

## CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO: ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT RHETORIC IN ERDOĞAN'S OFFICIAL DISCOURSE (2014 – 2020)

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### Abstract

*The paper analyzes President Erdoğan's official statements using Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model to explore how he legitimizes his rule and constructs Turkey's image as a nation-state within the global order. He positions Turkey as a key player in addressing regional and global issues, portraying it as a tolerant nation capable of contributing to European and global stability. The paper argues that Erdoğan's discourse challenges existing power dynamics with the EU and Western institutions, promoting an inclusive vision of global cooperation and advocating for UN reform. Ultimately, Fairclough's model reveals how Erdoğan's language constructs Turkey's international image, critiquing global power structures while enhancing his domestic and international leadership standing.*

**Keywords:** Turkey, Erdoğan, United Nations, European Union, critical discourse analysis

**JEL:** Z13

### Introduction

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who first became Turkey's prime minister in March 2003, and then president in August 2014, has been in power for 20 years now. He is among the longest-serving top state officials who enjoys popularity in Turkey and easily wins sweeping victories at elections. To quote *The Economist*, 'Turkey now has an executive presidency, which Mr Erdogan has exploited to combine the roles of president, prime minister, party chairman and de facto central-bank governor' (The Economist, 2023), which is evidence to his authoritarian bent. In the field of international relations, he is a factor all states take heed of, taking into account that Turkey is the 19<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world and the second largest standing military force in NATO. His foreign policy 'prizes autonomy from the West and favours armed intervention' (The Economist, 2023). What is

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more, by his decree even the country's name was changed to Türkiye, so that it follows the pronunciation in the Turkish language.

These are some of the reasons why this paper aims to examine Erdoğan's official statements, which is its **research object**. It is no accident that the period chosen for the analysis is 2014 – 2020. It was during his presidency that a shift was observed in Turkey's policy – away from democracy to authoritarian rule. Erdoğan's leadership style is found to be in line with that of his predecessors. It is generally characterized by a lack of commitment to the norms and values of democracy, disrespect for state institutions and a violation of human rights (for details see Gümüş, 2023, pp 183-192). Gümüş exposes how Erdoğan and his AKP party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Justice and Development Party) gradually removed the military as the arbiter of politics, eroded the independence of the judiciary and monopolised the media landscape (Gümüş, 2023). During the last two decades of its rule, AKP gradually developed from a 'pro-European Muslim democratic party to an authoritarian Islamist civilizational populist party that represses opposition, dissidents, undesired minorities, journalists and human rights advocates', starting to produce and employ 'civilizational populist necropolitical narratives to stabilize and perpetuate its control over Turkey' (Yilmaz, Erturk 2023, p. 1). With regard to the **research topic**, this piece of research seeks to identify the major discourses in Erdoğan's statements, through which the Turkish President legitimizes his autocratic rule. More specifically, the paper aims to analyze *how* – by applying Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) – and explain *why* the Turkish president constructs Turkey's image as a nation state within the existing world order.

### Dataset and materials

The statements made on the occasion of international events and organizations fall within a broader research on all of Erdoğan's official discourse. The latter encompasses the President's official messages delivered in the period 2014 – 2020 and retrieved from through the official website of the Turkish presidency at <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/>. In order to secure sufficient convenience of reference, the statements were encoded from S1 to S91 (see table in appendix).

It is common knowledge that highly placed officials make public statements on different occasions to address the public at large and respond to various events, such as domestic or foreign policy issues and communicate to their people their policies, opinions, and responses to current events. Official statements allow politicians to inform, persuade, or address concerns of the public, ensuring their viewpoints and decisions are understood. Hence politicians influence and often shape public opinion on the issues in question, whilst demonstrating accountability

and maintaining transparency which is crucial in contemporary democracies. Thus official statements and speeches are strategic tools to influence the perceptions of the general public. They are formal, deliberate forms of communication, intended to guarantee clarity and conciseness of expression. Furthermore they are carried out in a formal language and official tone and most often delivered in a timely manner on specific occasions.

The most appropriate theoretical framework within which the analysis of public statements is carried out is admittedly critical CDA, and more specifically the models offered by Teun Van Dijk and Norman Fairclough.

### **Theoretical framework**

The analysis in this paper is carried within the broader methodological framework of CDA. The term discourse analysis designates two major strands of language-oriented studies (see Tincheva, 2015, pp. 23-37). The 'narrower' approach regards discourse as pertaining to the underlying structure(s) of interpersonal interaction and conversations, focusing on matters of cohesion and coherence of any stretch of language use or speech. The 'broader' approach elaborates on linguistic structures as available means of expressing social differences and their possible interpretations. This second kind deals extensively with mindsets and culture, social beliefs, and communicative means of perpetuating social practices and differences. The authors of this paper subscribe to the definition of discourse as any text, whether written, spoken, a monologue or dialogue, regardless of its genre and register-related features, used with a purpose at the various levels of context. This purpose of communication may be persuasion or manipulation for reasons of legitimacy. Furthermore, in public discourse what is said (the idea conveyed) is as important as *how* it is said (verbal and non-verbal means of expression).

Overall, discourse analysis, particularly within the framework of CDA, provides valuable insights into the ways in which language reflects and perpetuates power dynamics and social inequalities. Researchers like Fairclough, Van Dijk, and R. Wodak have paved the way for understanding the complex interplay between language, power, and society.

An influential scholar is Teun Van Dijk, who pioneered CDA as a discipline concerned with the study of text and talk in context (Van Dijk, 2011). Van Dijk's work highlights how language can be used to control or influence others, often operating beneath conscious awareness. He emphasizes the role of ideology in shaping discourse and examines how power, dominance, and bias are perpetuated through language. Other researchers have made significant contributions to the field of discourse analysis. R. Wodak, for instance, focuses on the intersection of language, politics, and society, particularly in the context of social identities and

power relations. Wodak's work explores how language constructs and reinforces social hierarchies and ideologies. Discourse is socially constitutive in the sense that helps to 'sustain and reproduce the status quo, and in the sense that it may contribute to transforming it' (Blackledge, 2005, p. 4). In this sense discourses may serve to construct national identities (Wodak, 2002) or categories such as 'race', 'nation', 'ethnicity' and 'citizen', may perpetuate such categories, and may even dismantle or destroy them" (Blackledge, 2005, p. 4).

One prominent figure in discourse analysis is Norman Fairclough, who emphasizes the relationship between language and power. Fairclough's work focuses on uncovering the ways in which language is used to maintain or challenge existing power structures. He introduced the concept of discursive practices, which explores how language both reflects and shapes social realities. Fairclough's multidimensional model of discourse analysis considers the text, discursive practices, and social practices, emphasizing the interconnectedness of language and society.

Like Van Dijk, Fairclough's approach to CDA is a model that combines text analysis with an analysis of discourse processes in studying text production and interpretation (Fairclough, 1992a, 1995a). In this sense, and as far as this work is concerned, this approach is particularly useful to the case study of this paper since it enables us to 'foreground links between social practice and language, and the systematic investigation of connections between the nature of social processes and properties of language texts' (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 96).

The first dimension is the text, which is concerned with a language analysis of text, 'the written or spoken 'product' of the process of text production' (Fairclough, 1992a, p. 3). It is a 'product rather than a process – a product of the process of text production' (Fairclough, 2001, p. 20). Overall, in this paper text is referred to as the linguistic textual features of concrete instances of discourse and text structure, i.e. vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000).

The second dimension of discourse is the discursive practice, and within the latter Fairclough offers a two-fold approach comprising institutional processes and discourse processes which affect the transformations that take place in production and consumption (Fairclough, 1995b). This indicates that discourse is produced, distributed, and consumed in society (Fairclough, 1992a). In such a vein discursive practice suggests that discourse is arguably approached by analysing vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure. Furthermore focus should be centred on three aspects that link text to its context, namely speech acts, coherence, and intertextuality (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000). This study focuses on both the intertextual and lexical choice manifestations of discourse within official statements.

Through the third dimension of social practice, Fairclough establishes his approach to change, i.e. 'hegemonies change which can be identified in 'discursive change' when it is conceived from the perspective of intertextuality (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000, p. 449). Following Fairclough (1995a, p. 97), the link between text and 'sociocultural practice is mediated by discourse practice'. In other words, the way in which the text is produced and interpreted depends largely on the 'nature of the sociocultural practice which the discourse is part of (including the relationship to existing hegemony)' (Fairclough, 1995a, p. 97). The model of discourse Fairclough develops is framed in a theory of ideological processes in society. Thus, texts in this context are the products of 'discursive processes'.

### **Erdogan's dubious attitude to the EU**

The statements made with regard to the EU should be analyzed within the broader context of an overview of the Turkey-EU relations in the past 30 years, highlighting the serious transformations these relations had undergone and the relevant domestic policy implications for the country. This comprehensive task has been accomplished by researcher Çiğdem Nas (2023). The initial progress in these relations gradually faced regression, which had a serious impact on 'democratization and identity-based transformation in Turkish politics and society' (Nas, 2023, p. 185). It is in this context that the narrative on the EU should be examined.

Nas identifies several periods in the deterioration of these relations (for a detailed account see Nas, 2023, pp. 185-207). Turkey's accession process was launched following the declaration of Turkey's candidacy to the EU at the Helsinki European Council in 1999, and, accordingly, the country was obliged to meet the membership criteria and adopt the *acquis* of the Union. As a result of the extensive reforms carried out in Turkey, the accession negotiations were opened in 2005. However, due to a number of factors, among which the major one was the Cyprus conflict, French President Sarkozy's questioning of Turkey's suitability for membership, and differences over Libya and the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, to mention but a few, the accession process was brought to a halt. In the post-2016 period, the Syrian refugee crisis and the refugee deal transformed the Turkey-EU relations into an interest-based transactional relationship. It was then that the Turkish leadership accused the EU of not being fair and objective and make Turkey wait for membership for 53 years (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, 2016, as cited in Nas, 2023, p. 187). Turkey now defined its geopolitical identity as a regional relevant power, identified in IR literature as a 'middle power' (Kayhan Pusane, 2021, as cited in Nas, 2023, p. 188). In 2018, the Council assessed the situation and concluded that the start of this process is not foreseen

since Turkey was moving away from the EU in terms of values and standards. The limitations of rights and freedoms, transition to the highly hierarchical and centralized Presidential regime, problems in the functioning of the judiciary and regression in freedoms and democratic standards were all noted (Council of the EU, 2018, as cited in Nas, 2023, p. 193). Overall, during the 23 years between 1999, Turkey's declaration as a candidate, and 2022, Turkey's relations with the EU reached a climax point only to retreat to a point of stalemate and regression.

Within the examined corpus comprising 94 public statements delivered by President Erdoğan in the studied period, several were made on the occasion of Europe Day – 9 May. The president begins all statements by taking a historical perspective on the origins of the EU, thus appealing to collective memories, and then defines Turkey as a nation that is open to Europe. What is more, 'the adoption of the Schuman Declaration is a critical step manifesting that the history of Europe doesn't only consist of wars and internal conflicts' (S69). Moreover, '[h]aving kicked off as an economic community, the integration process has subsequently been consolidated with new moves and thus displayed major achievements such as Single Market, Euro, Schengen, etc' (S69). The European project is seen as a guarantee of peace, stability, prosperity and harmony in the continent, as becomes evident in the examples: 'The European Union was initiated sixty-nine years ago as a peace and stability project, to bring different cultures, nations and languages together under a single umbrella' (S22) and 'The idea of European integration has led the way to peace, stability and prosperity in Europe after long years of wars and conflicts. The integration process that began with economic co-operation has transformed the EU into a political integration model by enhancing harmony among its members in all areas' (S45).

Overall, the statements in question describe the successful transformation of Europe from a divided and hostile continent into a union of different European states. However, in the next rhetorical step, a comparison is made between the divided past of Europe and its contemporary challenges. These arising new threats challenge 'the founding values which brought the EU into existence on 9 May 1950' (S22), namely 'universal values such as human rights, rule of law, democracy, equality and justice, on which the EU claims to be built upon' (S45). The threats are 'cultural racism, discrimination and anti-immigration tendencies, in particular Islamophobia' (S22), which are conceptualized as social diseases (S69). Other threats pertain to 'populist policies and short-term national interests' (S4), 'the most serious threat facing the future of the Union is to let exclusionist discourses be a means of populist policies' (S69). There are cases of specifically referring to the sources of the challenges. Yet most European parties, movements and politicians are referred to vaguely and in unspecified quantities, which exposes preemptive argumentation.



In the description of the relationship between Turkey and the EU, Turkey's possible contributions to the union are explicitly stated. Some statements are more specific, taking into account the Covid-19 pandemic:

'As a negotiating candidate country, a Customs Union associate and one of the most important trade and investment partners of the EU, Turkey's participation in all the measures and work undertaken by the Union during and after this pandemic, will yet render the EU even stronger' (S4).

Turkey's EU accession is seen as the major engine for Europe's political and economic growth, as the examples from the corpus clearly suggest. It is Erdoğan's strong belief that the EU's vision and international role will be transformed with Turkey's accession, as the following quote suggests: 'Full membership of Turkey to the EU along with its economic, political, security and social contributions, will enrich the Union with a more participatory and inclusive vision and transform the EU into a global actor' (S4).

This is a recurrent motif, which was found in the analogous statement with almost the same wording a year earlier:

'It is possible to overcome these existential threats only with the support of countries like Turkey, which have a strong tradition of tolerance allowing different cultures to live together in peace. Turkey's full EU membership will make economic, political and social contributions to the EU. It will also provide the EU with a more participatory and inclusive perspective and help the EU to become a global actor' (S22).

Erdoğan is thus creating a sense of belonging to a superior Turkish nation with a tradition of multiculturalism. Earlier on, basing his argument on history and historical knowledge, Erdoğan creates a narrative that supports the discursive construction of a hegemonic Turkish national identity:

'This kind of tendencies and policies, which are on the rise in Europe, are poisoning Turkey-EU relations as well. Our country, which has been a part of Europe historically, geographically and culturally for centuries, desires to maintain its EU accession process, which it regards as a strategic goal, in an understanding of mutual respect and equality on a win-win basis' (S69).

Erdoğan's solutions to the identified threats are related mainly to Turkey's accession, his vision of the EU is connected solely with defining Turkey's place in the Union. This is explicitly stated in one of his speeches: 'Besides its economic, political and social benefits, Turkey's full membership will provide the Union with the biggest opportunity in addressing these threats' (S45).

Erdoğan invariably defines Turkey's commitment to membership in the EU, stressing the country's resolve 'to reach full membership to the EU, which we consider as a strategic objective' (S4). This has been reiterated more than once in the corpus, as the examples expose:

‘Despite all the double standards we have been facing in our accession negotiations, Turkey is determined to become a full member of the EU as a strategic objective. I believe that our European friends will support Turkey’s efforts by refraining from policies and statements that would bring the accession negotiations to a deadlock’ (S22).

Such hope is expressed in yet another case, and specific mention is made of the migration deal with the EU and its alleged achievements:

‘Our country is still committed to the accession process which it sees as a strategic goal despite blockages stemming from the ambitions of a few member states. Turkey wants to continue the current cooperation mechanisms with the EU in line with our common interests. The positive results obtained through the migration deal with the EU in the period when the migration crisis was at its climax has shown what Turkey and the EU can achieve when they work together’ (S45).

Admittedly, positive results will be obtained in many other spheres as well, and are by far not limited to the migration policy.

Broken down into the three major components of Fairclough’s model of CDA, the analysis of Erdogan’s Europe Day messages yields the following results. Vocabulary and word choice of the textual analysis suggest that there is a consistent use of the following terms when describing the ideals of the EU: integration, peace, stability, prosperity, and unity. On the other hand, the repetition of words such as discrimination, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and populist policies frames these negative trends as significant threats to the EU’s foundational values. In terms of modality, phrases like ‘Turkey is determined,’ ‘I believe,’ ‘it is possible,’ and ‘we wish’ all express both a sense of commitment and a call for change. Hereby, Turkey’s image is constructed as a proactive and optimistic partner in the EU’s project, despite facing obstacles in the accession process. The analysis of the used pronouns exposes a sense of inclusivity: ‘we’, ‘our’, and ‘Europeans’ are used to emphasize a shared identity and collective responsibility. Even though this reveals an inclusive view of Europe that incorporates Turkey, the distinction made between Turkey and some member states in the context of ‘blockages’ renders Turkey as separate from the existing EU while highlighting unfair treatment.

Within intertextuality falling under the discursive practice, historical milestones such as the Schuman Declaration and Turkey’s EU candidacy in 1999 are consistently referred to in the messages. This shared European narrative aims to legitimize Turkey’s desired role in the EU. Furthermore, the reference to the issues like ‘migration’ and ‘refugee crisis’ links Turkey’s cooperation with the EU to broader discourses on global challenges, whereby Turkey’s contributions are emphasized. Next recurring themes such as the criticism of discrimination, populism, and the EU’s exclusionary policies toward Turkey expose Turkey’s position that its treatment is inconsistent with the EU’s own stated values of



inclusivity and unity. What is more, Erdoğan positions Turkey as a victim of the EU's 'discriminatory and exclusionary' attitudes while also framing Turkey as a potential savior of the Union's founding values. By such a dual positioning, Turkey's image is constructed as both an outsider that has suffered mistreatment and an insider whose contributions are crucial for the EU's future stability and prosperity.

The examination of the broader sociopolitical context and power dynamics in which the texts are embedded within the third element of the model – social practice – suggests the following. First, situated within a period of rising nationalism, populism, and xenophobia in Europe, Erdoğan's statements highlight EU's failure to live up to its own principles, thus challenging the power dynamics between the EU and Turkey. The emphasis on Turkey's strategic objective of full-fledged EU membership serves as a critique of the EU's exclusionary stance while reaffirming Turkey's desire to integrate on equal terms. Second, criticism is also carried out of the EU's moral authority, suggesting the Union's failure to include Turkey, which stems from the deep entrenched prejudices. Thus the EU's self-portrayal as a bastion of human rights and democracy is challenged and the discourse is shifted, implying that Turkey's full membership could rectify the argued failures. In the third place, there is reference to regional and global dynamics. Regional challenges such as the migration crisis and global uncertainties are invoked, whereby Turkey is portrayed as a key player in addressing these issues. Erdoğan's framing of Turkey as having a 'strong tradition of tolerance' positions the country as capable of offering solutions to problems like social cohesion and extremism, counteracting narratives that depict Turkey as incompatible with European values. Fourth, an ideology of inclusivity and cooperation is conveyed, suggesting that the EU's success is built on embracing diversity and scrapping exclusionary practices. By aligning Turkey's desired full membership with this inclusive vision, Erdoğan challenges the EU to practice what it preaches.

By way of conclusion, Erdoğan's Europe Day messages serve multiple functions. Textually, the inclusive and positive language used aims to advocate for Turkey's EU membership, while leveling criticism at the EU for failing to live up to its ideals. Discursively, the statements draw on historical narratives and contemporary global challenges to position Turkey as an essential part of the European project. Socially, the statements challenge existing power relations between Turkey and the EU, advocating for a more inclusive and equitable Europe. The essential argument is that Turkey's full integration into the EU would not only benefit Turkey but also help the EU tackle its internal crises, embodying the founding values of unity, tolerance, and cooperation. Finally, it becomes clear that Erdoğan's discourse is both an assertion of Turkey's European identity and a criticism of European exclusionary practices.

### **Erdogan's controversial attitude to the United Nations (UN)**

In the statements issued on **World Refugee Day** (S18, S40, S66, S84), President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan refers to several recurring themes. The first one is on the humanitarian crisis and Turkey's role in it. The rising numbers of displaced individuals is noted. Mention is made of Turkey's response, emphasizing that Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees, particularly from Syria, and provides them with dignified living conditions. Next, criticism is levelled at the international community. In each statement, Erdoğan criticizes other countries, especially Western nations, for their inadequate response to the refugee crisis. They are accused of xenophobia, discrimination, and turning their backs on the oppressed. The EU's failure to tackle the crisis and meet financial commitments to support refugees in Turkey is stressed. Furthermore, there is a call for shared responsibility. The global community is urged to share the burden of supporting refugees. Importance is attached to international cooperation and the implementation of agreements like the Global Compact on Refugees. Overall, the World Refugee Day is seen as an occasion to call for reflection on the shared responsibilities toward refugees and to urge participation in global initiatives to aid displaced people.

CDA analysis is yet again carried out in three stages, as the first one involves a textual analysis. In terms of vocabulary and word choice, the following is worth noting. Emotive and moralistic language is used, and terms like human dignity, conscience, generosity, oppressed, and victimized are referred to. Words like racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and hostility indicate a critical stance against countries not aiding refugees. Turkey is described as 'embracing' refugees 'without discrimination,' and thus Erdoğan projects an image of moral high ground. Strong modal verbs are used - must, will, and should – in phrases such as 'should extend a helping hand' and 'Turkey will continue', whereby Turkey's actions are presented as definitive and non-negotiable. This suggests certainty and commitment, while calls on others to fulfil their responsibilities expose a perceived obligation for the international community. The rhetorical devices of contrast and juxtaposition are employed to emphasize Turkey's role as opposed to the perceived failures of other nations, whose actions are described with phrases like 'hiding behind barbwire' and 'turning their back on the oppressed'. Hence their lack of solidarity and compassion is criticized, contrasting it with Turkey's 'open door' policy.

The second stage of the CDA – the discursive practice – pertains to how the text is produced, distributed, and consumed, focusing on the interaction between the speaker (Erdoğan) and the audience. As official communications from the Turkish presidency, the studied messages are intended for both domestic and international audiences. By emphasizing Turkey's generosity and humanitarian efforts, Erdoğan aims to influence global opinion, positioning Turkey as a leading moral actor in the refugee crisis. The repetition of similar themes across multiple years suggests an

ongoing narrative that Turkey wishes to maintain. Intertextuality suggests reference to global frameworks, like the Global Compact on Refugees. What is more, calls for fair 'burden sharing' connect the speeches to ongoing international debates about the responsibilities of states in managing refugee flows. Erdoğan's criticism of the international community exposes a discourse of moral accountability and a demand for equitable participation in refugee support. Erdoğan highlights Turkey's efforts, thus attempting to both defend Turkey's internal policies on refugees and criticize those who fail to provide similar support.

In the third stage of the analysis of social practice, the texts are situated within its wider social and political context, exploring power relations, ideologies, and the broader social implications. Worth noting in this respect is the following. Erdoğan positions Turkey as a moral leader in the refugee crisis, using this stance to assert influence in international policy discussions. By framing Western countries as failing in their humanitarian duties, he not only questions the global power dynamics but also challenges Western nations' self-portrayal as champions of human rights. The statements draw on a discourse of humanitarianism rooted in Turkish national identity, where historical, religious, and cultural values of hospitality are given prominence. Thus the narrative serves to build national pride and legitimize Turkey's policies. With regard to the social implications, Turkey is portrayed as a victim of inadequate international support while simultaneously promoting its generosity. Hence Erdoğan constructs a dual narrative: one that justifies Turkey's refugee policy domestically, and another that seeks to increase international recognition and support.

Overall, Erdoğan portrays Turkey as a generous and humane actor in the refugee crisis while calling for a more comprehensive and equitable international response.

In his **Human Rights Day** statements (S12, S30, S54), President Erdoğan emphasizes Turkey's commitment to upholding human rights while yet again criticizing global failures in this area. The following topics have been identified. In the first place, there is criticism of global human rights violations. Violations of the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are in focus, and issues such as cultural racism, Islamophobia are cited, as well as the suffering of people in conflict zones like Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and Yemen. International bodies, particularly the UN Security Council, are subject to severe criticism for their impotence with regard to addressing these issues effectively. Turkey is depicted as a defender of human rights and a provider of humanitarian aid, both domestically and internationally, as special attention is given to the country's historical tradition of welcoming and supporting the oppressed. Furthermore reforms to strengthen democracy and protect fundamental rights within the country are emphasized. The third topic is Islamophobia and discrimination. Islamophobia, xenophobia, and discrimination are criticized globally, especially in Western countries. Erdoğan

associates the global spread of terrorism and violence with the lack of a unified response to these forms of intolerance. Next comes the topic of Turkey's domestic reforms. The latter include judicial reforms, the establishment of institutions like the Turkish Human Rights and Equality Institution, and the country's ongoing efforts to enhance human rights protection. Finally, a call is placed for global justice. Erdoğan calls for international action and cooperation to address human rights violations and urges countries to avoid turning a blind eye to suffering worldwide. He advocates for the principles of peace, justice, and respect for all.

The first stage of the CDA – textual analysis – clearly suggests that the statements are crafted using formal and diplomatic language, reflecting Erdoğan's official position as the President of Turkey. As mentioned, Turkey is portrayed as a defender of human rights and justice. Terms such as justice, reform, racism, Islamophobia, terrorism, and oppression are prevalent. The choice of words positions Turkey as proactive and morally responsible while casting others as negligent or complicit in human rights violations. The frequent use of the pronouns of 'we' and 'our' places Turkey within the narrative of defending human rights, creating a sense of national unity and shared purpose. The stage of the analysis of the discursive practices suggests the following. The analyzed statements clearly align with the broader narrative of Turkey as a sovereign nation committed to global justice. In terms of intertextuality, global events and documents, such as terrorist attacks, the Syrian conflict, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are referred to. Thus Erdoğan makes connections between these events and Turkey's own policies, implying that Turkey's actions are in line with international human rights standards. As official state communications, these statements are intended for a wide audience, including both domestic and international listeners. They serve to bolster Turkey's image and justify its policies. At the final stage of CDA, the statements are analyzed within the context of broader social and political conditions. The speeches reflect the sociopolitical climate in Turkey and globally, where debates about human rights, terrorism, migration, Islamophobia, and geopolitical conflicts are prevalent. Erdoğan's focus on Islamophobia and discrimination corresponds with Turkey's positioning as a protector of Muslim communities and a critic of Western policies. Next, an attempt is made to assert Turkey's ideological stance on human rights. By criticizing international bodies and Western countries, Erdoğan positions Turkey as a morally superior actor. This aligns with Turkey's foreign policy of advocating for the rights of Muslim-majority countries and portraying itself as a leader in the Muslim world. Finally, the statements challenge the dominant Western-centric narrative on human rights, suggesting that Western countries and international organizations alike have failed to uphold these values. This reasserts Turkey's own understanding of human rights, often framed through its historical and cultural lens, as an alternative.

In his messages on the anniversary of the United Nations (S34, S58, S77, S90) establishment, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasizes Turkey's role as a founding member and strong supporter of the UN. He highlights global challenges such as climate change, ethnic cleansing, hunger, terrorism, and conflicts, particularly affecting vulnerable regions in Africa, Asia, Syria, and Iraq. Erdoğan criticizes the UN Security Council, arguing for reforms to make it more inclusive, democratic, transparent, and accountable. He underscores Turkey's contributions to peacekeeping, mediation, humanitarian aid, and the fight against terrorism, while advocating for enhanced international cooperation. Additionally, he mentions Turkey's efforts to turn Istanbul into a regional UN hub. His recurring message, 'The world is bigger than five,' calls for a fairer global representation and governance structure within the UN. This motto, which runs through the entire narrative pertaining to the UN, has been consistently used and popularized by Erdoğan since 2013, when he was prime minister, viewed as a follow-up to Turkey's overall critique of the UN system in the course of the Justice and Development Party rule since 2002. Admittedly the motto manifests Erdoğan's 'frustration with the UN system and his vision of a more functional and representative UN' in the context of the Security Council's 'failure in bringing about an effective solution' to the conflicts across the world – Palestine, Syria, among others. The motto is believed to have a number of connotations:

'[A] strong support for a just and peaceful international order; a plea against permanent membership and the accompanying veto mechanism; a call for reforming the UN to render the UNSC more representative, transparent and accountable; and an outcry against imperialistic interventions' (Insight Turkey, 2019).

As regards the textual analysis, the following is worth noting. The language used in these statements emphasizes unity, global cooperation, peace, and humanitarian efforts. Repeated phrases like global peace, security, reform of the UN, and aforementioned motto convey a focus on global justice and Turkey's stance on global issues. The formal, diplomatic language, typical of political discourse exploits collective terms such as mankind, global community, and all the UN members. This suggests a universal approach, while the repeated mention of Turkey underscores the country's active role in international matters. Rhetorical devices are used to frame Turkey as a moral and active player on the world stage. The motto also functions as a catchphrase to highlight Turkey's critique of the current UN Security Council structure. His reference to specific crises (e.g., Syria, Iraq) and Turkey's response (hosting refugees) illustrate Turkey's leadership and ethical stance. In terms of discursive practice, the statements are yet again official communications from the President's office, aimed at both domestic and international audiences. They are intended to be distributed widely through government websites and media outlets. The statements refer to a range of global

issues, such as the Syrian crisis, terrorism, climate change, and global inequality. By connecting these issues to Turkey's actions (hosting refugees, advocating UN reform), Erdoğan places Turkey within a global narrative of moral responsibility and leadership. There is intertextual consistency across the years, with recurring themes like Turkey's criticism of the UN Security Council, calls for reform, and emphasis on humanitarianism. There is an implicit assumption that the UN, as it currently stands, is insufficient in addressing global crises. The statements also presuppose that Turkey has a significant moral and practical role in fostering global cooperation and addressing these crises. In terms of social practices, the discourse reflects broader ideological and power dynamics, emphasizing Turkey's desire for a more equitable global order. Embedded within the context of global political discourse on the effectiveness and fairness of international institutions like the UN, the statements call for reform, particularly concerning the Security Council. This comes to reflect Turkey's broader foreign policy stance on promoting a multipolar world order, positioning the country as a key regional player.

## Conclusion

Overall, the occasion of Europe Day, the Refugee Day, Human Rights Day, and UN's anniversary serves as a platform for Turkey to assert its perspectives on global issues, notably the need for UN reform. Erdoğan's statements convey an ideology that criticizes Western dominance within global institutions and advocates for a more inclusive and democratic international system. The statements construct Turkey's image as a compassionate, proactive, and influential actor in global politics, challenging power structures that limit its influence (the permanent members of the Security Council). Thus perceptions of Turkey are shaped as a leading advocate for global justice and UN reform. The statements resonate with countries sharing similar criticism of the UN, potentially fostering alliances and strengthening Turkey's international standing. Domestically, they reinforce Erdoğan's image as a leader committed to humanitarian values and national pride. Moreover, the analysis carried out within the framework of Fairclough's three-dimensional model exposes its potency for examining the construction of a state's image in the international order.

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*Appendix*

No	Occasion	Link
S4	Europe Day, 9.05.2020	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/119219/president-erdogan-s-message-on-europe-day-">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/119219/president-erdogan-s-message-on-europe-day-</a>
S12	Human Rights Day, 10.12.2019	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/113872/president-erdogan-s-message-on-human-rights-day">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/113872/president-erdogan-s-message-on-human-rights-day</a>
S18	World Refugee Day Message, 20.06.2019	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/105745/world-refugee-day-message">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/105745/world-refugee-day-message</a>
S22	Europe Day Message, 9.05.2019	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/105298/europe-day-message">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/105298/europe-day-message</a>
S30	Human Rights Day, 10.12.2018	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/100031/president-erdogan-s-message-on-human-rights-day-">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/100031/president-erdogan-s-message-on-human-rights-day-</a>
S34	UN, 24.10.2018	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/99360/president-erdogan-s-message-on-the-73rd-anniversary-of-the-establishment-of-the-un-">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/99360/president-erdogan-s-message-on-the-73rd-anniversary-of-the-establishment-of-the-un-</a>
S40	World Refugee Day Message, 20.06.2018	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/94590/world-refugee-day-message">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/94590/world-refugee-day-message</a>
S45	Europe Day Message, 9.05.2018	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/94170/europe-day-message">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/94170/europe-day-message</a>
S54	Human Rights Day, 9.12.2017	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/87656/president-erdogans-message-on-human-rights-day">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/87656/president-erdogans-message-on-human-rights-day</a>
S58	United Nations, 24.10.2017	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/86069/the-72nd-anniversary-of-the-establishment-of-the-united-nations">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/86069/the-72nd-anniversary-of-the-establishment-of-the-united-nations</a>
S66	World Refugee Day, 20.06.2017	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/77644/dunya-multeciler-gunu-mesaji">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/77644/dunya-multeciler-gunu-mesaji</a>
S69	Europe Day, 9.05.2017	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/75123/avrupa-gunu-mesaji">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/75123/avrupa-gunu-mesaji</a>
S77	UN, 24.10.2016	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/55741/birlesmis-milletler-in-kurulusunun-71inci-yildonumu">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/55741/birlesmis-milletler-in-kurulusunun-71inci-yildonumu</a>
S84	World Refugee Day, 20.06.2016	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/44458/the-presidents-statement-on-world-refugee-day">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/44458/the-presidents-statement-on-world-refugee-day</a>
S85	Europe Day, 9.05.2016	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/43904/message-by-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan-on-occasion-of-europe-day">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/43904/message-by-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan-on-occasion-of-europe-day</a>
S90	UN, 24.10.2015	<a href="https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/35751/message-by-he-recep-tayyip-erdogan-president-of-the-republic-of-turkey-on-the-occasion-of-the-70th-anniversary-of-the-foundation-of-the-united-nations">https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/speeches-statements/558/35751/message-by-he-recep-tayyip-erdogan-president-of-the-republic-of-turkey-on-the-occasion-of-the-70th-anniversary-of-the-foundation-of-the-united-nations</a>