



TASC Media Watch: January 2019

Member of the TASC Board of Advisors Enis Pinar's comment was posted on [Foreign Policy](https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/12/31/the-united-states-cant-rely-on-turkey-to-defeat-isis-kurds-syria-ypg-erdogan/), in response to an article, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/12/31/the-united-states-cant-rely-on-turkey-to-defeat-isis-kurds-syria-ypg-erdogan/>, originally published on December 31, 2018, but which since has been copied by the Rand Corporation and disseminated on its website which unfortunately does not permit readers to comment.

"Normally I would comment on the message rather than worrying about the messenger, however the history behind at least one of the two authors of this article is worth commenting on as a factor in evaluating its claim that the U.S. can't rely on Turkey to defeat ISIS.

Mr. Ahmet Yayla is identified only as an assistant professor at DeSales University and a former counterterrorism police chief in Turkey. Omitted is the fact that former police chief Yayla is currently sought for questioning by Turkish authorities for alleged membership in the subversive organization headed by Muslim imam (cleric) Fethullah Gulen, a political opponent of Turkish President Erdogan whose extradition from where he is living in Saylorburg, Pennsylvania to Turkey was officially requested for being behind the failed July, 2016 military coup in that country.

On September 14, 2016, Prof. Yayla also testified before a House Subcommittee defending imam Gulen and suggesting Erdogan had been behind the coup attempt using it as a means to get rid of his opponents. Yayla's evidence: "*almost without knowing anything about the coup makers and who were behind the coup, Erdogan blamed Mr. Gulen ... for being behind the coup*".

Unaware at the time of his testimony that the Turkish intelligence agency MIT had years ago cracked the encryption software called Bylock which Gulen's network used to communicate among its members and had lists of Gulenista operatives within the government and the judiciary. Ex-police chief Yayla complained in his prepared statement that "*Especially the Hizmet movement and people close to Mr. Gulen were targeted*", concluding "*Erdogan is no longer a*

friend of the U.S. and its NATO allies, and likely can never be so again". Hardly an unbiased "academician". And I am hardly surprised that he has sought employment at a university in Pennsylvania located less than 40 miles from the compound of the Gulen organization.

But leaving the personal bias of one of the authors aside, the article itself is full of misdirection and inconsistencies. For example it states "*One of Erdogan's main arguments ... is that the People's Protection Units (YPG), a Kurdish militia and the most effective fighting force in the broader anti-Islamic State coalition, is an extension of the PKK*" (the Kurdish group designated as a terrorist organization by both the U.S. and the EU). The article goes on to suggest that it is because "*This message resonates with Erdogan's supporters*" but that the U.S. is "*far less sympathetic to this characterization*". Yet, this is a fact previously confirmed by none other than former U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter who in his official testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on April 28, 2016, when asked by Sen. Lindsey Graham whether the Kurdish PYD and YPG in Syria were aligned with or have substantial ties to the PKK, replied with a clear-cut "Yes": <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4591976/def-sec-carter-us-backed-syrian-kurdish-group-shares-ties-terror-group-pkk>

The article also mentions a few ISIS attacks in Turkey, but fails to account for the contradiction of why ISIS would have conducted at least seven major attacks in four years against Turkish targets resulting in major loss of life if the Turkish government is supposedly supporting ISIS; instead, casually brushing off the numerous terror attacks by ISIS against Turkey and Turkish targets as a possible "*cost of doing business in a dangerous region*".

The bias of the article is further apparent in its reference to instances of looting and theft in Afrin by the Turkish backed Syrian rebels, but its making no mention whatsoever of the alleged war crimes committed by the YPG in forcibly removing native Arab and Turcoman residents from their villages in areas the Kurds occupied, their arbitrary arrest of PYD opponents, abuse of detainees, the unsolved abductions and murders, and the use of children in the PYD's police force and armed wing, the YPG; all of which was clearly documented by Human Rights Watch in their report entitled "[Under Kurdish Rule: Abuses in PYD-Run Enclaves of Syria](#)".

If anyone cares to read a counter-point to this hit-piece of an article, they should Google the June 6, 2017 New York Times OP-ED article by Kyle W. Orton entitled "[The Error of Arming the Syrian Kurds](#)".