

Looking to the Past to Frame the Future:
Turkey's Use of Narratives to Counter
Narratives from the West and Elevate its Status

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Spring 2022

Strategic Narratives in Public Diplomacy

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Introduction

Turkey's legacy and its future, very much relies on projecting narratives and frames that fit in and around its predecessor: the Ottoman Empire. Known for its powerful military, arts and culture, religious tolerance, and diverse population, the Ottoman Empire existed for more than 600 years and was greatly aided by its strategic position as a transcontinental country – straddling Europe and Asia with access to significant waterways. The empire was not to last as it eventually experienced periods of instability and turmoil and ultimately fell apart. However, the projection of a strong nation that is respected, just like the Ottoman Empire was, has been important to Turkey especially as it navigates the 21st century. While empires are not a well-received concept today, membership in and alliances with international organizations that have strategic benefits, such as military and economic support, are important to nations of various sizes including Turkey. Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952 as a security guarantee during the time of the Cold War and to reinforce its Western identity.¹ NATO is not the only organization that Turkey has sought to join that has Western ideology. Since 1999, Turkey has been seeking membership in the European Union (EU) but accession into the organization has been fraught with domestic and international issues over the years that have prevented full membership. Turkey continues to publicly talk about the importance of joining the EU but recently Turkey has pivoted its narrative to create an even stronger argument for itself: Turkey does not need the EU and the West as much as the EU and the West needs Turkey. This paper will look at Turkey's use of narratives to counter Western narratives particularly as they relate to anti-EU membership narratives and to position itself as a power broker between Europe, the West, Muslim majority countries, and countries that Europe has had

¹ NATO Staff, "Turkey and NATO - 1952," North Atlantic Treaty Organization (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, n.d.), https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_191048.htm?selectedLocale=en.

difficult relationships with. These narratives are meant to project a strong Turkey, even while it has been undergoing an economic crisis and other domestic challenges that have made it look weaker to the international community.

The Importance of Narratives

Narratives are powerful tools that nations and various state actors have at their disposal to achieve political objectives. By definition a narrative is a “coherent system of interrelated and sequentially organized stories that share a common rhetorical desire to resolve a conflict by establishing audience expectations according to the known trajectories of its literary and rhetorical form.”² Using strategic narratives as tools, political actors seek “to extend their influence, manage expectations, and change the discursive environment in which they operate.”³ A well-crafted narrative helps people understand why something happens a certain way or why a certain action is utilized - they are “central to human relations.”⁴ Narratives are important for both the country that is projected the narrative as well as the receiver of the narrative. The receiver is better able to understand actions undertaken and serve as a foothold for our perceptions of others. Narratives do have structure to them, and they typically include an initial situation or order, a problem that disrupts the order, and a resolution that reestablishes order. Why is this so important? Communication is a mighty tool in its ability to change how power works.⁵ Well-crafted and communicated narratives, frames, and stories have an impact on relations between countries and their larger perceptions in the world.

² Jeffrey R. Halverson, H. L. Goodall, and Steven R. Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 14.

³ Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order* (London: Routledge, 2014), 2.

⁴ Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order* (London: Routledge, 2014), 1.

⁵ See above

Narratives are reinforced and connected through stories that fit within a larger master narrative that provide people with a “systematic understanding of their tribal histories, lands, states, or nations.”⁶ A master narratives is a “transhistorical narrative that is deeply embedded in a particular culture.”⁷ In America, a master narrative would be democracy. There are many stories and narratives that are framed around the U.S., its path to forming a “more perfect union,” and various democratic institutions that are taught to school children and projected in various forms of media. It has been so ingrained that just the term “democracy” invokes an image of the U.S. for most. While we tend to think of master narratives as the dominant narrative, narratives are typically broken into three types: system narrative, identity narrative, or issue narrative.⁸ System narratives are focused more on the structure of international affairs or the way that a nation views world functions.⁹ Identity narratives focus more on the identities of the actors in international affairs, and issue narratives are strategic in that they look to shape the environment or way in which policy discussions take place.¹⁰ Issue narratives are the most focused of the narratives and are tied to specific issues. In understanding narratives, we are able to understand how countries use them to achieve goals and how they are being responded to. In the case of Turkey, understanding the theory behind narratives is important because it helps us to understand how Turkey is taking its history and weaving frames and messages together to fit narratives to counter narratives from the West.

Turkey’s Turning Point and Changing Relationship with the West

⁶ Jeffrey R. Halverson, H. L. Goodall, and Steven R. Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 12.

⁷ Jeffrey R. Halverson, H. L. Goodall, and Steven R. Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 14.

⁸ Alister Miskimmon, Ben O’Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order* (London: Routledge, 2014), 5 & 7.

⁹ Alister Miskimmon, Ben O’Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order* (London: Routledge, 2014), 7.

¹⁰ Ibid

It is important to provide context related to where Turkey started and what events have taken place that have resulted in the West's narratives. The fall of the Ottoman Empire was complete after it aligned itself with the Central Powers during WWI. The Republic of Turkey was founded in October 1923 following the end the war with the division of land that was previously a part of the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish Nationalist Movement that resulted in the creation this republic was led by Mustafa Kemal who would eventually become the first president of the newly formed Republic of Turkey. His belief in what this new republic should look like became known as Kemalism or "Six Arrows" and represented republicanism, nationalism, populism, statism, secularism, and revolution.

Modern day Turkey recognizes its unique identity as a majority-Muslim constitutional republic that is secular, and within the last 10 years Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has tapped into narratives rooted in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Nationalist Movement that have made him sound more in line with authoritative regimes rather than democracies. This shift has become even more apparent after the July 2016 coup d'état attempt that was carried out by a faction of the Turkish Armed Forces. This deadly coup, that killed nearly 250 people, has been considered a monumental turning point for Turkey as the attempt was being carried out by members of the Turkish military that included a coordinated attack on major cities, such as Istanbul and Ankara, and saw the bombing of the parliament building and the kidnapping of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹¹ President Erdoğan's response to the coup was to declare a state of emergency that gave extraordinary powers to the office of the president "in order to remove swiftly all the elements of the terrorist organisation involved in the coup attempt."¹² The state of

¹¹ Al Jazeera Staff, "Turkey's Failed Coup Attempt: All You Need to Know," Al Jazeera (Al Jazeera, July 15, 2017), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/7/15/turkeys-failed-coup-attempt-all-you-need-to-know>.

¹² Al Jazeera Staff, "Turkey Declares 'State of Emergency' after Failed Coup," Al Jazeera (Al Jazeera, July 21, 2016), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/7/21/turkey-declares-state-of-emergency-after-failed-coup>.

emergency was meant to last three months, constitutionally it was allowed for up to six months continuously, but it went on for two years after ongoing extensions were approved.

While the state of emergency finally ended in 2018, the policies enacted during its time have largely stayed in place, all in the name of national security and protecting Turkey. This includes sweeping security laws targeted towards “counterterrorism” and include the ability to ban public gatherings, extending detention periods and allowing for the dismissal of public servants if “there are links to or contacts with terrorist organizations or other perceived threats to national security.”¹³ The policies have resulted in the jailing of those in the political opposition and ordinary citizens who speak out against the government.¹⁴ These Policies have also targeted journalists and journalism resulting in the incarceration of journalists and the conversion of media outlets from centrist to decidedly pro-government.¹⁵ The environment that Turkey finds itself in has created concern regarding freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and democratic backsliding not only among the Turkish people but also among member-states in the EU, NATO, and the United States. It also calls into question whether a country with such laws should become a member of the EU.

Turkey has been a candidate for full membership in the EU since 2005 and while Turkey is not wholly located within the European continent, its location is of great strategic importance to the EU and the West. Turkey becoming a member of such an organization would not be unprecedented, as it was previously a member of the Council of Europe and associate member of the European Economic Community and the Western European Union. While Turkey has a

¹³ Reuters Staff, “Turkish Parliament Passes Security Law to Replace Emergency Rule,” Reuters (Reuters, July 25, 2018), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security/turkish-parliament-passes-security-law-to-replace-emergency-rule-idUSKBN1KF0P9>.

¹⁴ Noah Blaser, “We Fell off the Face of the Earth,” Foreign Policy (Foreign Policy, August 8, 2021), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/08/turkey-prison-complex-erdogan/>.

¹⁵ BBC Staff, “Turkey Profile - Media,” BBC News (BBC, June 8, 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17992011>.

history of being a member of Westernized and European-based organizations, accession talks have hit many speedbumps over the years. Some EU members have voiced concern about admitting a country with a majority Muslim population as they see the country “too different” to join the organization.¹⁶ Another major issue around accession has been Turkey’s occupation of a region of Cyprus in the north that is only recognized by Turkey as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Turkey is unwilling to give up its military presence in Northern Cyprus given the large population of Turkish people in that region on the island. With its presence on the island, it is also declaring rights to the maritime region off that part of the coast of Cyprus. Both these issues tap into Turkey’s desire to support the Turkish people (Turkish Nationalist Movement) and expand its reach and strategic importance (Ottoman Empire). Their refusal to remove armed military personnel from the territory has angered members of the EU and stalled the accession process for years as it was an issue prior to Turkey even becoming a candidate country.

Prior to the 2016 coup attempt, Turkey was already being questioned by the EU for its democratic backsliding due to excessive police response to protests and the suppression of the Kurdish population – preventing democratically elected Kurdish officials from taking their seats in parliament and laws that aimed to suppress the expression of traditional Kurdish practices. However, it was the policies enacted after the attempted coup, that resulted in accession talks coming to a standstill in 2018. Technically, Turkey is still an EU candidate country and President Erdoğan has been clear that he still sees EU membership as a top strategic priority for Turkey.¹⁷

¹⁶ Keith B. Richburg, “Giscard Declares Turkey Too 'Different' to Join Eu,” The Washington Post (WP Company, November 9, 2002), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2002/11/09/giscard-declares-turkey-too-different-to-join-eu/826842dd-b769-4ef8-bc37-c8fa2fe80928/>.

¹⁷ Hürriyet Daily News Staff, “EU Membership Remains Turkey's Strategic Priority: Erdoğan - Turkey News,” Hürriyet Daily News (Hürriyet Daily News, January 13, 2022), <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/eu-membership-remains-turkeys-strategic-priority-erdogan-170756>.

Narratives from Turkey and the West

	MASTER & IDENTITY NARRATIVES	SYSTEM NARRATIVES	ISSUE NARRATIVES
TURKEY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim • International Player – World Power (time as Ottoman Empire) • Democratic • Culturally rich • Economic potential • Invaluable bridge between Europe and Asia • Improve relations with majority Muslim countries • Turkish Nationalist Movement • Maritime Power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sphere of influence – normalizing relationships • Islamophobic sentiments in the West • Military alliances matter (NATO member) • Rule of law • Human Rights (protector) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU interference in the region • Turkey has the right to enter negotiations to purchase weapons from places like Russia and China to protect themselves • Europe’s support of the war in Afghanistan & Iraq (with the exclusion of a few – France and Germany) – attacks on majority-Muslim countries • Houses the largest population of refugees in the world. • Support for Ukraine during Russian invasion.
THE WEST (EUROPEAN UNION AND THE US)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authoritarian • Democracy (Turkey has been experiencing Democratic backsliding) • Strategic Partner • Not a mature European-style democracy • Serves as invaluable bridge between Europe and Asia – culturally and economically • Economic partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transatlantic Security • Europe based on democratic narratives • Military alliances matter (NATO) • Human Rights (violator) • Rule of law • Media freedom (decline) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreements in place to purchase weapons from Russia • Increased arms sales to countries in Africa • Purchase of once free press outlets that now spew pro-government propaganda • Detention of those who speak out in opposition (political, civilian, journalists) • Support for Russia and China • Could improve relations with majority Muslim countries • Dispute with Greece and the Republic of Cyprus (The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus)

- Support for Ukraine during Russian war – drones

The EU's predominate narratives against Turkey gaining membership center around human rights (system narrative), rule of law (system narrative), media freedom (system narrative), and accusations of democratic-backsliding (master narrative) due Turkey's presidential system that became more powerful in response to the attempted coup in 2016.¹⁸ These narratives target very real issues, and the EU conducts a yearly report on Turkey to identify if the fundamentals of the accession process are being followed. Within the 2021 report, concerns about democratic backsliding, rule of law, human rights, and assertive foreign policy that is at odds with EU priorities are all cited as areas of ongoing concern.¹⁹ These narratives are in response to the previously mentioned policies that have been put in place by the Turkish government.

Use of Master and Identity Narratives by Turkey

As anti-EU membership narratives against Turkey have increased over the past 7 years, Turkey has tapped into master, system, and issue narratives to unite the country and counter arguments from detractors which they primarily see as the West. Turkey has positioned the West as the antagonist in much of its responses while the Turkish identity is the protagonist. This use of the identity of the Turkish people is very much routed in the nationalism that began with the Turkish Nationalist Movement. The laws that have tightened control over the Turkish people as well as policies that have led to the occupation of the northern region of Cyprus and relationships

¹⁸ European parliament, "Parliament Wants to Suspend EU Accession Negotiations with Turkey," European Parliament (European Parliament, March 13, 2019), <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20190307IPR30746/parliament-wants-to-suspend-eu-accession-negotiations-with-turkey>.

¹⁹ European Commission, "Key Findings of the 2021 Report on Turkey," European Commission (European Commission, October 19, 2021), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_21_5282.

with countries hostile to the West touch on the narrative of the Ottoman Empire in projecting Turkey has a powerful international influence.

Turkish National Movement

In 1918, with the signing of the Armistice of Mudros, the Ottoman Empire ended hostilities with the Allied powers. After the Armistice, Constantinople was occupied and much of the Ottoman Empire was occupied partitioned up by the Allied powers. The government in what was left of the Ottoman Empire was seen as ineffective by a growing faction of its people and soon the Turkish National Movement was born. Turkish people also saw these foreign occupants as the oppressors to the culture and heritage that existed within what was the remaining border of the Ottoman Empire. Only through this campaign, with their unity and determination, could they be successful in creating a sovereign land that would look after the interests of the Turkish people.

Mustafa Kemal's focus as the republic's first president was on creating a modern, secular nation while preserving the Turkish way of life. He created a system of free and required primary education and because of this, along with his adoption of thirteen children, he was seen as someone who loved children and wanted to take care of them. Kemal also wanted to see woman given higher standing and they were given equal civil and political rights. Kemal's biggest focus was squarely on ensuring the preservation of what it meant to be Turkish and developed his ideology, Kemalism, that represented republicanism, nationalism, populism, statism, secularism, and revolution.

Kemalism included policies that glorified Turkey's past in primary schools so children would be raised on that history and promoting the use of only the Turkish language. While Kemal originally recognized a separate Kurdish state, once the Republic of Turkey was formed,

he supported only a Turkish state. These included laws require the changing of surnames, which impacted Greeks, Armenians, and Kurds, outlawing the Kurdish language, and forbidding Kurds to wear their distinction dress near important or administrative cities in Turkey. The belief was that this would secularize and modernize all who lived within Turkey's borders through nationalism and statism. It is interesting to note that France has engaged in similar behavior related to its Muslism population in the banning of headscarves as a way to preserve the French identity. Kemal was such a beloved figure in Turkey that in 1934, he was given the surname Atatürk, which means "Father of the Turks."

Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire was formed around 1299 and, at its height, the empire included Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Egypt, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, parts of Arabia and the North African coastal strip.²⁰ At one time Turkey had a larger population of Christians than Muslims and was revered for its religious tolerance. It was a strong regional power and served as the hub for interactions between Europe and the Middle East. With its strategic location, it was able to control many important trade routes between the East and the West. This resulted in great wealth for the empire. The Ottoman Empire also had an extremely well-organized central system of government that extended to its military which was renowned around the world.²¹ "Under the reign of Süleiman the Magnificent, whose 16th-century lifetime represented the peak of the Ottomans' power and influence, the arts flourished, technology and

²⁰ History.com Editors, "Ottoman Empire," History.com (A&E Television Networks, November 3, 2017), <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/ottoman-empire>.

²¹ Erin Blakemore, "Why the Ottoman Empire Rose and Fell," History (National Geographic, May 3, 2021), <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/why-ottoman-empire-rose-fell>.

architecture reached new heights, and the empire generally enjoyed peace, religious tolerance, and economic and political stability.”²²

The position of sultan was hereditary but the rest of the elite in the Ottoman Empire could earn their positions regardless of birth. To keep such a tightly controlled system, there were laws in place that actively suppressed the Turkish population. Women were forced to become slaves and concubines, while men could also be forced in domestic labor and military service.²³ This also created a feudal system of exploitation that would require the Ottoman Empire to tightly control its people while at the same time seeking opportunities to expand its size.

The decline of the Ottoman Empire came about because of many factors. Lands that were a part of the empire started to fight for independence and the once large Ottoman Empire started to lose control over its vast territory. There were also new European powers forming alongside the Industrial Revolution and economic competition with new trade routes that excluded lands controlled the Ottoman Empire.²⁴ All of these factors served to destabilize the Ottoman Empire but the lore of the once great empire, that was so great that it was peerless, still resonates today especially with President Erdoğan.

Contesting Narratives - Purchase of Russian Missile System

To understand how Turkey is using narratives to counter narratives from the west, I want to specially look at the narratives and messaging surrounding Turkey’s purchase of a weapons system from Russia that angered the EU, NATO, and the United States. Turkey has taken an issue narrative, it has the right to purchase a weapons system to protect itself and tapped into

²² Erin Blakemore, “Why the Ottoman Empire Rose and Fell,” History (National Geographic, May 3, 2021), <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/why-ottoman-empire-rose-fell>.

²³ Erin Blakemore, “Why the Ottoman Empire Rose and Fell,” History (National Geographic, May 3, 2021), <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/why-ottoman-empire-rose-fell>.

²⁴ Erin Blakemore, “Why the Ottoman Empire Rose and Fell,” History (National Geographic, May 3, 2021), <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/why-ottoman-empire-rose-fell>.

both master narratives around the Turkish Nationalist Movement and the Ottoman Empire. In 2017, Turkey announced it would be purchasing a Russian S-400 missile defense system to enhance its national security. At the time, Turkey had an agreement with the U.S. to be a part of the manufacturing of Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter jets that would be turned over to Turkey. The U.S. saw the Turkey-Russia transaction as a threat to U.S. technology since Russia would be within Turkey's borders and within proximity of any U.S. technology previously acquired by or known to Turkey. The U.S. was also concerned about its NATO partner, with the 2nd largest military in the organization, partnering with Russia as Russia is known for its anti-NATO stance. Turkey's stance on the issue was that it has the right to protect itself and that includes purchasing weapons from anyone it chooses. Turkey also made sure to reiterate that it tried to purchase its own U.S. made Patriot missile system, outside of a system that NATO manages in Turkey, but that a deal could not be reached.

In Turkey's messaging to the U.S., concerned EU members, and the world, Turkey promoted a master narrative of the Turkish Nationalist Movement and national sovereignty related to the purchase of such weapons especially as it relates to issues of national security, a system narrative, – President Erdoğan said, “Nobody can interfere with that. We are the only ones to make such decisions.”²⁵ The U.S. has said the purchase of this system would threaten its own national security if Russia was to be granted access by Turkey to any U.S. technology. Turkey's growing relationship with Russia was also seen as retaliation against NATO for what Turkey believes to be NATO and Western states' failure to support a fellow member during and

²⁵ Humeyra Pamuk, “Erdoğan Says Turkey Plans to Buy More Russian Defense Systems,” Reuters (Reuters, September 27, 2021), <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkeys-erdogan-says-intends-buy-another-russian-s-400-defence-system-cbs-news-2021-09-26/>.

after the 2016 coup attempt.²⁶ However, Turkey sees this relationship as leveraging its strategic importance in the region, a nod to its previous role at the Ottoman Empire, as a branch between the EU and adversaries to the EU to achieve its goals.

The U.S. responded to the missile defense deal by stopping the F-35 manufacturing deal and threatened economic sanctions.²⁷ The U.S. did ultimately sanction a few Turkish defense officials and froze their financial assets in the U.S.²⁸ However, the EU did not take any action against Turkey related to the purchase of the Russian made missile system even though they had threatened to at one time. It is important to understand that Turkey's message stayed the same every time this issue was brought up in the media. Turkey was emphatic that it is the only one who can make these decisions for itself, tapping into the narrative of the Turkish Nationalist Movement that saw outside groups attempting to be oppressors of Turkey. Turkey, in response to the U.S., reiterated the stance that "the S-400 would not be integrated into NATO systems and would not pose a threat to the alliance."²⁹ As far as threats from the EU for sanctions regarding this and other conflicts between Turkey and the EU, President Erdoğan made sure to call out what he saw as hypocrisy within the EU to counter the EU's narratives, "Decisions to impose sanctions on Turkey wouldn't be much of a concern to Turkey,... The EU has never acted honestly. The EU has never honored its promises,...."³⁰

²⁶ Carlotta Gall, "Turkey Gets Shipment of Russian Missile System, Defying U.S.," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, July 12, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/12/world/europe/turkey-russia-missiles.html>.

²⁷ Amanda Macias, "U.S. Sanctions Turkey over Purchase of Russian S-400 Missile System," *CNBC* (CNBC, December 15, 2020), <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/12/14/us-sanctions-turkey-over-russian-s400.html>.

²⁸ Abigail Williams, "U.S. Sanctions NATO Ally Turkey over Russian S-400 Defense System," *NBCNews.com* (NBCUniversal News Group, December 15, 2020), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/u-s-sanctions-nato-ally-turkey-over-russian-s-400-n1251228>.

²⁹ Daily Sabah Staff, "US Sanctions on Turkish Officials over s-400s Come into Force," *Daily Sabah* (Daily Sabah, April 6, 2021), <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/us-sanctions-on-turkish-officials-over-s-400s-come-into-force>.

³⁰ Laurence Norman, David Gauthier-Villars, and William Mauldin, "U.S., EU to Impose Sanctions on Turkey over Missile System, Energy," *The Wall Street Journal* (Dow Jones & Company, December 11, 2020), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/eu-to-impose-new-sanctions-on-turkey-officials-over-energy-activities-in-eastern-mediterranean-11607648191>.

Below is a chart that looks at Turkey’s narrative battle with the U.S. and the EU around the purchase of the Russian made missile system. Looking at narrative contestation shows us “the different ways in which narratives can be convincing and the fields in which they are contested.”³¹

What aspect of narrative is contested	Convincing	Unconvincing
Informational content		Turkey lacks a missile defense system that can better protect itself. This ignores that NATO already operates a Patriot missile defense system within Turkey’s borders.
Emotional content	To be asked to continue to sacrifice for NATO and the West but not stand up for itself is demeaning to the people of Turkey and its sovereign status.	
Epistemology	Turkey is a bridge between Europe and the Middle East and a member of NATO. It plays an important part in the region and should be able to defend itself. As a NATO member with the 2 nd largest military in NATO, home to a major U.S. base, and U.S. ally in the war against the Islamic State, Turkey should be able to protect itself with more advanced missile systems especially as weapons capabilities have increased in the region	
Degree of ambiguity	Turkey talks about having had some recent success in the war in Syria and given the spillover effect from this conflict and others, there is a need for Turkey to be able to increase its defense capabilities.	
Relation to action	Turkey continued to push that this had nothing to do with NATO and everything to do with securing a missile system to be used for defending itself	
Process of formation		President Erdoğan’s narrative is focused on sovereignty and national security, but it ignored what many recognized as Turkey looking to put

³¹ Alister Miskimmon, Ben O’Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order* (London: Routledge, 2014), 5 & 7.

pressure on the U.S. and NATO allies, by becoming closer with Russia, for what they feel is a failure to support them during the 2016 coup attempt. Turkey aligning itself with Russia is not seen as a positive step for Turkey's relationship with NATO. It was also concerning to other Western countries to see Turkey align itself with a country that was openly hostile towards what it saw as Western encroachment on Russia.

Process of projection

President Erdoğan knows how unpopular the U.S. is with the Turkish people. In talking about attempts to buy the U.S. made Patriot missile system while housing NATO's own Patriot missile in Turkey, he can successfully talk to the Turkish people about why it is important for Turkey to have their own missile defense system (such as the U.S. says were good enough to house the missile system for NATO but not good enough to have one for ourselves).

Process of reception

President Erdoğan and his administration were consistent in their messaging around this being an issue of their right as a sovereign nation to increase their national security capabilities. No other country sanctioned Turkey over their purchase of the Russian missile system.

President Erdoğan might have hoped this would be seen as a non-NATO option for a missile defense system since Turkey was having trouble acquiring one, but it was seen as anti-NATO which can have significant implications on Turkey's relationship with NATO.

Media Landscape

One important factor to take into consideration when it comes to battles between narratives is the media landscape in which these narrative battles are taking place. "The new media ecology does not alter material power allocation among powerful states and nonstate actors. But it does both facilitate and complicate the ways in which powerful states are able to shape conceptions of order. Therefore, order is the narrated understandings of the material base and the normative frameworks intrinsic to those understandings."³²

Each nation has its own narratives and frames that are utilized to uphold those narratives, but nations are having to navigate a media landscape unlike any before. As Miskimmon,

³² Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order* (London: Routledge, 2014), 89.

O'Loughlin and Roselle have identified; "our communication environment fundamentally affects how narratives are communicated and flow, and with what effects."³³ Entman's model tells us that there has been a traditional cascading network when it comes to frames. To look at the top of the cascading waterfall, we would see the traditional role of the administration flows down to other elites, media, new frames, and then to the public. The cascade can also work in reverse and frames can start with the public and move to the media and news frames to other elites and then to the administration.³⁴ However, in today's environment this model can be thought of more as a jumble of points than a cascading model with a smooth flow.

The beginning of this shift started with the 24-hour news cycle in what has been dubbed the CNN effect. There is no definitive definition as to what this effect is, but it has generally been described as: "facilitating instant communication between states and leaders, and forcing leaders to adopt policies that they would not make otherwise."³⁵ As images began to stream across the globe 24 hours a day, the typical structure of a narrative comprised of actors; events, plot, and time; and setting and space were taken away from the typical elites that communicated out narratives and put in the hands of anyone with a camera and an outlet to broadcast.³⁶

This has resulted in two major effects: "(1) Global television news coverage has accelerated the foreign-policy making process; and (2) it can affect the conduct of policy - opposed to its establishment - showing graphic images that tend to undermine elite and public support for specific policy goals."³⁷ During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, images were

³³ Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order* (London: Routledge, 2014), 1.

³⁴ Robert M. Entman, "Cascading Activation: Contesting the White House's Frame after 9/11," *Political Communication* 20, no. 4 (2003): pp. 415-432, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600390244176>, 419-420.

³⁵ Eytan Gilboa, "Global Television News and Foreign Policy: Debating the CNN Effect," *International Studies Perspectives* 6, no. 3 (2005): pp. 325-341, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1528-3577.2005.00211.x>, 327.

Eytan Gilboa, "Global Television News and Foreign Policy: Debating the CNN Effect," *International Studies Perspectives* 6, no. 3 (2005): pp. 325-341, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1528-3577.2005.00211.x>, 327.

coming back to the United States from what was happening as well as news reports and misinformation about what extremists wanted the rule of law to be, created fear among American people. Since 2010, there have been 201 anti-Sharia law bills introduced in 43 states.³⁸ This concerted effort seeks to stoke fear of Islam and ignores the fact that the U.S. Constitution already denies authority to any foreign laws.³⁹

With the rise of social media, communication has turned into a public performance.⁴⁰ Every event has the potential to become news with 12 news values, as identified by Galtung and Ruge, that are likely to turn news into events.⁴¹ This phenomenon has even affected how news is covered. Politico, for example, set themselves apart from other political news outlets by scooping stories and focusing on insider gossip all at a faster pace than anyone else. Once other outlets, including *The New York Times*, saw how much traffic Politico received related to these types of stories, their editors started to shift focus onto the “drama” or whatever provided more traffic hits and less on the facts.⁴² News stories regarding the Trump White House were focused more on infighting and staff drama than on policies that could have serious consequences.⁴³ To be fair, Trump and others have been more than happy to play into this game because it also has benefited them with increased social media followings and the perception of an online army ready to defend or help them at any moment.

olicy: Debating the CNN Effect,” *International Studies Perspectives* 6, no. 3 (2005): pp. 325-341, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1528-3577.2005.00211.x>, 336.

³⁸ Swathi Shanmugasundaram, “Anti-Sharia Law Bills in the United States,” Southern Poverty Law Center, February 5, 2018, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/02/05/anti-sharia-law-bills-united-states>.

³⁹ See Above.

⁴⁰ Jonathan Haidt and Tobias Rose-Stockwell, “The Dark Psychology of Social Networks,” *The Atlantic* (Atlantic Media Company, November 12, 2019), <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/12/social-media-democracy/600763/>.

⁴¹ Tony Harcup and Deirdre O’Neill, “What Is News? Galtung and Ruge Revisited,” *Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (November 2, 2001): pp. 261-280, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700118449>, 262-264.

⁴² Perry Bacon Jr., “Opinion | How the Rise of Politico Shifted Political Journalism off Course,” *The Washington Post* (WP Company, September 8, 2021), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/09/07/politico-rise-shifted-political-journalism-off-course/>.

⁴³ See Above

Discussion

The narratives being used against Turkey are just in the concern they cause. Democratic backsliding in such a strategically important country is dangerous. Turkey is trying to deflect these concerns by tapping into narratives that support how strategically important it is and calling out what it sees as hypocrisy on the issues. These narrative battles are meant to tamper outrage over policies that are being enacted and emphasize that the West needs Turkey. A good example of this is Turkey voicing its concern for the rise in Islamophobia in EU member states as well as the West which dramatically increased in the wake of the attacks on September 11, 2001, in the United States, the subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and discovery of terrorist cells within Europe. In media articles related to ongoing Islamophobia in Europe and the West, Turkish papers and government officials regularly frame the argument as the “demonizing of Muslims” that they say started with the U.S. following the attacks on September 11th⁴⁴, and that continue today with indifference by Western governments toward anti-Muslim sentiment and even laws that create hostile stances towards Muslims living in various countries throughout Europe.⁴⁵ When the West accuses Turkey of human rights violations against Kurds, it combats the narrative that they are committing human rights violations by promoting an issue narrative around the fact that they host the largest number of refugees in the world with 3.7 million people.⁴⁶

While it cannot be said that Turkey has won over any Western country with its narratives, it has been able to prevent major sanctions and, in some cases, has proven to be an ally. Turkey

⁴⁴ Hürriyet Daily News Staff, “Erdoğan Warns 'Race of Islamophobia' by Public Authorities in the West,” Hürriyet Daily News (Hürriyet Daily News, May 25, 2021), <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-warns-race-of-islamophobia-by-public-authorities-in-the-west-165004>.

⁴⁵ Daily Sabah Staff, “Populism Fueling Islamophobia in Europe, Turkey Says,” Daily Sabah (Daily Sabah, February 16, 2022), <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/populism-fueling-islamophobia-in-europe-turkey-says>.

⁴⁶ UNHCR Staff, “Refugee Statistics,” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, November 10, 2021), <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>.

is still a member of NATO and has supported Ukraine during the recent Russian invasion into the country. It has also served as the host for peace talks between Russia and Ukraine. Something that might not have been possible without Turkey's relationship with Russia. A recent visit by the U.S. State Department's undersecretary for political affairs underscored how important Turkey has been in the region:

“I would say Turkey's played an absolutely pivotal role. Turkey's been a stalwart defender of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity from the beginning. In every U.N. format, Turkey has said loudly and clearly, this is a bloody aggression, and we oppose it. Turkey has been a strong friend of Ukraine, both in terms of humanitarian support, in terms of security support,... Recalling Turkey's decision to implement the Montreux Convention to stop the Russian navy from passing through the straits into the Black Sea, Nuland said, “What Turkey did with regard to invoking Montreux was absolutely essential to ensure that the Black Sea couldn't be used in this war.”⁴⁷

This type of public affirmation from a Western official, given everything that has gone on in the last 10 years, reaffirms Turkey's narrative that it is an international powerhouse, just like the Ottoman Empire.

Given the democratic backsliding, it is unlikely that Turkey will ever be admitted to the EU given the current accession requirements. That would require policy change between Turkey and the EU regarding the association agreement. It is unclear if Turkey is willing to come to the table and talk about a new agreement but in the meantime, it will continue to highlight important master narratives and utilize system and issue narratives to support its belief that it is too

⁴⁷ Serkan Demirtaş, “Turkey Playing Pivotal Role in Ukraine Crisis: Nuland - Turkey News,” *Hürriyet Daily News* (Hürriyet Daily News, April 6, 2022), <https://www.hurriyetcailynews.com/turkey-playing-pivotal-role-in-ukraine-crisis-us-172757>.

powerful of a strategic partner to be left out of the conversation. “There is a real world independent to us, but narratives shape how we perceive and understand it and those understandings condition behavior.”⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Alister Miskimmon, Ben O’Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order* (London: Routledge, 2014), 89.

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