYY format. Yet, I did not provide full citation data in the endnote to avoid overcrowding the text. The complete citation information of the speeches is provided in an appendix to the bibliography, ordered by the date for easier access.



<sup>8</sup> I understand “meaning” as what a concept entails, as the objects that concept refer to in the world; and as the totality of assumptions regarding its use within a language. This definition is broadly in line with Ludwig Wittgenstein’s understanding of meaning. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, and G. E. M. Anscombe, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963).

<sup>9</sup> The virtual identification relates closely to the logics of pre-emptive action political theorists have demonstrated to be in operation in justifications of violence. Brian Massumi among others have written on the atmospheres of insecurity and states of alert becoming the new normal after 9/11 in “Fear (The Spectrum Said),” *Positions* 13, no. 1 (2005): 31–48; and in *Ontopower: War, Powers, and the State of Perception* (Duke University Press, 2015). Another example is Judith Butler, who, building on Talal Asad’s work wrote “the domain of justifiability is preemptively circumscribed by the definition of the form of violence at issue” referring to any violence of a state military being *by definition* justified; in *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009): 154–55.

<sup>10</sup> Except for Erdogan himself. Erdogan self-identifies as the idealized version of the nation’s friend, to the extent that his desires, intentions, and actions are indiscernible from the nation’s. The identity of the “man” as a living breathing individual and the “nation” as an abstraction is constructed partly through the position as the speaker (as the voice of the nation), and partly through the reiteration of Erdogan’s and the nation’s desires, intentions, and actions. Implications of this identity will be further explored in the section designated to the use of the concepts “nation” and “state.”

<sup>11</sup> Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Duke University Press, 2011): 6–7.

<sup>12</sup> Berlant, 2011: 52. In “Thinking about Feeling Historical,” *Emotion, Space and Society* 1, no. 1 (October 2008): 4–9, Berlant defines the genre an “architecture for apprehending. She writes “Indeed, most of social life happens in such modes of lower case drama, as we follow out pulsations of habituated patterning that make possible getting through the day (the relationships, the job, the life) while the brain chatters on, assessing things in focused and unfocused ways” and posits the AIDS crisis and invasion of Iraq as crisis of the ordinary, that initiates reassessment of the conditions of ongoingness.

<sup>13</sup> Berlant, 2011: 52. The discussion among scholars of affect on the interaction of affect, language, and cognition is one that exceeds the scope of this essay. Affect theorists such as Brian Massumi, Nigel Thrift, and William Connolly have been criticized for producing anti-intentionalist accounts of affect by Ruth Leys, in her essay “The Turn to Affect: A Critique,” *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 3 (March 2011): 434–72. Among others, the issue has been discussed by Clive Barnett in his “Political Affects in Public Space: Normative Blind-Spots in Non-Representational Ontologies,” 2008; Megan Watkins in “Desiring Recognition, Accumulating Affect” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Duke University Press, 2010): 269–279; and Linda Zerilli in her “The Turn to Affect and the Problem of Judgment,” *New Literary History* 46, no. 2 (2015): 261–286.

<sup>14</sup> The extent of the affective atmosphere’s influence on the subject is also part of discussion in the literature above. In approaching affect through genre/interpretive framework Berlant focuses on the texts not as initiators of change in the atmosphere, but as resources that enable analysis.

<sup>15</sup> The argument that different patterns of attachments to the world constitute or vary among communities is shared by several affect theorists. Sara Ahmed refers to the lack of pleasure from proximity to “good” objects as a manner of alienation from the affective community in “Happy Objects” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Duke University Press, 2010): 37; Lauren Berlant examines intimate attachments to God, capital, and nation in “Introduction: Compassion (and Withholding),” in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. Lauren Berlant (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), and in *Cruel Optimism* which follows her National Sentimentality Trilogy.

<sup>16</sup> The interpretation of cultural texts and particularly language in this manner is a common method used by affect theorists.

<sup>17</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas provides a broad overview of the “ethnic antipathy” arguments including Buruma 2002, Horowitz 2001, and Kaufman 2001. Kalyvas, 64.

<sup>18</sup> Scott Straus’s study on state-making and genocide in modern Africa provides an example of such studies that take the constitution of ethnic identifications as prior to the analysis and use the criteria to explain discursive justifications of violence. Accordingly, political elites benefit from the “foundational narratives” which define the state’s primary constituency and historical role, in justifying violence. Scott Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> Rogers Brubaker and David D. Laitin, “Ethnic and Nationalist Violence,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, no. 1 (August 1998): 444. See “Ethnic and Nationalist Violence,” particularly 443–444 for an overview of the constructivist argument compared to the culturalist approaches. As aptly described by Brubaker and Laitin, culturalists employed psychoanalysis and focused on cultural construction of fear, prominently in the 1990s. Without disputing the influential role of fear however, I will contest the external determination of the enemy and broaden the scope of the analysis in search for the invocations that tap into communal feelings of belonging. Some valuable examples can be found in Wilmsen and McAllister’s edited volume, Edwin N. Wilmsen and Patrick McAllister, eds., *The Politics of Difference Ethnic Premises in a World of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Brubaker and Laitin, 446-447. Also see Rogers Brubaker, "Ethnicity Without Groups," in *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2006), where he recapitulates the constructivist argument by emphasizing that the ways in which groups themselves are ways of perceiving the world instead of actual things in the world.

<sup>21</sup> The notion that violence is exerted on the Kurdish people and precisely because they are Kurdish people is a fact; while the constructed nature of ethnicity in terms of what the category encompasses and entails can be discussed—as it will be later in this paper—the consequences of its historical existence and contemporary apprehension by the government cannot be disregarded. Documentation of the violence and its particular objects can be observed in "Turkey's Kurdish Conflict: 2015-Present," *Institute for Security & Development Policy*, December 2016; "Report on the human rights situation in South-East Turkey July 2015 to December 2016," *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, February, 2017. An excellent resource that enables the geographical distribution of the violence exerted by the Government of Turkey within the June 2015-December 2016 period and its victims is the UCDP Organized Violence database. Uppsala Conflict Data Program (Date of retrieval: 18/06/02) UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia: [www.ucdp.uu.se](http://www.ucdp.uu.se), Uppsala University, <https://ucdp.uu.se/#actor/115>

<sup>22</sup> Almost exact phrase is used in eleven speeches. Some of them are: 07.03.2015, 08.15.2015, 09.22.2015. The original Turkish is: "Millet bir çeşnidir . . . Türk'üyle, Kürt'üyle, Laz'ıyla, Çerkez'ıyla, Gürcü'süyle, Abhaza'sıyla, Roman'ıyla, Boşnak'ıyla, kim olursa olsun 78 milyonu biz ülkemizde 'yaratılanı severiz yaratandan ötürü' anlayışıyla diyerek kucakladık." The word "çeşni" originates from the verb "to taste" and is used both for "flavor" or "seasoning" and "variety" in modern Turkish. For a detailed etymology please refer to Nişanyan, Sevan, "Çeşni," in *Nişanyan Sözlük*.

<sup>23</sup> 09.20.2015. The original phrase is from Erdogan's Yenikapı rally: "Türkiye'nin Kürt sorunu yoktur, terör sorunu vardır . . . Elbette tüm etnik unsurlar gibi Kürt kardeşlerimin de sıkıntıları, beklentileri vardır"

<sup>24</sup> Here the translation adds an inadvertent sexism to the President's choice of concept. The concept "kardes" in Turkish does not bring any connotation in terms of the subject's sex, similar to the concept "sibling." However, as the grammar of the concept "sibling" is not tied to social constructions enabled by the concept "brother" (such as brotherhood, band of brothers, brotherly love) the latter has been preferred.

<sup>25</sup> The word "brother" referring to citizens appears in 50 of the 93 speeches. Some examples include: 08.19.2015, 10.01.2015, 10.26.2015.

<sup>26</sup> Some examples of the brotherly fights are 08.28.2015, 09.29.15.

<sup>27</sup> Undisclosed third parties taking advantage of or exploiting the "sincere intentions" of the Turkish state appears frequently in the speeches after 07.24.2015.

<sup>28</sup> Speech dates will be inserted

<sup>29</sup> Speech dates will be inserted

<sup>30</sup> These are the speeches from the first on 06.11.2015 through 07.13.2015.

<sup>31</sup> People's Democratic Party (Turkish: Halkların Demokratik Partisi)

<sup>32</sup> For the main opposition Republican People's Party the example start earlier, on 07.07.2015. The first example of the accusation towards the People's Democratic Party on 08.17.2015, once the coalition talks begin to appear unfruitful.

<sup>33</sup> 07.24.2015. The Turkish words translated as "good will", "sincerity," and "exploitation" are "iyi niyet," "samimiyet," and "istismar" respectively. The importance of the selection of these words will be discussed later in the section.

<sup>34</sup> The Turkish word used here "hassasiyet" means both sensitivity and sensibility. Deriving from the adjective "hassas", which may be used as "sensitive skin," "delicate balance," "sensitive topic," or as the caution "act sensibly."

<sup>35</sup> 07.28.2015. The juxtaposition of these groups (terrorists and the so-called politicians, intellectuals, media members, NGOs) are frequent after this date. The imagery of "blood" becomes more prominent as the conflict escalates.

<sup>36</sup> Carl Schmitt in Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2009): 43.

<sup>37</sup> I am referring to the speech of 06.24.2015.

<sup>38</sup> In fact, the power of the office of the presidency increased gradually after the elections of 2014, culminating in a referendum in 2016 transforming the Turkish Republic from a parliamentary democracy into a presidential system. For a list of the laws and regulations please refer to "12. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Seçimi." T.C. Yüksek Seçim Kurulu. Accessed June 4, 2018.

<sup>39</sup> These others are not necessarily its enemies. By development and amelioration of its status the speeches refer to a plethora of ambitions ranging from economic development to an increasingly participatory democracy (regardless of their fulfillment, the aspirations are claimed by the JDP). Examples are almost in every speech, some examples include 07.11.2015, 08.15.2015, 10.26.2015.

<sup>40</sup> Some examples of these clauses can be found in the speeches of 06.21.2015, 08.19.2015, 09.06.2015.

<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, the foreign aid by Turkey increases from 45 million Turkish liras in 2002 to 4.5 billion in 2015, amounting to the third highest in the world. Examples of these formulations can be found in 07.31.2015.

<sup>42</sup> Speech dates will be inserted - on the praise of refugee camps by EU and NGOs.

<sup>43</sup> Speech dates will be inserted

<sup>44</sup> Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007): 26-27.

<sup>45</sup> Examples can be found in the speeches of 07.31.2015, 08.11.2015, 09.16.2015, 10.01.2015.

<sup>46</sup> Some examples of the reference to Cain and Abel are 08.12.2015, 08.16.2015, 08.19.2015.

<sup>47</sup> The Battle of Manzikert (1071) is a battle in which Seljuk Empire defeated the Byzantine army starting a cascade of events that led to the dwindling Byzantine presence in Anatolia. For more on the battle and its consequences refer to Paul K. Davis, *100 Decisive Battles from Ancient Times to the Present: The World's Major Battles and How They Shaped History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 118. The battle also has a place in the imaginary through the public education system in Turkey, which represents the battle as the decisive moment in which Anatolia became the Turkish home, what has in fact been called in the literature as the “foundational myth” of Turkey. For more on the presence of the battle in the Turkish imagination please refer to Carole Hillenbrand, *Turkish Myth and Muslim Symbol: The Battle of Manzikert* (Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

<sup>48</sup> Speech dates will be inserted

<sup>49</sup> Such as the speeches of 07.09.2015, 08.12.2015, 08.26.2015,

<sup>50</sup> The original quote reads: “Bakın bir şöyle yay var Pakistan'dan başlıyor, Afganistan, İran, Irak, geliyoruz Suriye, Filistin, Mısır, Libya devam ediyor. Ve bütün buralarda mesele nedir? Bu topraklarda yaşayan insanların parçalanması, bölünmesi... Bu topraklarda yaşayanlar da birbirinin kardeşi... Enteresan olan bu; kardeşi kardeşe vurduruyorlar. Neyle? Bakıyorsunuz bazı yerlerde mezhep çatışmaları ile. Bunlar olacak iş mi? Ama oluyor işte, bunu başarıyor, dış güçler bunu başarıyor” (08.12.2015).

<sup>51</sup> In all the speeches that stress the nation's benevolence and compassion on the Syrian refugee crisis, the West is criticized, frequently with an emphasis on its Christianity. Some examples are 09.16.2015, 09.29.2015.

<sup>52</sup> As expected, PKK is represented as atheist due to its communist foundation, and ISIS as an example of misguided Islam in which Islam's core values are overlooked.

<sup>53</sup> Examples include the speeches of 06.26.2015, 09.06.2015.

<sup>54</sup> The original quote is “terör insanlığın huzuruna mutluluğuna kast eder” (07.20.2015).

<sup>55</sup> This formulation is used in over twenty speeches, some examples are 07.13.2015, 08.14.2015, 10.01.2015.

<sup>56</sup> These accusations appear with higher density after 07.24.2015 speech.

<sup>57</sup> Erdogan criticizes PDP's leader who met with representatives of the European Council on several occasions.

<sup>58</sup> These appear after 08.11.2015

<sup>59</sup> While “blood” is used sporadically throughout the speeches as a consequence of violence and terror, it is affiliated with the Kurdish party and as a specific way of conducting politics as opposed to the legitimate and peaceful parliamentary proceedings later on. Some examples include 08.12.2015, 09.06.2015, 09.16.2015.

<sup>60</sup> The alignment of the Kurdish party with terror and PKK begins slightly before the first security operations on 07.24.2015. The suggested relationship escalates over time from not condoning terror strongly enough to outright support of the PKK. Examples include 08.11.2015, 08.12.2015 and 08.19.2015.

<sup>61</sup> Here I benefit from Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), particularly pages 5-20, 97-106; and Mesut Yeğen, “The Kurdish question in Turkey Denial to recognition,” in *Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey: Political Islam, Kemalism, and the Kurdish Issue*, eds. Marlies Casier and Joost Jongerden (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011), 67-84. See Barkey and Fuller, 10-13; Riamei, 73-75; Yeğen, 68-74, and Gunter, 35-36 in Michael M. Gunter, “Ocalan's Capture as a Catalyst for Democracy and Turkey's Candidacy for Accession to the European Union,” in *Kurdish Identity: Human Rights and Political Status*, eds. Charles G. MacDonald, and Carole O'Leary (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 35-55 on the framing the Kurdish Question as a problem of banditry, lack of civility, and foreign incitement; the denial of the Kurdish identity, and the government policies of repression and assimilation.

<sup>62</sup> See “Academics for Peace” and the declaration at <https://barisicinakademisyenler.net/English>.

<sup>63</sup> Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony And Socialist Strategy: Towards A Radical Democratic Politics* (Verso Books, 2014).