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Faculty of Political Science and Sociology

Bachelor's Degree Dissertation

**Framing the nation and the threat: A  
Discourse-Historical Approach to Erdoğan's  
discourses before, during and after the 2018  
Olive Branch Operation**

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*Al pare, la mare, i el tete, perquè sense el seu suport, res d'això seria possible.*  
*A l'Ona, per ser el gran pilar en aquest camí i en aquest treball.*  
*A la Xena, per fer-me companyia en silenci durant tantes nits de recerca, amb la seva*  
*presència tan tranquil·la com significativa.*  
*A la meva tutora, la Olivia, per la seva exigència, el seu suport i les seves observacions*  
*sempre encertades.*  
*I per últim, a l'Alejandra, l'Adri, la Carla, la Ilene, i la Neus, el gran regal d'aquests quatre*  
*anys, us enduc amb mi per sempre.*

## **Abstract**

This study examines how the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, utilized nationalist and religious discourse to legitimize Turkey's military intervention in northern Syria during Operation Olive Branch, in 2018. This research conducts a Critical Discourse Analysis of eight discourses delivered by Erdoğan from the 1st of October 2017 to the 6th of May 2018, grounded in Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). The study investigates to what extent Erdoğan framed the Turkish military intervention as a response to Kurdish terrorism and a defense of national sovereignty, while simultaneously constructing Turkey's role as a moral and protective actor of the Muslim umma. The analysis reveals that the discourses combined securitization strategies; particularly regarding Kurdish movements; historical references, and religious appeals to mobilize public support and reinforce a Turkish national identity rooted in both nationalism and Islam. The findings suggest that Erdoğan's rhetoric served not only to justify military action but also to consolidate domestic legitimacy and project Turkey's geopolitical aspirations in the region.

**Keywords:** Securitization, national identity, religious appellations, discourse, Olive Branch Operation

## **Resum**

Aquest estudi analitza com el President de Turquia, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, va utilitzar el discurs nacionalista i religiós per legitimar la intervenció militar de Turquia al nord de Síria durant l'Operació Branca d'Olivera, l'any 2018. Aquesta recerca duu a terme una Anàlisi Crítica del Discurs a partir de vuit intervencions públiques d'Erdoğan, pronunciades entre l'1 d'Octubre de 2017 i el 6 de Maig de 2018, basada en l'enfocament històric del discurs de Ruth Wodak (DHA). L'estudi investiga fins a quin punt Erdoğan va presentar la intervenció com una resposta al terrorisme Kurd i una defensa de la sobirania nacional, tot construint simultàniament el paper de Turquia com a actor moral i protector de la umma musulmana. L'anàlisi mostra que el discurs combina estratègies de securització; especialment pel que fa als moviments kurds; referències històriques, i apel·lacions religioses per mobilitzar el suport públic i reforçar una identitat nacional turca arrelada tant en el nacionalisme com en l'islam. Les conclusions suggereixen que la retòrica d'Erdoğan no només va servir per legitimar l'acció militar, sinó també per consolidar la seva legitimitat interna i projectar les aspiracions geopolítiques de Turquia a la regió.

**Paraules clau:** Securitització, identitat nacional, referències religioses, discurs, Operació Branca d'Olivera

## List of abbreviations

YPG	People's Protection Units
PYD	Democratic Union Party
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
DHA	Discourse-Historical Analysis
FETO	Fetullah Terrorist Organization
DAESH / ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party

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# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1. Statement of the research problem and object of study**

Erdoğan's discourses represent an emblematic illustration of the power of language in the justification of military interventions and consolidation of domestic support (Kardaş, 2018). However, the Turkish case reveals that these discourses also seek to construct a long-lasting national narrative that profoundly shapes Turkey's internal cohesion and its geopolitical ambitions. The presentation of the Kurdish issue, and in particular the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), as a serious danger to Turkey's territorial integrity and unity is at the heart of this story.

This study provides an in-depth examination of the discourses employed by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the context of the 2018 Operation Olive Branch, a military offensive launched by Turkey in Syria's Afrin region, aimed at targeting the Kurdish People's Protection Units, hereafter referred to as YPG, which is presented as an internal-external threat.

Additionally, an analysis of related academic studies on the topic, reveals that Erdoğan's discourses draw heavily on the notion of a "war on terror" as the initial justification for its military intervention, portraying the operation as a necessary defense against Kurdish terrorism (Croft, 2006; Gürcan, 2019). Over time, however, this justification has evolved into what scholars identify as a transformative occupation, a strategy that reshapes regional dynamics and expands Turkey's influence in Syria (Reimer-Burgrova, 2020). Simultaneously, the President's rhetoric has contributed to deepening social divisions within Turkey, particularly by framing Kurdish groups as existential threats, thereby reinforcing an us-versus-them narrative (Jackson, 2005).

## **1.2. Justification**

The justification of this research lies in its contribution to understanding to what extent language and political discourse serve as tools for both domestic consolidation and geopolitical positioning. While much of the existing literature has explored Erdoğan's nationalist and religious discourse separately, there has been limited analysis of how these two dimensions interact in the context of military interventions (Yilmaz, 2021). This study aims to address this gap by exploring how Erdoğan strategically merges national security

concerns with religious identity to justify, in this context, the Olive Branch Operation, reinforcing both Turkish nationalism and Turkey's role as a protector of the Muslim *umma*. Specifically, a key component of Erdoğan's rhetorical approach is the portrayal of Kurdish groups as existential threats, which enables the fusion of religious and nationalist narratives under the guise of national security.

Furthermore, this research provides a new perspective by situating Erdoğan's discourse within the broader historical and ideological framework of Ottoman heritage. By invoking the Ottoman past, Erdoğan constructs a moral and existential imperative for military action, presenting Turkey's intervention in Syria not only as a matter of national security but also as a continuation of its historical duty as a guardian of the Islamic world (Dinçer, 2023). Understanding the securitization of Kurdish groups within this narrative provides insight into broader patterns of exclusion and identity construction in Turkish politics, particularly regarding how external and internal threats are framed in relation to both historical legitimacy and contemporary geopolitics.

The study provides an in-depth analysis of Erdoğan's discourses during the 2018 Operation Olive Branch, which took place from January 20th, 2018, to March 24th, 2018 (Kasapoğlu & Ülgen, 2018). While the intervention itself occurred within this timeframe, the analysis extends from October 1st 2017 to May 6th 2018, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the evolution of Erdoğan's discourses, especially in response to shifting domestic and international audiences. While existing studies have highlighted Erdoğan's use of religious rhetoric during Operation Olive Branch, there has been limited analysis of how his discourse evolved over time, particularly with regard to the balance between religious references and security concerns, and how this evolution aligns with Turkey's broader geopolitical objectives.

### **1.3. Research question and hypothesis**

This inquiry is guided by the research question: "To what extent does Erdoğan's nationalistic and religious rhetoric during the 2018 Operation Olive Branch reinforce Turkish national identity and position Turkey as a guardian of the Muslim *umma*?"

The main hypothesis of this work lies on the premise that, rather than merely strengthening national identity by identifying external threats, Erdoğan's discourse constructs the Kurdish

YPG as an enemy by constructing an image of Turkey as uniquely responsible for safeguarding both the unity of the nation and the broader Muslim umma, linking these objectives to its historical and moral legacy.

#### **1.4. Objectives**

The objectives of this research focus on a profound analysis of Erdoğan's discursive strategy during the Olive Branch Operation. Outlined below are the main investigation aims of this study:

1. Conduct an in-depth analysis of Erdoğan's discourse strategies, focusing on the techniques he employs, such as securitization, and religious appeals.
2. Contextualize the securitization of the "Kurdish question" from the foundation of the Turkish Republic through Operation Olive Branch, thereby situating the 2018 discourse in a *longue durée* of Turkish state practice.
3. Examine how Erdoğan's rhetoric constructs the image of the enemy, and how this serves to reinforce Turkish national identity and justify military intervention.
4. Assess whether Erdoğan's discourse positions Turkey as the guardian of the umma, and if not, analyze how religious references function instead as instruments of legitimization and internal cohesion.

## **2. Historical and geopolitical context**

The Kurdish question in Turkey is deeply rooted in the historical and geopolitical transformations of the Middle East, particularly following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. The postwar reconfiguration of borders, initially outlined in the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, had promised Kurdish autonomy but was later nullified by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which instead integrated Kurdish populations into the newly established states of Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, with additional enclaves in Armenia and Azerbaijan (McDowall, 2004, pp. 115-118).

Map 1: Kurdish inhabited area



Source: *Washington Institute, Council on Foreign relations*  
citing *CIA World Factbook, Maps4news.com/©HERE*

This territorial restructuring laid the foundation for what is now known as the Kurdish question, a term that encapsulates the enduring struggle of the Kurdish people for political recognition and self-determination. In Turkey, this issue has been particularly contentious, as successive governments, particularly Erdogan's one, have framed Kurdish political movements as security threats, reinforcing a national security narrative that has shaped both domestic policies and regional geopolitics (López Castillo, 2019).

Kurds make up roughly 15–20% of the Turkish population, particularly in the southeast, where successive governments have treated Kurdish identity as a threat to national unity. The early Turkish Republic under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk pursued policies of assimilation, including bans on language and cultural expression, and violently suppressed uprisings such as the Sheikh Said Rebellion (1925) and the Dersim Revolt (1937–38) (Zürcher, 2004; White, 2000).

With the rise of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, from here on referred to as the PKK; a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla group that began an armed insurgency against the Turkish government in 1984; the situation worsened in the 1980s (Marcus, 2007). Decades of armed conflicts, widespread displacement, and human rights abuses resulted from the conflict. Village evacuations, extrajudicial executions, and counterinsurgency operations were all part of Turkey's militarized response to the Kurdish issue by the 1990s (Gunter, 2011). The state's

strategy was not merely to eliminate the PKK but to prevent the formation of any autonomous Kurdish political identity, according to Barkey and Fuller (1998).

The outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in 2011 introduced new geopolitical complexities. The Democratic Union Party, from now on referred to as the PYD, and its military wing, the YPG, were able to establish *de facto* independent rule over Kurdish-majority areas in northern Syria due to the power vacuum (Lowe, 2014). Because of the PYD/YPG's operational and ideological connections to the PKK, Turkey saw this growth as a direct security concern (Larrabee & Lesser, 2018).

Turkish concerns were further heightened by the United States' decision to back the YPG in its conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Ankara repeatedly warned that American military aid to the YPG was indirectly strengthening the PKK and undermining Turkish national security (Yavuz, 2018). The Turkish government also viewed the emergence of a Kurdish-controlled entity along its southern border as a direct threat, fearing that it could encourage Kurdish separatism within Turkey and disrupt the regional balance of power (Kardaş, 2018).

Against this backdrop, the Olive Branch Operation, launched on January 20th, 2018, was framed by Ankara as a necessary measure to prevent the emergence of a Kurdish-controlled corridor along its southern border (Kasapoğlu & Ülgen, 2018). The operation targeted Afrin, a key stronghold of the YPG, and was conducted in two phases: an initial aerial bombardment campaign followed by a ground offensive (Gunter, 2018).

In addition to its direct military goals, the operation had distinct geopolitical intentions. Turkey aimed to dissuade the United States from continuing its support for the YPG and to reinforce its control in northern Syria (Larrabee & Lesser, 2018). Turkey's involvement in Afrin was not only a response to Kurdish separatism but also a strategic message to Washington, signaling that Ankara would not tolerate the arming of the YPG (Yavuz, 2018). Although Russia accepted Turkey's authority over Syrian airspace, the operation escalated tensions with the U.S., especially as Turkey indicated plans to expand operations to Manbij, where U.S. troops were present (Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies, 2018).

### 3. Literature Review

The construction of Kurdish political movements in Turkey as security threats has consistently been the subject of extensive academic inquiry, particularly regarding how the Turkish state frames the Kurdish question as an existential security threat. Scholars like Krzyżanowska (2024) argue that the Kurdish conflict is deeply rooted in Turkey's national security narrative. According to the author, Turkey's concept of national security has been discursively shaped by a structural rejection of ethnic diversity, reinforced through official narratives that marginalize Kurdish identity. This security construction has been used to justify military repression against the PKK and other Kurdish groups, aiming to preserve Turkey's territorial integrity and its national modernization project.

This perspective is complemented by Gunter (2018) and Yeşiltaş (2018), who explore how the securitization of the Kurdish movement in Turkey has evolved from the PKK's resistance in the 1980s to the current strategies of the government. Gunter (2018) argues that in recent decades, the Turkish state has utilized the "war on terror" narrative to portray the PKK as an indisputable security threat, an enemy that justifies not only the use of military force but also the nullification of any political dialogue. Yeşiltaş (2018), on the other hand, examines how this securitization has directly impacted Turkey's foreign policy, especially in its relations with neighboring states and its regional military interventions. His research highlights how Turkey's national security narrative aligns with its geopolitical interests, particularly in Syria.

In exploring the securitization of political issues, scholars have examined how states construct certain issues as existential threats to justify extraordinary measures. Waeber (1995) introduces the securitization theory as instrumental in understanding the political dynamics behind framing issues as security threats. According to Waeber, this security construction allows the state to bypass democratic norms and implement policies that would otherwise be unacceptable. In the context of Turkey, Buzan (2008) expands on this theory, arguing that states like Turkey use states of emergency to delegitimize political alternatives and maintain social and political control through the use of fear. According to Barkey and Fuller (1998), despite episodic political openings, such as the brief dialogue process with Abdullah Öcalan, the securitization of the Kurdish issue has remained a consistent instrument of state power.

This body of work often addresses the disjunction between security discourses and religious rhetoric. Roy (2004) and Yeşiltaş (2018) highlight how Erdoğan's blending of nationalism with Islamic identity serves to reinforce Turkey's self-image as both a sovereign state and a moral leader. Roy suggests that Turkey, like many other nations, perceives itself as an imagined community (Anderson, 1983), where national identity is not only a social construct but also a political one. Anderson's research argues that the Turkish state has used nationalist and religious rhetoric to maintain an image of internal cohesion, asserting that national unity must be protected against any force, whether internal, like the PKK, or external, like the West.

Dinçer (2023) and Kasapoğlu & Ülgen (2018) illustrate how Erdoğan has integrated Islamic discourse and the symbolism of Ottoman heritage to consolidate his power and project Turkey as a regional leader. Additionally, in Erdoğan's speeches during the military intervention, themes of religious solidarity were frequently emphasized, drawing on Ottoman symbolism and Quranic references to rally domestic and regional support (Dinçer, 2023). This dual narrative of security and religion positioned Turkey as the guardian of both national sovereignty and broader Islamic values, reinforcing its identity as a bridge between East and West.

Hence, it is apparent that the "Kurdish question" has been a central axis shaping both Turkey's domestic and foreign policy narratives, rooted in the state's long-standing effort to preserve its territorial integrity and national unity. Kurdish nationalism, characterized by its pursuit of cultural recognition and political autonomy, has often been portrayed by the Turkish state as a fundamental threat to national cohesion (Gürcan, 2019; Dinçer, 2023). The internal divisions within Kurdish movements, ranging from ideological differences to strategies for achieving autonomy, have further complicated the resolution of this issue (Gürcan, 2019). This constructed security framework has allowed Erdoğan to maintain a state of perpetual crisis, where military interventions are framed as necessary and unavoidable.

Building upon the concept of securitization, the framing of military actions often relies on rhetorical strategies that construct moral imperatives, frequently through the dichotomy of "us vs. them" narratives (Jackson, 2005). This form of discourse portrays the state and its allies as defenders of universal values, while framing adversaries as existential threats to

these ideals (Campbell, 1998; Bleiker, 2001). In the context of the “war on terror”, such discourse has been instrumental in defining conflicts as battles between civilization and barbarism, thereby justifying military interventions as not only necessary but morally righteous (Croft, 2006). Erdoğan’s invocation of this moral binary during Operation Olive Branch not only legitimized the intervention but also reinforced Turkey’s image in the international sphere (Campbell, 1998; Bleiker, 2001). This approach not only underscores how language shapes perceptions of security and legitimizes the exceptional measures required to confront perceived threats, but also reinforced Turkey’s self-image as a leader within the Muslim world, capable of challenging Western narratives and asserting its autonomy in an increasingly multipolar world (Waeber, 1995; Buzan et al., 1998; Croft, 2006).

Overall, this literature provides important groundwork. However, what remains underexplored is how Erdoğan’s discourse evolved over time during Operation Olive Branch, particularly in the way religious and nationalist elements were strategically balanced in response to shifting domestic and international contexts. By drawing on these insights, this research examines how Erdoğan’s discourses in the context of the Operation, strategically reproduce these narratives to justify military intervention, reinforce national identity, and construct Turkey’s moral leadership within the Muslim world.

#### **4. Theoretical framework**

National identity and security perceptions are greatly influenced by political discourse. In addition to framing conflicts, leaders use discourses as strategies to defend military interventions and bolster public support (Waeber, 1995; p. 52). In Turkey, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has strategically employed religious narratives to securitize the Kurdish issue and therefore strengthen Turkish national identity, particularly during Operation Olive Branch (2018). In addition, the invocation of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey’s Islamic heritage to frame contemporary security policies as part of an enduring civilizational mission is frequently observed in Erdoğan’s discourse, where historical narratives are strategically employed to legitimize present-day political and military actions (Dinçer, 2013; pp. 306).



In this study, the theoretical framework is employed to understand the discursive strategies through which President Erdoğan frames Kurdish actors as existential threats, reinforcing both national security imperatives and collective identity formation. To this end, the research integrates three complementary theoretical perspectives: Michel Foucault's Discourse Theory, which elucidates how discourse constitutes social realities and power relations (Foucault, 1981); the Copenhagen School's Securitization Theory, particularly Ole Wæver's conceptualization of how security threats are socially constructed through speech acts (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998); and Social Identity Theory, which explains how national identity is maintained and reinforced through differentiation from externalized "others" (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The confluence of these perspectives provides a robust framework to understand how Erdoğan's rhetoric constructs and legitimizes security narratives, thereby normalizing extraordinary political measures under the guise of necessity.

#### **4.1. Discursive Construction of Threats**

According to Foucault's Discourse Theory (1981), discourses are more than ways of expressing ideas and are intrinsically tied to the structures of society itself. Moreover, they are not merely a tool for describing reality but a mechanism for its construction. Through them, power structures define what is perceived as truth, shaping social norms and political legitimacy. In this sense, political leaders do not simply respond to threats; rather, they produce and legitimize them through language, establishing the parameters of what constitutes security and who is framed as a threat. This process reinforces state authority by normalizing exceptional measures under the guise of necessity and inevitability (Foucault, 1981).

Moreover, Foucault's concept of governmentality (1991) is particularly relevant in the Turkish context, as Erdoğan's rhetoric aligns with state strategies that produce security threats as governing instruments. Through securitizing discourse, the state reaffirms its monopoly over violence while cultivating a national consciousness that perceives military interventions as imperative for national survival.

Besides, the Securitization Theory developed by the Copenhagen School, as explained by Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde (1998), posits that security is a socially constructed process in which certain affairs or actors are presented as threats to a referent object, like a state's

national security in the Turkish case. This theoretical foundation highlights how security discourses transform political issues into survival imperatives, bypassing democratic norms to justify controversial policies (Buzan, 2008; Lister, 2003). However, for securitization to succeed, the audience or political elites must accept the threat and support the proposed measures, transforming the discourse into a successful securitization. According to the theory, securitization does not necessarily rely on a real threat, but rather on the way the issue is presented as an urgent matter that must be addressed outside regular political procedures (Buzan et al., 1998; Wæver, 2004).

#### **4.2. National Identity, Othering and Civilizational Narratives**

In addition, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) argues that group cohesion is reinforced through the development of categories like “us” vs “them”, with in-groups seeking a positive self-definition. According to Tajfel & Turner (1979), “the establishment of positive distinctiveness between the in-group and the out-group is a fundamental psychological process, reinforcing group cohesion and collective identity” (p. 40). In the Turkish case, these external others are not just Kurdish separatists but also the broader geopolitical forces, particularly Western powers like the U.S., framed as undermining Turkey's role as a regional leader.

Meanwhile, Teun van Dijk's (1998) concept of the ideological square, which emphasizes the dichotomy between “us” and “them”, provides a crucial lens for examining how Erdoğan constructs a polarized discourse. By methodically highlighting Turkey's virtues and exaggerating the threats posed by Kurdish actors and Western powers, Erdoğan fosters a collective identity centered on national victimhood and resilience.

In addition, by the framing of Turkey's military interventions as historical and moral imperatives, rather than mere geopolitical strategies, his discourses foster a collective identity in which national strength is inseparable from religious duty (Brubaker, 2017). Such statement is further argued by Müftüler-Baç & Taş (2021), “by portraying Turkey as the last stronghold of Islamic civilization against both internal and external threats, Erdoğan consolidates his domestic support while positioning Turkey as a regional hegemon” (p. 205). This discourse reinforces Turkey's leadership claim in a crowded ideological field by uniting domestic support and positioning it as the primary bulwark against Kurdish secession and Western interference (Müftüler-Baç & Taş, 2021).

## **5. Methodology**

This analysis is based in a qualitative-interpretive case study methodology that is based on a constructivist epistemological perspective. Constructivist methods stress that meaning is socially constructed through language, practices, and power dynamics, rather than being innate (Klotz & Lynch, 2007). As a result, the study aims to comprehend to what extent political discourses actively shape national identity, security perceptions, and justifications for state action rather than testing fixed factors.

Consistent with its constructivist epistemological underpinnings, the study employs an interpretivist approach that highlights the active production, dissemination, and interpretation of meanings within particular sociopolitical situations. According to this viewpoint, speech is a social activity that shapes and reproduces power dynamics and collective identities rather than a neutral medium. Because it recognizes that speech is enmeshed in larger historical and ideological processes that shape what may be said, by whom, and with what consequences, the methodological approach is intrinsically contextual and reflective (Klotz & Prakash, 2008). The study places more emphasis on analytical depth than generalizability, concentrating on in-depth textual and contextual analysis to identify the narrative patterns and rhetorical devices that underlie Erdoğan's political speech.

### **5.1. Methods**

This research, grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically employs the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) developed by Ruth Wodak. The DHA is especially well-suited for a methodical analysis of political discourse because it enables the integration of textual analysis with the historical and sociopolitical settings in which the discourse is generated and consumed.

The study's foundation consists in the examination of eight public discourses delivered by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan between the 1st of October 2017 and the 6th of May 2018, corresponding to the timeframe for the planning, execution, and fallout of the Olive Branch Operation. The discourses were selected due to their discursive relevance to the object of study, as they exemplify how Erdoğan's rhetoric is constructed and deployed during a key moment of national and international projection. To provide a consistent corpus of analysis and to assure their authenticity, all materials are taken from the Presidency of the Republic of

Turkey's official website (Presidency of Turkey, 2018). Therefore, the eight chosen discourses are public addresses delivered in various contexts and with different communicative purposes; nonetheless, they constitute a cohesive corpus appropriate for discourse-historical analysis, since they enable the exploration of recurring rhetorical patterns and strategic language usages over time.

In line with the DHA, the analysis has been conducted using a structured self-designed template to guide the individual examination of each discourse. To guarantee openness and reproducibility, this analytical framework is fully described in Annex I on page 35. This template focused on the micro-level of the discourse, attending to lexical choices, referential strategies, rhetorical devices, and argumentation schemes, dividing the analysis in two phases. The aim of the first phase is to methodically identify discursive strategies and patterns that would subsequently be connected to broader social and political dynamics like the securitization of the Kurdish issue, the reinforcement of Turkish national identity, and the legitimization of military intervention through historical and religious narratives.

Moreover, following the completion of an individual analysis of each discourse, a second phase involved synthesising the findings to identify broader discursive trends and their evolution throughout the selected timeframe. This approach, in accordance with the principles of the DHA, allows for a contextualised understanding of to what extent Erdoğan's discourses respond to and shape the political and social dynamics of the period under study (Wodak, 2001). This methodological design thus ensures coherence, transparency, and analytical depth throughout the research process (Klotz & Lynch, 2007).

## **6. Empirical Analysis**

Following the individual examination<sup>1</sup> of the eight selected discourses delivered by President Erdoğan between October 2017 and May 2018, within the framework of 2018 Operation Olive Branch, this section aims to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the discursive continuities and transformations observed across the corpus. The primary objective is to evaluate the extent to which Erdoğan's nationalistic and religious rhetoric contributes to the ongoing reinforcement of a Turkish national identity and the construction of Turkey as the

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<sup>1</sup>See Annex I for the analyses of the eight discourses' templates (pp. 37-67).

legitimate guardian of the Muslim *umma*. The identification of recurring rhetorical strategies, thematic consistencies, and potential discursive shifts are significant for the understanding of the broader ideological narrative and to address the core research question.

In order to provide a synthesized representation of the discursive strategies present in Erdoğan's speeches, the following heat map illustrates the relative frequency and discursive intensity of selected themes across the analyzed time period. While not exhaustive, this visual tool contributes to identifying key patterns and variations in the discourse, and serves as a complementary support to the qualitative analysis that follows. Although not formally referred to as stories in every passage, these discursive patterns recycle key *topoi*<sup>2</sup> that serve as common justifications throughout the whole corpus.

Table 1. Discursive Heat Map: Erdoğan's speeches

Discursive themes	Oct'17	Dic'17	Jan'18	Jan'18	Feb'18	Mar'18	Apr'18	May'18
Militarization as moral duty	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2
Demonization of the enemy	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2
Us vs Them dichotomy	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2
Religious-national symbols	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
Anti-Western sentiment	3	3	3	3	2	2	1	1
Turkey as leader of the Umma	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	2

<sup>2</sup> A topos (plural *topoi*) is a "commonplace" or a conventional premise in argumentation: a culturally shared assertion or heuristic that speakers invoke as if it were self-evident, in order to justify or guide inferential moves without having to argue them from first principles (Wodak, 2003; pp. 683).

<b>Glorification of martyrdom</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
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Source: Own elaboration

Throughout the selected period, a consistent discursive strategy has been identified in Erdoğan's discourses: the articulation of military operations as a moral and national imperative. When broken down chronologically, we observe that the topos of threat reaches its peak in the period immediately preceding January 20th, coinciding with the aerial bombardment phase (Gunter, 2018); appeals to moral responsibility remain high during the ground incursion; and historical references intensify after the capture of Afrin, as the discourse seeks to anchor the victory in collective memory. The Operation Olive Branch is discursively framed not merely as a tactical security-oriented mission, but as a national duty and a moral-religious campaign. From the outset, the President Erdoğan presents the operation as a necessary response to the PKK/YPG threat constructed by him, yet he discursively elevates its significance by invoking a dual imperative: the moral duty to protect the homeland and oppressed Muslims, and the representation of the enemy, being portrayed as an imminent and existential threat to the unity and security of the state.

One of the most consistent elements in Erdoğan's discourse is precisely this portrayal of the enemy as not only dangerous but also illegitimate and absolutely malign. Through language that conveys urgency and danger, the President refers to them using terms such as "terrorists", "traitors", and "puppets of foreign powers". Over time, Erdoğan's framing of the Kurdish threat becomes increasingly embedded within a broader narrative of international betrayal and conspiracy. The internal enemies thus redefined not as an isolated actor, but as a proxy or extension of hostile foreign agendas, particularly those of Western states. In one of his discourses during the Operation Olive Branch, the President states:

Do you think you can conceal the truth by flying your flag over the hotbeds of the terrorist organization and stitching nondescript emblems on their shoulders? [...] However, do not worry, they will learn, they will learn why it is a big mistake to trust terrorist organizations. They will learn that they cannot find any ally other than Turkey to work with in the region (Erdoğan, 2018a).

In this quote, the invocation of "flags" and "emblems" is metaphorically exposing what Erdoğan presents as the hypocrisy of international actors, who, under the guise of neutrality or legality, are allegedly supporting terrorist networks on the ground. By equating

international actors with terrorist groups, the President frames foreign involvement, particularly by Western powers, not as neutral or peace-seeking, but as complicit in a broader scheme to undermine the sovereignty of Turkey. This strategic use of language serves not only to delegitimize the adversary, but, following Buzan and Foucault's concept of securitization, it transforms what could be seen as a political conflict into a matter of national survival. Through this kind of "speech act", Erdoğan introduces an emergency logic that legitimizes exceptional measures, in this context, the aforementioned military intervention.

Moreover, another recurring pattern identified throughout the analysis is the constant use of the polarized dichotomy of the "us" vs "them" in the construction and strengthening of the Turkish national identity. Such strategy attempts to consolidate a collective sense of unity and moral superiority as well as to delineate the boundaries of loyalty, distinguishing the "true" national self from both internal dissenters and external adversaries. This dichotomy appears in every single one of the discourses analyzed, but it stands out particularly in Erdoğan's speech on January 20th, 2018, when he declared:

They activated FETO and tried to cow our country into submission with its members within the police force, judiciary and military. [...] They set DAESH upon us and wanted to smother our streets in blood and fire. [...] They tried to make Turkey kneel under the burden of the refugee flow, but where in the world actually cracked? It was Europe that cracked. (Erdoğan, 2018a)

In this case, Erdoğan uses the logic of distinguishing between Turkey and its adversaries, framing the country as a victim and a resilient force standing against powerful enemies, by his use of this polarized language. This resonates strongly with Van Dijk's concept of the ideological square, where the in-group is valorized and the out-group demonized. Furthermore, the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) helps for the understanding how this discursive construction reinforces the country's internal cohesion, as it is said that the definition of a common enemy consolidates a strong and morally superior national identity. Nevertheless, Erdoğan not only points out the enemy but also constructs a positive and heroic sense of belonging for the "us" of Turkey.

The persistent repetition of terms like "our heroes", "our martyrs" or "this people does not kneel" creates an epic narrative that excludes those who do not align with it. This strategy not only polarizes but also establishes an implicit criterion of loyalty to the nation.

In addition, throughout the discourses, it is observed a growing Islamization of the national narrative, marked by the invocation of Allah and national symbols like the olive tree and Çanakkale at various points. For instance, in his speech on the 24th of January, he stated: “Olives are highly blessed in our belief, and *Vettini Vezzeytun*, here Allah swears by halva and the olive, a surah that begins with it.” (Erdoğan, 2018b); and in another discourse, on the 18th of March, he said, “With Allah's permission, we won that day in Çanakkale, and the victory is ours today.” (Erdoğan, 2018d). These kinds of statements go beyond mere cultural references; where Erdoğan actively embeds religious symbolism within the framework of national pride and historical memory. This provokes a moralization of military action and transforms the military intervention into a sacred duty. Death in combat, thus, is not only a sacrifice, but also an act of national redemption.

Although Erdoğan is a devoted Christian and these allusions may represent his own beliefs, their methodical and calculated incorporation into official statements goes beyond simple sentimentality. Religion serves as a potent instrument of political legitimation within the context of a nationalist and military rhetoric, rather than just as a personal moral compass. A military intervention gains sacred value when it is presented as divinely approved and symbolically connected to notable triumphs like Çanakkale. The public's emotional loyalty is sparked, criticism is avoided, and battle is ethically elevated through this sacralization of political activity. Thus, in addition to redefining sacrifice and battle death as acts of national redemption, enmeshed in a spiritual and historical continuity, the islamization of the national narrative serves to uphold Erdoğan's rule.

The religious dimension of Erdoğan's discourses is intensified not only in terms of Muslim identities but also through a strong appeal to Ottoman history, which deeply resonates with the collective imagination of Turkey. By referencing past struggles like the Battle of Çanakkale, the President draws a symbolic continuity between historical victories and the contemporary military intervention in Afrin. Moreover, this use of historical analogy is not neutral; as Wodak (2009, pp. 38-42) argues, it reactivates historical memories to provide legitimacy to present actions. By portraying Turkey as the heir to the Ottoman heritage, Erdoğan presents the country as an unwavering protector of both its independence and the Muslim world. What's more, such analogies reinforce the narrative that the Olive Branch Operation is not an isolated event but part of a broader, ongoing struggle of national survival, a pattern that fits with the Copenhagen School's concept of securitization (Buzan, Wæver &



de Wilde, 1998). Additionally, this pattern also clearly delineates the in-group and the out-group, a process central to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), where the Turkish population is depicted as righteous defenders of justice and sovereignty, while external threats are framed as part of a larger struggle.

It is at this stage of the analysis that the dialectical relationship between the microlevel of textual and rhetorical choices and the macro-level of socio-political structures, central to the DHA, becomes especially evident (Wodak, 2009, p. 38; see also Wodak, 2015, pp. 28-30). At the micro-discursive level, Erdoğan's use of specific linguistic and rhetorical strategies, such as metaphorical framing, emotional intensification, appeals to authority, and lexical polarization, reflects a strategic construction of meaning that seeks to legitimize political action and delineate identity boundaries (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; pp. 45-49). However, these strategies do not operate in isolation. The DHA emphasizes that the analysis of a discourse must connect the text-internal features to text-external factors (Wodak, 2015; p. 31). These text-external factors include the historical context, institutional frameworks, socio-political power relations, and collective experiences of the society (Wodak, 2015; pp. 30-32). In Erdoğan's case, the external context involves not only the legacy of the Ottoman Empire and national trauma narratives, but also current geopolitical tensions, the securitization of the Kurdish issue, and Turkey's evolving role within the Islamic world. The DHA's integrative framework, which attempts to describe how meaning is created in discourse as well as how discourse contributes to the reproduction and alteration of power relations and social identities, is best illustrated by this interaction between the micro and the macro.

Up to this point, the analysis demonstrates that Erdoğan's continuous discourses throughout the selected period establish a vicious argumentative cycle, wherein the portrayal of the threat perpetually reinforces the justification and legitimacy of the measures implemented. This cycle is maintained through the reiteration of certain topics and the demonization of the enemy, which facilitates the normalization of extreme positions by the time of closing the space for questioning and dissidence (Wodak, 2009; p.38).

Besides, the progressive elevation of Turkey's position beyond national borders, presented not merely as a territorial security matter but also as a broader moral duty, is another significant trend that shows up throughout the corpus of the discourses chosen. Erdoğan's frequent appeals to religious obligation, divine blessing, and the protection of the oppressed

reveal an implicit positioning of Turkey as singular leader and redeemer among Muslim states, despite the comparatively limited number of explicit allusions to the *umma* or the Islamic world. For instance, Erdoğan stated, in the address on May 6th:

Our revival will also pave the way for the salvation of all the oppressed across the world. Currently, Turkey is turning into the most important power of its region. It will be a global power and a leading country in the new era. It will take a huge leap forward with wisdom, will and courage. (Erdoğan, 2018f)

Although Erdoğan does not specifically mention the *umma* in this statement, it is observable that, in this moralised geopolitical worldview, Turkey is positioned as the leader of civilization. Claiming to be salvific, this is more in line with a narrative of regional hegemony and national exceptionalism than it is with Islamic unity. Therefore, the claims of global leadership and protection of the underprivileged are employed to justify Turkey's growing power under the pretense of moral responsibility.

Furthermore, a persistent anti-Western sentiment becomes more pronounced as the operation unfolds. In several discourses, especially the one delivered on February 18th, Erdoğan accuses Western powers of supporting terrorist organizations, and therefore, betraying Turkey: "They all know it, and they have it in their records...[Yet] they support PKK and protect terrorists." This externalization of the menace serves a dual purpose: it delegitimizes foreign criticism while fostering a siege mentality, whereby national cohesion is reinforced through the construction of a morally inferior and threatening "other". Rather than engaging with criticism, Erdoğan reframes it as evidence of hostility, thus holding a narrative of resistance and national virtue.

Finally, the overall narrative constructed throughout the Operation Olive Branch period is reinforced by two more discursive components. The first is the repeated focus on Turkey's autonomy and self-sufficiency, often encapsulated in the notion of "Turkey alone". On the 1st of April, Erdoğan addressed: "Turkey is much stronger than before...and will continue down its road by getting stronger every day" projecting an image of unwavering strength and spiritual mission. Echoing previous invocations of historical successes like Çanakkale, this narrative not merely encourages self-reliance in the face of foreign challenges but also elevates Turkey as a singularly powerful and morally pure player.

Secondly, the glorification of martyrdom and sacrifice serves as a discursive unifier. Across the corpus, expressions like “our martyrs live on” and “this people does not kneel” are regularly used, constructing an epic tale of perseverance and collective struggle. Erdoğan reinforces a unified national mythology by fusing religious devotion with patriotic heroic iconography. These elements further consolidate the construction of a Turkish national identity centered on moral virtue, resistance, and divine purpose, providing the discursive foundation for both internal solidarity and Turkey’s aspirational role as righteous power within the Muslim world.

In sum, while this analysis has identified multiple thematic and strategic consistencies, it is essential to consider how these discourses remain dynamic and continuously evolve in response to both internal and external political and social contexts.

## **7. Conclusions**

This analysis set out to answer the research question: “To what extent does Erdoğan's nationalistic and religious rhetoric during the 2018 Operation Olive Branch reinforce Turkish national identity and position Turkey as a guardian of the Muslim umma?”

In order to provide a rigorous answer to this research question, the study sought to achieve four main objectives: firstly, to thoroughly examine Erdoğan's discursive techniques, especially his use of securitization and religious appeals, secondly, to place the securitization of the “Kurdish question” within the Turkish Republic’s historical trajectory, thirdly, to examine how Erdoğan’s rhetoric constructs the image of the enemy by legitimizing the military intervention, and lastly, to determine whether Erdoğan's discourse positions Turkey as the guardian of the umma, or whether Islamic allusions are largely used as instruments of internal cohesion and legitimization. By addressing these objectives, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how political discourse can be strategically constructed during times of conflict to serve both domestic and international agendas.

The following investigation of eight discourses delivered between October 2017 and May 2018 shows that, to a considerable degree, Erdoğan's discourses achieve the objectives suggested, albeit through a carefully calibrated combination of securitizing language, moral appeals, and historical references.

Regarding the initial hypothesis, the findings primarily confirm that, according to Erdoğan's discourses, Turkey is portrayed as solely responsible for both national unity and the larger Muslim community. The interplay of threat, moral duty, and history in his speeches suggests a deliberate strategy to bolster Turkey's regional influence while disguising it as a moral-historical mission. However, this conclusion must be qualified, as it is not viable to determine whether or not these rhetorical strategies altered public opinion or policy outcomes in the absence of audience response data. Alternative variables, like domestic electoral considerations or broader geopolitical calculations, may also explain similar linguistic choices. As a result, while the hypothesis is validated in terms of the presence and consistency of these discursive moves, its impact remains an open question.

Through the use of a securitization framework, Erdoğan's strategic discourse is framed as a shift from a defensive act, aimed at protecting national security and integrity, to a more proactive approach with the main objective of expanding Turkish influence in the specific Syrian region of Afrin. Erdoğan positions Turkey as a "misunderstood" nation by the West, capitalizing on this victimized narrative through the use of unilateral steps, suggesting that if Turkey does not take action, no one will defend it from the demonized enemy. As the analysis progresses, it becomes evident that the President employs a problematic discourse strategy, portraying the operation as a means of political mobilization that goes beyond seeking a genuine resolution to the conflict. From an analytical perspective, this discourse is interpreted as a reflection of his strong, pragmatic, ultranationalist leadership style, which is centered on strengthening his hold on the nation and the larger Middle East.

In this case study, a key argumentative strategy from the DHA has been identified: the use of topoi. During the selected discursive period, Erdoğan employs three relevant topoi: the topos of threat, the topos of moral responsibility, and the topos of history.

Firstly, the topos of threat is used to justify the military intervention, namely, Operation Olive Branch, by presenting the organizations labeled as terrorist as existential threats to Turkey's national unity and to Islam. Secondly, the topos of moral responsibility builds the argument that Turkey assumes the role of protector, both of its territory and of its "oppressed brothers", legitimizing its military actions and framing them as just. Lastly, the topos of history is based on invoking past milestones to illustrate a sense of historical continuity as a means of justifying decisions grounded in national legacy.

Nevertheless, this research contains some limitations. While it offers an in-depth analysis of Erdoğan's discourse and its implications, it does not encompass the full range of historical and geopolitical factors that have influenced Turkey's position on national security and Kurdish nationalism over time. While Erdoğan's discourse at the event reflects broader themes in Turkish politics, this research does not aim to provide an exhaustive historical account. Instead, it emphasizes how his discourses merge contemporary security concerns with a calculated invocation of Ottoman heritage to construct a moral and existential imperative for military action.

In conclusion, Erdoğan's continuous discourses in the context of the 2018 Olive Branch Operation have strengthened Turkish national identity through the use of strategies of securitization and religious references. However, these Islamic references function primarily as rhetorical resources that aim to justify military action and mobilize internal support, rather than as an explicit proclamation of Turkey as the guardian of the umma. This nuance indicates that the religious dimension operates, particularly, as a tool for building internal consensus, and opens the door for future research willing to explore the reception of this discourse and compare it with other interventions in which the global religious leadership may be more explicitly articulated.

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#### Use of AI

I utilized Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to enhance the clarity and coherence of the text, and to support the continuous development of ideas throughout the writing process.

## 9. Annex I

### 9.1. Individual template

The aim of this template is to conduct an empirical analysis of each speech individually, applying Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). This will provide the basis for a comprehensive global analysis, which will be integrated into the main body of the research.

LEGEND: Frequency and Rhetorical Weight of Discourse Indicators:

- Low: The indicator appears a few times in the speech, or its presence is implicit or weak.
- Moderate: The indicator appears several times in the speech, with a notable but not dominant presence.
- High: The indicator appears frequently and prominently in the speech, being a key element of its rhetoric.

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

- Date of the discourse:
- Context of the intervention (event, situation that motivates it):
- Target audience (who is it addressed to, who listens):
- Main purpose of the discourse:
- Type of discourse:

#### ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE ELEMENTS

- Central theme of the discourse:
- Micro-macro connection:

Table 2. Discursive Strategies and Structure.

Element	Present? (yes/no)	Example in the discourse
Use of collective pronouns ("we", "our nation")		

Opposition "we" vs. "they" (polarization of groups)		
Legitimization by religious authority (quotes from the Koran, references to the umma)		
References to Ottoman/Turkish history as a source of legitimacy		
Demonization of the enemy (PKK/YPG/West)		
Emotionalization of the speech (martyrs, sacrifice, national heroism)		

Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 3. Use of language and rhetoric.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Religious terms		
Nationalist key words		
Tone of the speech (aggressive, conciliatory, heroic, vindictive...)		
Calls to action		
Historical comparisons		

Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 4. Construction of national identity and the role of Turkey in the umma.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Turkey as leader of Islam		
Heroic Turkish identity		
Link between nation and religion		
Use of metaphors of struggle and resistance		

Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 5. Legitimization of the military intervention.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Use of metaphors and war expressions		
Use of hyperboles and exaggerations		
Use of religious terms to justify the action		
Use of inclusive pronouns		

Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

## 9.2. Individual analysis 1

### GENERAL INFORMATION

- Date of the discourse: 01/10/2017
- Context of the intervention (event, situation that motivates it): Inauguration of the 26th Term and 3rd Legislative Year of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

- Target audience (who is it addressed to, who listens): Members of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the Turkish nation.
- Main purpose of the discourse: To inaugurate the new legislative year, pay tribute to the martyrs and the nation's history, justify the transition to the presidential system, and reaffirm the commitment to the fight against terrorism and the defense of national sovereignty.
- Type of discourse: commemorative

## ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE ELEMENTS

Central theme of the discourse: National unity, defense of democracy, consolidation of the new presidential system, fight against terrorism, and reaffirmation of Turkey's foreign and security policy.

Micro-macro connection: At a micro-level, the discourse refers to concrete events, particularly the July 15 coup attempt and the constitutional amendment, that mark a turning point in Turkish politics. Therefore, at a macro-level, these events are linked to a long-term vision of Turkey as a strong and autonomous nation capable of leading the region and defending its values through enhancing unilateral action. The ideological framework established in this discourse, later provided the basis for the Olive Branch Operation.

Table 2. Discursive Strategies and Structure.

Element	Present? (yes/no)	Example in the discourse
Use of collective pronouns ("we", "our nation")	Yes	<i>Repeated use of "our nation", "our deputies", "our country" (e.g., "Our nation, which almost built a wall of flesh around the Grand National Assembly...")</i>
Opposition "we" vs. "they" (polarization of groups)	Yes	<i>Division between "us" (the nation, the state, loyal deputies) and "those with dark ambitions" or "those who have become partners in treason".</i>

Legitimization by religious authority (quotes from the Koran, references to the umma)	Yes	<i>Phrases such as “Praised be God” and implicit references to divine will, even though no direct sacred texts are quoted.</i>
References to Ottoman/Turkish history as a source of legitimacy	Yes	<i>“Gazi Mustafa Kemal”, “the War of Independence”, comparisons with Malazgirt, the Conquest of Istanbul, Çanakkale, Dumlupınar.</i>
Demonization of the enemy (PKK/YPG/West)	Yes	<i>“We say that the PKK is a separatist terrorist organization”, “We say that FETO is a treacherous gang”.</i>
Emotionalization of the speech (martyrs, sacrifice, national heroism)	Yes	<i>“34 of our citizens were martyred...”</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak’s Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 3. Use of language and rhetoric.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Religious terms	Moderate	<i>Expressions such as “Praised be God” and other invocations that link the nation's sacrifice and defense to a higher, divine will.</i>
Nationalist key words	High	<i>Frequent repetition of terms like “nation”, “patriot”, “independence”, “unity”, “sovereignty”, etc.</i>
Tone of the speech (aggressive, conciliatory, heroic, vindictive...)	High	<i>The tone is predominantly heroic and aggressive, as it emphasizes struggle, defense, and</i>

		determination in the face of internal and external threats
Calls to action	High	<i>“Let us build together the future of Turkey”</i>
Historical comparisons	High	“July 15 is now ours, just like Malazgirt, the Conquest of Istanbul, Çanakkale, Dumlupınar,”

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak’s Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 4. Construction of national identity and the role of Turkey in the umma.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Turkey as leader of Islam	Moderate	<i>No explicitly used the concept of “leader of the umma”, although there is commitment to fellow Muslims, through references to shared values and cooperation with Muslim countries.</i>
Heroic Turkish identity	High	Exaltation of national heroism through references to martyrs, the War of Independence, and the resilience shown during the coup attempt reinforces the image of an indomitable people.
Link between nation and religion	Moderate	Elements of national identity are intertwined with religious expressions (e.g., invocations of God, homage to historically revered figures) to strengthen the feeling of unity and purpose.
Use of metaphors of struggle and resistance	High	<i>“wall of flesh”, “united fist”</i>



Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 5. Legitimization of the military intervention.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Use of metaphors and war expressions	High	<i>"the game played", "descending on the organizations of terrorism"</i>
Use of hyperboles and exaggerations	Moderate	<i>The discourse amplifies the threats by describing the events of July 15 as tests of national unity, elevating the narrative to an almost mythic level, stressing that any act against these values will be met with a determined response.</i>
Use of religious terms to justify the action	Moderate	<i>Religious terms are incorporated to confer moral legitimacy to the actions of the State, linking the defense of the nation with divine will, although without delving into textual quotations.</i>
Use of inclusive pronouns	High	<i>Repeated use of "we", "our", and "the nation" integrates all citizens into the struggle. Sense of collective responsibility and commitment to defending Turkey.</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

### 9.3. Individual analysis 2

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

- Date of the discourse: 17/12/2017
- Context of the intervention (event, situation that motivates it): The discourse is given at a mass opening ceremony in Karaman, a city in central Turkey. Its primary focus

was to celebrate the completion of various infrastructure projects and services, however, it also served a larger political purpose, specifically within the context of Turkey's Olive Branch Operation in Syria.

- Target audience (who it is addressed to, who listens): Addressed to the attendees of the mass opening event in Karaman, and more broadly, to the Turkish public. It also contains messages to Turkey's allies (particularly the U.S.), criticizing their support for groups that are considered terrorist by Turkey.
- Main purpose of the discourse: Construction of a confrontation narrative between Turkey and external actors, presenting the country as a harassed nation that must apply unilateral measures in order to be self-protected, while reports its allies' hypocrisy.
- Type of discourse: political and mobilizing.

## ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE ELEMENTS

- Central theme of the discourse: Elimination of terrorist threats along Turkey's borders and the rejection of foreign interference in regional security matters.
- Micro-macro connection: At a micro-level, Erdogan outlines specific military actions taken by Turkey to eliminate terrorist groups from regions near its borders (Afrin, Manjib, and Idlib). He mentions Euphrates Shield and joint actions with Russia and Iran, by framing these actions as necessary to secure the country's territorial integrity. On the other hand, at a macro-level, Erdogan refers to the redesigning of the Middle East by external powers and criticizes countries; especially those in the West, like the U.S., for supporting groups that Turkey sees as enemies. The conflict is framed as a larger geopolitical battle where Turkey is not only defending its own interests but also resisting foreign efforts to destabilize the region.

Table 2. Discursive Strategies and Structure.

Element	Present? (yes/no)	Example in the discourse
Use of collective pronouns ("we", "our nation")	Yes	<i>"We shall eliminate terrorists from Afrin"</i>

Opposition "we" vs. "they" (polarization of groups)	Yes	<i>"We shall continue to take the wind out of the sails of terrorists spoiled, provoked and armed by some who are supposedly our allies"</i>
Legitimization by religious authority (quotes from the Koran, references to the umma)	Yes	<i>"Al-Quds is the capital of our spiritual rearm"</i>
References to Ottoman/Turkish history as a source of legitimacy	No	Not mentioned explicitly.
Demonization of the enemy (PKK/YPG/West)	Yes	<i>"It does not matter whether this information is called PKK or PYD or YPG or FETO or DAESH, they are only different handles of one candlestick"</i>
Emotionalization of the speech (martyrs, sacrifice, national heroism)	Yes	<i>"We shall not turn a blind eye to the provocation and harassment targeting our holy places, especially Al-Quds."</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 3. Use of language and rhetoric.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Religious terms	High	<i>"Al-Quds is the capital of our spiritual realm.", "Our holy places"</i>
Nationalist key words	High	<i>"our nation", "our borders", "We shall continue to work in line with the benefits, expectations and</i>

		<i>objectives of our country and nation."</i>
Tone of the speech (aggressive, conciliatory, heroic, vindictive...)	Aggressive and heroic	<i>"We shall eliminate terrorists from all our borders."</i>
Calls to action	High	<i>"We shall eliminate terrorists from Afrin, Manbij, Tell Abyad, Ras al-Ayn and Qamishli."</i>
Historical comparisons	Low	No explicit references

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 4. Construction of national identity and the role of Turkey in the umma.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Turkey as leader of Islam	High	<i>"The decision to recognize Al-Quds as the capital of Palestine taken at the OIC Extraordinary Summit is one of those steps."</i>
Heroic Turkish identity	High	<i>"We have stood by the oppressed and the victims all around the world."</i>
Link between nation and religion	High	<i>"Al-Quds is the capital of our spiritual realm."</i>
Use of metaphors of struggle and resistance	High	<i>"We shall tear down these terrorist formations in whichever form they may be one by one at all costs."</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 5. Legitimization of the military intervention.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
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Use of metaphors and war expressions	High	<i>"We shall eliminate terrorists."</i>
Use of hyperboles and exaggerations	High	<i>"We no longer fall for the games of those who pull out the gun of economy."</i>
Use of religious terms to justify the action	Moderate	<i>"Al-Quds is the capital of our spiritual realm."</i>
Use of inclusive pronouns	High	<i>"We shall continue to work in line with the expectations of our country and nation."</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

#### 9.4. Individual analysis 3

##### GENERAL INFORMATION

- Date of the discourse: 20/01/2018
- Context of the intervention (event, situation that motivates it): The speech was delivered at the AK Party's Kütahya Provincial Congress on the same day that Turkey launched Operation Olive Branch.
- Target audience (who is it addressed to, who listens): Primarily directed at AK Party members, local officials, and the Turkish public, aiming to consolidate internal support. However, the speech also indirectly addresses international actors.
- Main purpose of the discourse: The main purpose is to justify the launch of Operation Olive Branch, by framing it as a defensive and necessary military action and reinforcing national unity around the government's policies. This legitimization is sought both domestically and internationally by the Turkish president.
- Type of discourse: Political and persuasive

##### ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE ELEMENTS

Central theme of the discourse: The speech revolves around the justification of Turkey's military intervention in Afrin, presenting it as an essential move to protect national security, sovereignty, and stability. Erdoğan portrays the operation as a response to terrorism, positioning Turkey as the defender of its borders and regional stability. Additionally, in the discourse, a sense of national unity and duty in the face of external threats is reinforced.

Micro-macro connection: At a micro-level, Erdoğan presents the operation as an urgent national security measure, framing the PKK/YPG in Afrin as an imminent threat to Turkey. His rhetoric employs historical references, emotional appeals, and nationalist narratives to justify military action. Therefore, at a macro-level, the discourse aligns with Turkey's broader geopolitical strategy and Erdoğan's nationalist-Islamist ideology. It reinforces the perception of Turkey as a sovereign power resisting external interference, particularly from Western actors. The "us vs. them" dichotomy extends beyond Kurdish groups to include international forces perceived as complicit in destabilizing Turkey.

Table 2. Discursive Strategies and Structure.

Element	Present? (yes/no)	Example in the discourse
Use of collective pronouns ("we", "our nation")	Yes	<i>"It is our duty to prove them wrong", "We will gradually eliminate the terror trying to encircle our country", "We, as a nation, will not yield to threats".</i>
Opposition "we" vs. "they" (polarization of groups)	Yes	<i>"They will learn that they cannot find any ally other than Turkey", "They want to smother our streets in blood and fire"</i>
Legitimization by religious authority (quotes from the Koran, references to the umma)	Yes	<i>"If Allah permits, their fate will be the same"</i>

References to Ottoman/Turkish history as a source of legitimacy	Yes	<i>"Our millennia-long presence in the region is thanks to our bravery and patience."</i>
Demonization of the enemy (PKK/YPG/West)	Yes	<i>"The enemy in Syria is the terrorist organizations and their supporters... they are the same terrorists who tried to destroy Turkey."</i>
Emotionalization of the speech (martyrs, sacrifice, national heroism)	Yes	<i>"It is our duty to prove to them that we will not surrender despite more martyrs."</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 3. Use of language and rhetoric.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Religious terms	Moderate	<i>"If Allah permits..."</i>
Nationalist key words	High	<i>"Our nation", "independence", "national security", "future of our homeland"</i>
Tone of the speech (aggressive, conciliatory, heroic, vindictive...)	High	Aggressive emphasis on the defense of the nation and the fight against perceived enemies.
Calls to action	High	<i>"We must destroy this terror corridor", "We must do what is necessary"</i>
Historical comparisons	High	<i>"Our millennia-long presence in the region..."</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 4. Construction of national identity and the role of Turkey in the umma.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Turkey as leader of Islam	High	<i>"They will learn that they cannot find another ally in the region but Turkey."</i>
Heroic Turkish identity	High	<i>"The Turkish nation will not surrender. We are ready to fight for our independence."</i>
Link between nation and religion	Moderate	<i>"We fight for our national security, but also for the security and future of our Syrian brothers."</i>
Use of metaphors of struggle and resistance	High	<i>"We will gradually eliminate this terror corridor", "We face the threat with courage."</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 5. Legitimization of the military intervention.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Use of metaphors and war expressions	High	<i>"We will destroy this terror corridor", "We fight to ensure the security of our nation."</i>
Use of hyperboles and exaggerations	Moderate	<i>"We have identified all trucks and planes loaded with weapons... and we have begun capturing them."</i>
Use of religious terms to justify the action	Low	-
Use of inclusive pronouns	High	<i>"We fight not only for ourselves but for our Syrian friends.", "we will gradually eliminate"</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)



## 9.5. Individual analysis 4

### GENERAL INFORMATION

- Date of the discourse: January 24, 2018
- Context of the intervention (event, situation motivating it): The speech is framed within the context of the Olive Branch Operation, launched to "clear Afrin of terrorists." It is part of meetings with mukhtars, at a time when achievements are being celebrated, and efforts are mobilized to continue the military action.
- Target audience (who it is directed to, who listens): Directed at the mukhtars (local leaders) from various Turkish provinces, and to the Turkish people.
- Main purpose of the discourse: To justify the Olive Branch Operation as a necessary measure to eradicate terrorism (mentioning ISIS, PKK, YPG, and other organizations) and ensure national security, as well as to motivate the unity and commitment of local leaders and the citizenry.
- Type of discourse: Political-military speech

### ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE ELEMENTS

Main theme of the discourse: The speech focuses on justifying and continuing the Olive Branch Operation to "clear Afrin of terrorists."

Micro-macro connection: At the micro-level, the speech references the specific situation in Afrin and its impact on citizens (e.g., safety of life, infrastructure, and the return of refugees). At the macro-level, it links this action to the protection of national sovereignty and the identity of the country, emphasizing national unity and the historical legacy of the struggle for the homeland.

Table 2. Discursive Strategies and Structure.

Element	Present? (yes/no)	Example in the discourse
Use of collective pronouns ("we", "our nation")	yes	<i>"for accompanying such a broad embrace that has no precedent in our country and world history", "on behalf of my people"</i>

Opposition "we" vs. "they" (polarization of groups)	yes	<i>"those who are trying to distort our efforts", "those who want to include Afrin in the terror corridor"</i>
Legitimization by religious authority (quotes from the Koran, references to the umma)	yes	<i>"Olives are very blessed in our belief and 'Vettini Vezzeytun', here Allah swears by halva and olive", "Al Fatiha for our martyrs..."</i>
References to Ottoman/Turkish history as a source of legitimacy	yes	<i>"Our country brought our nation to the edge of the cliff a century ago... We came out of this census turning the resurrection that began in Çanakkale into an establishment with our War of Independence."</i>
Demonization of the enemy (PKK/YPG/West)	yes	<i>"to cleanse Afrin of terrorists", "the new collaborators of the Crusade", "PYD hits DEAŞ, YPG hits DEAŞ"</i>
Emotionalization of the speech (martyrs, sacrifice, national heroism)	yes	<i>"we gave 22 martyrs in the Euphrates Shield Operation", "our martyrs... are alive"</i>  <i>There is repeated allusion to the sacrifice and bravery of soldiers and martyrs.</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 3. Use of language and rhetoric.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Religious terms	Moderate	<i>"Las aceitunas son muy bendecidas en nuestra creencia", "aquí Alá jura por la</i>

		<i>halva y la aceituna", "Al Fatiha para nuestros mártires..."</i>
Nationalist key words	High	<i>"nuestro país", "nuestra nación", "defender nuestra tierra", "unidad"</i> <i>"80 millones de turcos, kurdos, lazos..."</i>
Tone of the speech (aggressive, conciliatory, heroic, vindictive...)		<i>"limpiar Afrin de los terroristas", "disparar al pájaro del arroyo con la piedra del arroyo", "entramos en sus guaridas"</i>
Calls to action	Low	<i>"tengo una petición de ustedes: Mis hermanos, miren, mukhtars de diferentes provincias, espero que sigamos reuniéndonos..."</i>
Historical comparisons	Low	<i>"Nuestra nación llevó a nuestra nación al borde del acantilado hace un siglo..."</i> <i>(Se alude a la Guerra de Independencia y a la resurrección que comenzó en Çanakkale.)</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 4. Construction of national identity and the role of Turkey in the umma.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Turkey as leader of Islam	Low	No se declara explícitamente a Turquía como líder del Islam, aunque se invoca el deber de ayudar a <i>"nuestros hermanos musulmanes"</i> en Siria.
Heroic Turkish identity	Moderate	<i>"nuestros mártires", "nuestros soldados... se sacrifican", "entramos en sus guaridas"</i>
Link between nation and religion	Low	<i>Se mezclan elementos religiosos y de identidad nacional: "Al Fatiha para</i>

		<i>nuestros mártires", "Las aceitunas son muy bendecidas en nuestra creencia"</i>
Use of metaphors of struggle and resistance	Moderate	<i>"disparar al pájaro del arroyo con la piedra del arroyo", "nos convertimos en un F-16... nos convertimos en un tanque, cañones y entramos en sus guaridas"</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 5. Legitimization of the military intervention.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Use of metaphors and war expressions	Moderate	<i>"limpiar Afrin de los terroristas", "disparar al pájaro del arroyo con la piedra del arroyo", "entramos en sus guaridas"</i>
Use of hyperboles and exaggerations	Low	<i>"la organización terrorista, que estaba equipada con 5 mil camiones y 2 mil aviones llenos de armas"</i>
Use of religious terms to justify the action	Moderate	<i>"Las aceitunas son muy bendecidas en nuestra creencia... aquí Alá jura por la halva y la aceituna", "Al Fatiha para nuestros mártires"</i>
Use of inclusive pronouns	High	<i>"nuestro país", "nuestra nación", "nuestros hermanos", "nosotros", "mi gente"</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

## 9.6. Individual analysis 5

### GENERAL INFORMATION

- Date of the discourse: 18/02/2018

- Context of the intervention (event, situation that motivates it): Discourse given at the Ankara Provincial Congress of the AK Party during the ongoing Olive Branch Operation in Afrin.
- Target audience (who it is addressed to, who listens): Members and supporters of the AK Party, Turkish citizens, international actors (implicitly addressing the U.S. and European nations).
- Main purpose of the discourse: To justify Turkey's military intervention in Afrin, reinforce national unity, and criticize Western support for the YPG/PYD while portraying Turkey as a victim of unfulfilled promises by the U.S.
- Type of discourse: Political and mobilizing discourse

## ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE ELEMENTS

Central theme of the discourse: Justification of Turkey's military intervention through a narrative of national security, betrayal by Western allies, and the necessity of self-reliance in combating terrorism.

Micro-macro connection: The discourse connects the micro sphere (the message aimed at the Turkish citizens and at the AKP base) with the macro (Turkish foreign policy) by the construction of a narrative based on victimization and legitimization that justifies the military actions in terms of defending its national security, territorial integrity, and the fight against terrorism.

The appeal to patriotism and the sacrifice of martyrs is used not only to mobilize the internal population, but also to send a message to the foreign world, presenting Turkey as a tough nation committed to protect its interests and to maintain a strong sovereignty when facing external influences.

The discourse is, at the same time, aiming to justify an immediate action, Olive Branch Operation, while projecting an image of Turkey as an autonomous actor.

Table 2. Discursive Strategies and Structure.

Element	Present? (yes/no)	Example in the discourse
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Use of collective pronouns ("we", "our nation")	Yes	<i>"We both negotiate and continue our operations on the ground."</i>
Opposition "we" vs. "they" (polarization of groups)	Yes	<i>"If some idiot PYD, YPG terrorists launch rockets into our lands..."</i>
Legitimization by religious authority (quotes from the Koran, references to the umma)	No	-
References to Ottoman/Turkish history as a source of legitimacy	No	-
Demonization of the enemy (PKK/YPG/West)	Yes	<i>"We told them... they cannot destroy a terrorist organization with another one."</i>
Emotionalization of the speech (martyrs, sacrifice, national heroism)	Yes	<i>"There were nearly 100 martyrs of ours. Then we said, 'Enough is enough.'"</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 3. Use of language and rhetoric.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Religious terms	Low	<i>No direct religious references, though moral framing is present.</i>
Nationalist key words	High	<i>"Turkey is the only country which really fights DAESH and wins."</i>
Tone of the speech (aggressive, conciliatory,	Aggressive and vindictive	<i>"Back in Mr. Obama's tenure, we repeatedly spoke with him but every</i>

heroic, vindictive...)		<i>time we were deceived."</i>
Calls to action	Moderate	<i>"We cannot bear it anymore."</i>
Historical comparisons	Low	Implicit references to Turkey's historical struggle against threats.

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 4. Construction of national identity and the role of Turkey in the umma.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Turkey as leader of Islam	Low	-
Heroic Turkish identity	High	"Turkey has the power, means, and capacity to deal with all kinds of terrorism."
Link between nation and religion	Low	"They thought they could break our unity, but they failed."
Use of metaphors of struggle and resistance	High	<i>"We entered there one night all of a sudden."</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 5. Legitimization of the military intervention.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Use of metaphors and war expressions	High	<i>"We are in the field and at the table"</i>
Use of hyperboles and exaggerations	High	<i>"Thousands of planeloads and truckloads of weapons delivered to the terrorists..."</i>
Use of religious terms to justify the action	Low	No explicit religious justification

Use of inclusive pronouns	High	<i>"We both negotiate and continue our operations on the ground."</i>
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Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

## 9.7. Individual analysis 6

### GENERAL INFORMATION

- Date of the discourse: 18/03/2025
- Context of the intervention (event, situation that motivates it): The speech is given at the ceremony commemorating the martyrs of March 18 and the 103rd anniversary of the victory of Çanakkale. This event has a strong historical and national significance for Turkey. In addition, it is inserted in the context of the recent takeover of Afrin, in Syria, by the Turkish Armed Forces and the Free Syrian Army. This adds an element of timeliness and political relevance to the speech.
- Target audience (who is it addressed to, who listens): Addressed to "Dear Çanakkale, Dear young people, Ladies and gentlemen", encompassing citizens, young people and attendees of the ceremony, and with a message that extends to the Turkish nation as a whole and to the Syrian brothers.
- Main purpose of the discourse: The main purpose of the speech is to commemorate the victory of Çanakkale, exalt national heroism and legitimize the Olive Branch intervention. More indirectly, it is perceived that the speech seeks to mobilize the audience in support of the government's actions, in addition to promoting a sense of unity.
- Type of discourse: this discourse is of a commemorative and political nature. It combines elements of historical tribute with justifications of current political and military actions, like the Olive Branch Operation.

### ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE ELEMENTS

- Central theme of the discourse: the core topic is the connection between Turkish historical heroism, exemplified in the battle of Çanakkale, and contemporary military actions in Afrin. The speaker seeks to present the intervention in Afrin as a



continuation of the historical struggle for the defense of the nation and the protection of the "Muslim brothers."

- Micro-macro connection: At the micro-level, stories of individual heroism and sacrifice are narrated, while at the macro-level, these actions are presented as part of a broader historical and geopolitical struggle for the survival and greatness of Turkey. The micro-macro connection, thus, is established by linking the individual actions of Turkish soldiers in Çanakkale (micro) with the destiny of the nation and the region (macro).

This connection is continuously established throughout the discourse, when the heroic acts of the soldiers in the battle of Çanakkale are compared with the acts of the soldiers who participated in the Olive Branch Operation, creating a connection in which it is sought that the audience assimilates that the acts of today's soldiers are just as important as the acts of the soldiers who fought in the battle of Çanakkale.

Table 2. Discursive Strategies and Structure.

Element	Present? (yes/no)	Example in the discourse
Use of collective pronouns ("we", "our nation")	yes	<i>"We" (several times), "our nation" (several times), "our brothers", "on behalf of my staff and my nation", "We are 81 million, one nation."</i>
Opposition "we" vs. "they" (polarization of groups)	yes	<i>"They attacked us in Çanakkale with the strongest armies of the time; what happened?", "From PKK to FETO, from DEAŞ to PYD, all organizations are used for this purpose."</i>
Legitimization by religious authority (quotes from the Koran, references to the umma)	No	<i>"However, there are references to faith and religion as important elements of national identity"</i>

References to Ottoman/Turkish history as a source of legitimacy	yes	<i>"As a Turkish nation, we are waging a struggle in the same way inside and outside our borders today, with the emotion, determination and faith that we fought yesterday in Çanakkale.", "We cannot understand the establishment of the Ottoman Empire without knowing Malazgirt."</i>
Demonization of the enemy (PKK/YPG/West)	yes	<i>"From PKK to FETO, from DEAŞ to PYD, all organizations are used for this purpose.", "The wave of terror against Turkey is nothing more than an attempt to shorten the Çanakkale attack again a century later."</i>
Emotionalization of the speech (martyrs, sacrifice, national heroism)	yes	<i>"We commemorate all our martyrs and veterans with mercy.", "Our ancestors knew very well what the struggle of Çanakkale and the struggle here meant. For this, he made Çanakkale insurmountable by revealing his best and intensity."</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 3. Use of language and rhetoric.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Religious terms	Moderate	<i>"Faith is the jewel of what is divine", "our Lord who showed us these days"</i>
Nationalist key words	high	<i>"nation", "homeland", "flag", "history", "glory", "victory",</i>

		<i>"martyrs", "sacrifice".</i>
Tone of the speech (aggressive, conciliatory, heroic, vindictive...)	Heroic, vindictive, aggressive	The speech exalts the heroism of Turkish soldiers, claims victory in Afrin and adopts an aggressive tone towards Turkey's enemies.
Calls to action	moderate	<i>"Embrace your body, let this shameless one encroach.", "We are going to enter their lairs."</i>
Historical comparisons	high	Constant comparisons between the battle of Çanakkale and the operation in Afrin, as well as references to other key moments in Turkish history.

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 4. Construction of national identity and the role of Turkey in the umma.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Turkey as leader of Islam	Low	<i>There is no explicit affirmation of Turkey as the leader of Islam, but its role in the protection of Muslims is mentioned ("This is the last army of Islam")</i>
Heroic Turkish identity	High	The speech emphasizes the courage, determination and sacrifice of Turkish soldiers throughout history
Link between nation and religion	Moderate	Faith and religion are presented as important elements of Turkish national identity, but there is no explicit call for the unity of the umma.

Use of metaphors of struggle and resistance	High	<i>"battle", "struggle", "war", "resistance", "trenches", "battleships", "concrete tunnels", "traps".</i>
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Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 5. Legitimization of the military intervention.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Use of metaphors and war expressions	High	<i>"Olive Branch Operation", "Euphrates shield", "cleaning up sword scraps", "traps they left behind".</i>
Use of hyperboles and exaggerations	Moderate	<i>"From PKK to FETO, from DEAŞ to PYD, all organizations are used for this purpose"</i>
Use of religious terms to justify the action	Low	<i>No explicit religious terms are used to justify military intervention, but the protection of the "Syrian brothers" is invoked</i>
Use of inclusive pronouns	High	<i>Expressions such as "our nation", "our country", "our brothers", "on behalf of my staff and my nation", "We are 81 million, one nation." are repeated."</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

## 9.8. Individual analysis 7

### GENERAL INFORMATION

- Date of the discourse: 01/04/2018

- Context of the intervention (event, situation that motivates it): Visit to Oğulpınar Military Post in Hatay, on the Turkish-Syrian border, after the capture of Afrin during Operation Olive Branch.
- Target audience (who it is addressed to, who listens): Turkish soldiers, security officials, celebrities supporting the operation, and the Turkish public.
- Main purpose of the discourse: To legitimize Turkey's intervention in Afrin as a historic success and reinforce national identity through military rhetoric.
- Type of discourse: celebratory, mobilizing, and militaristic.

#### ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE ELEMENTS

- Central theme of the discourse: Military victory of Turkey in Afrin as a symbol of its growing fortitude.
- Micro-macro connection: At the micro-level, Erdoğan employs rhetorical strategies such as heroic language, collective pronouns, and historical references to construct a narrative of national strength. Phrases like *"Our soldiers made history"* and *"The entire world followed with astonishment and admiration"* frame Turkey's military intervention as not only successful but also as a defining moment in the country's history. The use of inclusive pronouns (*"Turkey is much stronger than before"*) fosters a sense of unity between the government, the military, and the people, reinforcing the legitimacy of state actions. At the macro-level, the discourse fits into Erdoğan's broader nationalist project and Turkey's geopolitical positioning. The speech serves to consolidate his leadership by linking military success to national development, suggesting that Turkey's sovereignty and strength are directly tied to its ability to conduct military operations beyond its borders. By referencing past political crises (e.g., the July 15 coup attempt), Erdoğan situates the intervention within a historical trajectory of overcoming threats, reinforcing a narrative where Turkey's progress is contingent on a strong and unified leadership. This strategic use of discourse aligns with Wodak's concept of how language constructs and maintains power, legitimizing state actions through appeals to national identity, historical continuity, and military triumph.

Table 2. Discursive Strategies and Structure.

Element	Present? (yes/no)	Example in the discourse
Use of collective pronouns ("we", "our nation")	Yes	<i>"Turkey is much stronger than before..."</i>
Opposition "we" vs. "they" (polarization of groups)	No	<i>The speech contrasts Turkey's growing strength with past threats (e.g., "before the July 15 coup attempt"), but does not explicitly name an external enemy.</i>
Legitimization by religious authority (quotes from the Koran, references to the umma)	No	<i>-There are no religious references or Quranic quotes in the speech.</i>
References to Ottoman/Turkish history as a source of legitimacy	No	<i>"Our soldiers made history in Operation Olive Branch" emphasizes a historical continuity of military success.</i>
Demonization of the enemy (PKK/YPG/West)	No	<i>The speech does not name PKK/YPG directly but refers to "security threats" and Turkey's need to grow stronger, implying external adversaries.</i>
Emotionalization of the speech (martyrs, sacrifice, national heroism)		<i>"It is really a historic success" and "the entire world followed with astonishment and admiration" use heroic language but do not mention specific martyrs or sacrifices.</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 3. Use of language and rhetoric.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
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Religious terms	Low	<i>No explicit religious terms are used</i>
Nationalist key words	High	<i>“historic success”, “much stronger than before”, “Turkey has made progress in every field”.</i>
Tone of the speech (aggressive, conciliatory, heroic, vindictive...)	High	<i>“Our soldiers made history”, and “Turkey is much stronger than before...” present a victorious and self-affirming narrative.</i>
Calls to action	Moderate	<i>The speech indirectly calls for national unity and continued military strength: "Turkey will continue down its road by getting stronger with every passing day."</i>
Historical comparisons	Moderate	<i>References to past crises ("before the July 15 coup attempt", "before the security-judiciary coup attempt in 2013") frame Turkey's present as a period of strength.</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 4. Construction of national identity and the role of Turkey in the umma.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Turkey as leader of Islam	Low	<i>The speech does not contain references to Turkey as a leader of the Muslim world or the umma.</i>
Heroic Turkish identity	High	<i>"Our soldiers made history", "a historic success that the entire world followed with astonishment and admiration."</i>

Link between nation and religion	Low	No direct religious-national link is established.
Use of metaphors of struggle and resistance	High	<i>"Turkey will continue down its road by getting stronger with every passing day" frames Turkey as engaged in an ongoing struggle.</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 5. Legitimization of the military intervention.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Use of metaphors and war expressions	Moderate	<i>"Operation Olive Branch", "took under control", "made history".</i>
Use of hyperboles and exaggerations	High	<i>"The entire world followed with astonishment and admiration."</i>
Use of religious terms to justify the action	Low	<i>There are no religious justifications for the intervention.</i>
Use of inclusive pronouns	High	<i>"Turkey is much stronger than before..." emphasizes collective national strength.</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

## 9.9. Individual analysis 8

### GENERAL INFORMATION

- Date of the discourse: 06.05.2018
- Context of the intervention (event, situation that motivates it): Presentation of the AKP's election manifesto for the June 24th, 2018 elections, during a provincial congress in Istanbul.



- Target audience (who is it addressed to, who listens): AKP party members, conservative and nationalist Turkish voters, national and international media.
- Main purpose of the discourse: To mobilize support for the upcoming elections, present the party's vision, and reinforce Erdoğan's image as the protector of Turkey and the Muslim world.
- Type of discourse: Political-campaign discourse

#### ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE ELEMENTS

- Central theme of the discourse: Turkey as a rising power fighting global injustices and terrorism, while protecting its nation and oppressed Muslim communities.
- Micro-macro connection: In this discourse, Erdoğan connects domestic concerns, like national unity, security, and economic development, with broader geopolitical and civilizational narratives. While addressing internal challenges and portraying Turkey as a strong and stable nation (micro level), he simultaneously situated the country as a global actor defending Muslim communities and confronting Western double standards (macro level). This alignment reinforces a national identity rooted in both sovereignty and moral leadership, positioning Turkey as both a regional power and the guardian of the *umma*.

Table 2. Discursive Strategies and Structure.

Element	Present? (yes/no)	Example in the discourse
Use of collective pronouns ("we", "our nation")	Yes	<i>"We have crushed in their own lairs..."</i> , <i>"Our revival..."</i>
Opposition "we" vs. "they" (polarization of groups)	Yes	<i>"Those who failed...are now working to besiege us..."</i>
Legitimization by religious authority (quotes from the Koran, references to the umma)	Yes	<i>"Salvation of all the oppressed" - implicitly references Turkey's role as protector of the umma.</i>

References to Ottoman/Turkish history as a source of legitimacy	Yes	<i>“Revival” language evokes historical continuity with Ottoman Legacy.</i>
Demonization of the enemy (PKK/YPG/West)	Yes	<i>“Terror corridor”, “hit men”, “fanaticism”, “cultural racism”, “Islamophobia”</i>
Emotionalization of the speech (martyrs, sacrifice, national heroism)	Yes	<i>“With wisdom, will and courage”; defending refugees and oppressed peoples</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak’s Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 3. Use of language and rhetoric.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Religious terms	Moderate	<i>“Salvation”, “oppressed”, “Islamophobia”</i>
Nationalist key words	High	<i>“Our borders”, “revival”, “dignified place”, “global power”</i>
Tone of the speech (aggressive, conciliatory, heroic, vindictive...)	Heroic, vindictive	Struggle, rebirth, resistance, regional power
Calls to action	Moderate	<i>“We are working to gain a dignified place...”, “We have ripped the terror corridor apart...”</i>
Historical comparisons	Low	No specific historical events cited, but a strong narrative of civilizational continuity.

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak’s Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 4. Construction of national identity and the role of Turkey in the umma.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Turkey as leader of Islam	Moderate	Defense of Gaza, Rakhine, Somalia, Bosnia; references to the Muslim world as oppressed
Heroic Turkish identity	High	<i>“Crushed the heads of hit men”, “ripped the terror corridor apart”</i>
Link between nation and religion	Moderate	Turkey as moral protector of Muslims, criticism of Islamophobia, reference to <i>“salvation”</i>
Use of metaphors of struggle and resistance	High	<i>“Tumor”, “tear apart”, “revival”, “fight”, “besiege”</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak’s Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

Table 5. Legitimization of the military intervention.

Indicator	Frequency	Example in the discourse
Use of metaphors and war expressions	High	<i>“Crushed heads”, “ripped apart”, “terror corridor”</i>
Use of hyperboles and exaggerations	Moderate	<i>“Most important power of its region”, “world’s largest humanitarian aid donor”</i>
Use of religious terms to justify the action	Low	Moral justification via defense of the oppressed
Use of inclusive pronouns	High	<i>“We have...”, “Our revival...”, “We are witnessing...”</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on Wodak’s Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

