

From: [John Tomlin](#)
To: dao@nytimes.com
Subject: OpEd Response to John Bolton's Book
Date: Thursday, January 30, 2020 9:34:00 AM

James,

Hope you are well.

Thought you'd be interested in an OpEd responding to former NSA John Bolton's allegations.

The author, Michael Caridi of Greenwich, specifically responds to the idea that Trump provided personal favors to the President of Turkey, calling that allegation "postulation dressed up as fact". He also mentions some key points regarding the legal case surrounding the Turkish bank, Halkbank.

Could you please give this a read and consider for publish? Thank you.

By Michael Caridi
Greenwich, Connecticut

According to a report first published in *The New York Times*, former National Security Adviser John Bolton's forthcoming book includes inaccurate portrayals of interactions between President Trump and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey. Bolton claims that Trump granted personal favors to Erdogan – citing remarks made by Trump in connection to the U.S. Justice Department's fraud and money-laundering case against the Turkish bank Halkbank, after encouragement from Erdogan to intervene.

The suggestion that Trump provided questionable favors to his Turkish counterpart in connection to the Halkbank case is postulation dressed up as fact.

It's true that by all accounts the two Presidents share a positive relationship. The reality is that the U.S. and Turkey are NATO allies with some important overlapping interests – among them global security. Given the relationship, it's to be expected that Erdogan would raise concerns with Trump over an American legal action that has the potential to bankrupt his country's second-largest bank. Halkbank is part state-owned and part publicly-traded, meaning the Turkish government, stock market and public all lose if it goes under – along with the bank's U.S. investors. The case has been a noose around the Turkish economy's neck for years.

The Turkish Government sought a reduced penalty and fine against Halkbank, and President Trump agreed to look into the issue well before the indictment in the Southern District of New York. In principle, practice and law, there is nothing inappropriate about this because it took place before any indictment decision. U.S. Presidents can request the Department of Justice avoid certain actions in cases where that request supports U.S. national security objectives. Regardless of how it might be spun those are the facts and there is nothing untoward about them.

The Justice Department, too, has disputed Bolton's account of events, saying "there was no

discussion of ‘personal favors’ or ‘undue influence’ on investigations, nor did Attorney General Barr state that the President’s conversations with foreign leaders was improper.” They added that Bolton seems to be attributing his own views onto Barr, who doesn’t share them.

For all Bolton’s apparent insinuations of preferential treatment and under-the-table deals, Halkbank was indicted in October 2019 and the trial proceedings are underway. And in fact, the U.S. government is currently seeking escalating fines against Halkbank, starting at \$1 million dollars per day. To say ‘there’s no there there’ on this particular Bolton bombshell is an understatement.

Trump’s enthusiasm for Erdogan is well-recalled, more than once he declared himself a “big fan” of Turkey’s leader. But Bolton can’t transform ordinary diplomatic engagement into something improper by sheer will, not even to sell books.

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