

BROOKINGS DOHA CENTER

TURKEY-EU RELATIONS:

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AND BEYOND

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MINISTER BAĞIŞ: All three explain the standing of Qatar in international politics today. Qatar really has proven her quality, her independence, and impact in the region. And Turkey is very blessed to be very close to Qatar. We have leaders who have similar approaches to international issues. And I had the privilege of being the hosting minister for His Highness Emir of Qatar during his trip to Turkey this past summer, and he graciously invited me to Doha. And I had a very fruitful conversation with him in the morning, and I'm happy that my last activity here in Doha before leaving for Ankara is speaking here at the Brookings Doha Center.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you.

MINISTER BAĞIŞ: Qatar/Turkish relations have really prospered in the last several years. Our trade volumes have exceeded a billion dollars. There's much more cooperation. We have very similar views on international affairs. My president and my prime minister both consider his highness, The Emir,

to be not only close friends, but like a brother. And that has also brought our nations very close. And the responsibility of my ministry, which I consider to be the reform kitchen of Turkey, not only deals with Turkish situations with Europe but also deals with coordinating the reforms within Turkey to increase the living standards of the Turkish people to the standards that are present in EU member states. It is something that can easily be observed here in Qatar as well. When you look at the construction technology. When you look at the food hygiene standards. When you look at the pace of increase in living standards of human beings, Qatar is also implementing major reforms. And Qatar has become a source of inspiration. Stability here has become a source of inspiration as well.

Turkey also considers herself to be a source of inspiration in the region because we share a common heritage, a common past, common values, traditions, but we also have responsibilities towards our own people. I think the most important parallel between

the Turkish government and the Qatari government is both governments care for their people. And they try to increase the living standards of their people. And that's what has ensured that our leaders have very similar approaches to issues.

The Turkish-EU relationship is nothing new for those of you who represent or who have lived in EU countries would know that Turkey's first application to European Economic Zone with the name back then was back in 1959. Was Prime Minister Menderez who made the first application, so this is a 52-year old relationship, and a lot has changed in Turkey in the last 52 years. When we first applied, our per capita income, believe it or not, was \$300. Now it's more than \$11,000 and it's on an increasing trend. Our annual tourism income for the whole country was \$9 million. Now it's more than \$30 billion. We only had 14 universities back then including the ones that were established during the Ottoman Empire. Today we have more than 200. Turkey today is much more democratic, much more prosperous, much more self-confident, much

more transparent, and the EU reforms have a lot to do with it. If Turkey has become a source of inspiration with increasing living standards of her own people today, it's because of the EU reforms. So, the process has made Turkey a better country to raise our own kids.

And as far as I'm concerned, the process itself is more important than the end result, because the process of achieving the standards has ensured a higher living quality for our people. Today Turkey realizes that. Unfortunately, there are those who try to block Turkey in the negotiation process. Unfortunately, there are those narrow-minded politicians in various EU member countries who exploit Turkey's membership aspirations for the upcoming local elections. I am sure these attempts will backfire. However, we're not counting number of chapters, but we are counting the reform process that we achieve domestically. And when we look back at the last 2 or 3 years, if we have changed the standards of the toys that our kids play with, if we have ensured that only

organic ingredients are used in baby food manufacturing, if we have made sure that carbon monoxide level in the air that we breathe is lessened by making sure that some of the fuels that create too much carbon monoxide are not allowed to be used by vehicles in city centers, all these have made living standards for our own people higher. That's what we - - that's how we evaluate the process.

And at times, when I need to explain the process to my own citizens in Turkey, I claim that EU is Turkey's dietician. Everyone knows that they need to eat healthy, and they need to exercise regularly to lead a healthy life. But sometimes they need a good dietician to give them a prescription. Listening to that dietician, doing that 45 minutes of cardiac activity every morning, or eating less fatty and high calorie stuff and trying to eat healthy, makes you a more fit person. Well, 27 countries have become more fit, more dynamic, more prosperous, more transparent, more democratic, by implementing the EU IT. And you might ask, "Well, how come then they have economic

problems right now? Why is there a crisis in Europe?"

Well, it's because 21 of the 27 were not actually implementing their own diet program. Twenty-one countries are not in line with the master criteria. Those countries who really put themselves in discipline, who really fulfill the necessities of the master criteria, have become healthier and have no economic problems. But those countries who did not obey the rules, unfortunately, went into difficulty. The main problem was not the EU rules. The main problem was there was not enough regulation of the EU rules. Because of a rule called unanimity, when every major decision had to be voted unanimously, some countries had to look the other way to the shortcomings of others. Because they needed the vote of those countries who were reporting their own numbers on other issues, so they let them report their own numbers to the commission.

And right now, what we see in Europe, what we see in Brussels, by the leaders signed to come and increase regulation, is they're trying to close the



gap. They're trying to make sure everyone understands the necessity of being in discipline.

But Turkey has become the fastest growing economy in Europe. Without being in EU, we have actually fulfilled the master criteria except for being in Euro Zone. That's why for 5 years in a row we had more than 8 percent growth. According to OECD, our growth potential will continue to be the largest in Europe until at least 2020. And according OECD we will be the second largest economy in Europe, after Germany, by 2050. That is if Germany doesn't decide to pay off all the debts of Greece, Portugal, Spain, and everyone else. If they do, we might end up being the largest as well.

But Turkey has many advantages to Europe as well. Just like we gain from the reform process, just like Turkey's becoming a better country to raise our own kids by implementing these higher standards, Europe is also gaining from Turkey. Right now, as I said, economically, Europe needs new markets. Turkey is not only a market of 74 million people, but within

three hours of flying, you can reach 1.5 billion consumers from Turkey. Turkey is a hub. Europe is aging. The medium age in Germany, for example, is 45, but the median age in Turkey is 29. I happen to be one of the youngest ministers in the Turkish government, but 70 percent of my nation is younger than I am. And that shows, like the Qatari population, this young, dynamic population will give a chance for future to take away the growth load for Europe. Europe has an energy crisis. Seventy percent of the energy resources that Europe needs are either to the south, north, or east of Turkey. Unless someone can come up with a new wireless technology of energy transfer, Turkey's cooperation is a must, for Europe to have access those energy resources.

In all those issues, it is very clear that Turkish- Euro relations are based on a win-win platform. But more importantly, with the largest and most -- and the strongest military in Europe, Turkey is also a source of stability in the region. When we look at the countries where people have risked their

own lives to demand higher standards of living, in Libya, in Egypt, and Tunisia, they are actually demanding to have the standards that are present in Qatar, in Turkey, in terms of being able to feel that they are equal citizens in the societies that they live in. And that gives us a responsibility to mend the differences.

Turkey has always been historically a bridge, because we have been the most eastern part of the West, and most western part of the East. We have always been a bridge between East and West, Europe and Asia, among different values, cultures, energy resources, and consumers. And for that bridge to be dependable, for any bridge to be dependable, it has to sit on four different legs. What trick he's doing right now is enhancing the eastern leg, the southern leg, the western leg, and the northern leg simultaneously. Sometimes I am asked, "Is Turkey shifting from one foreign policy priority to another?" and I always respond, "No, Turks can walk and chew gum at the same time." The fact that we are enhancing our

relations with Qatar doesn't mean that we are giving up our demands to become a part of Europe. We can handle both, and it's important for both.

When I had the very first meeting with his highness, The Emir, this morning, I once again realized that Turkey's EU perspective is being very closely monitored and watched by even his highness and everyone else in the region. Also by scholars in India, in China, in Africa, throughout the world. So, this is a very important relationship that we all have to work on it together. And I think Turkey is playing a very historical role of mending the differences, and I think we all have to work together on some of our common challenges, priorities. With those thoughts, I think I have intrigued enough questions in the room, so let's turn this monologue into a dialogue and let's have exchange of ideas. With those thoughts, let me say (speaking in foreign language). Thank you for giving me a chance to speak and looking forward to our discussion.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you very much. Thank

you for this great presentation. And for enlightening us about the important challenges that the region faces and about Turkey's relationship with Europe. And I will start with my -- with one or two questions and then we'll open it up for our great audience.

My very first question -- this is -- I cannot afford but to ask you this question because personally I have been having this discussion, many times in the past, about -- with Turkish friends and in classroom and other places. Whether Turkey would ever become a member of the European Union. So, this is a great opportunity for me to ask the right person whether -- do you believe that Turkey will ever become a member of the European Union? And I do believe, and I agree with you on what you said, that the process matters. The process is important. And I agree that the process has raised the standards on different levels, but also we still need to have the end results, the final outcome in mind, after almost 52 years of negotiations with European Union. And as the chief negotiator, do you believe that we are going to

get to that point at some point in the future?

MINISTER BAĞIŞ: Well, I certainly believe Turkey will eventually become a member of European Union. But it's not up to me. It's up to the Turkish people. When we complete a negotiation process, we will ask the Turkish people if they want to join or not. And whatever they decide, democratically, through a referendum, will be the decision of my country. But as I said during my introduction, the process itself, as far as I'm concerned, is much more important than the end result. If we have the same living standards, same democratic standards, same transparency standards as the rest of Europe being a member or not doesn't really make that big of a difference. Norway is not a member today. Switzerland is not a member today. But when you look at their standards, they are not any lower than many countries. Many would argue that Turkey is far ahead of some of the member countries and I would tend to agree. But there are still some issues we need to work on. The EU still has the best prescription. As

I mentioned, I consider the EU to be dietician, but the dietician himself is overweight, has a few clogged arteries, and is moody these days. But that doesn't make the prescription bad. The prescription is still the best around. We have to implement the prescription even though the dietician needs to be treated himself.

MR. SHARQIEH: Great. My second question -- I think your party, the Justice and Development, led the revolution and it's foreign policy. And since you came to power, and you're one of the great thinkers of this reform, for this revolution where you improved all the relationships with neighboring countries and, in particular, in the East. Some believe that you paid more attention to the East as to improve your position and your negotiation with Europe. So, it came as a result of, or as part of the process of, your outreach to Europe as to build a strong relationship and, you know, to build strong partnerships with the East to be positioned stronger to be able to negotiate with us. How do you see your

future relationship with the East, even if you become part of the -- officially of the West, of the European Union?

MINISTER BAĞIŞ: To be honest with you, Brian (phonetic), when I sit at the desk in Brussels to negotiate on behalf of Turkey, I represent not only 74 million Turks, I also represent 30 million Muslims within European borders. I also represent 1.5 billion Muslims around the world. I also represent 3 billion human beings who have been isolated or ignored by the West. I think Turkey's EU aspirations are bigger than Europe, are bigger than Turkey, are bigger than -- combined. When I look at EU, I don't see economic union or a political union. What I see, looking at the EU, is the grandest peace project of the history of mankind. I sometimes joke with my French colleagues, and I say if you can live with the Brits under the EU umbrella, you should not have that big of a deal living with us because none of the wars you had in history with us were as bloody as the wars you had with them. If the Dutch, the Italians, the Belgians,



the Brits, the French, everyone else, can live happily ever after on this continent because of EU, it makes the European Union the grandest peace project of the history of mankind. It is a continental peace project.

Turkey's membership would turn this continental peace project into a global peace project. Then the values that have brought EU member countries together, like peace, democracy, human rights, freedom of speech, would spread in a very meaningful manner to a larger geography. Democratization and stability was inevitable, and now it's unreturnable. And Turkey is playing a very major role in there.

And what makes Turkey different compared to the countries around Turkey, compared to our neighbors, is because we are trying our best to increase the living standards of our own people. We are making peace with our own people, and we accept everyone as they are. One thing we have to learn is we cannot change people. I have tried changing the favorite football team of some of my friends. I could

not be successful. People have their own preferences in life, their own ethnicity, their own languages, their own choices. But we have to learn how to live with our differences, and work together, and achieve together for our common priorities. And that's why European Union membership is good for Turkey and good for the region.

MR. SHARQIEH: Thank you very much. I'm sure our audience have burning questions about the role of Turkey and Arab Spring, so I wanted to save those questions for the audience. Take the first question please.

MS. SARI: Good evening. Francesca Sari (phonetic) from the Peninsula Newspaper. In your opinion, what is the UE (phonetic) not going to accept the fact that there are, like, around 80 million Muslim people, the border with Iraq, or the fact that Turkey does not accept the Armenian genocide? Which of these three elements is the top for one in the UE process?

MINISTER BAĞIŞ: Well, Turkey is a country

of 74 million. Yes, the predominant religion is Islam, but arguing that Turkey is Muslim today is an argument that I would consider to be a day late, a dollar short. Because when Turkey first applied back in '59, Turks were predominantly Muslim. When Turkey became a member of the Customs Union, we were predominantly Muslim. When we received a date to start accession negotiations back in 2004, we were predominantly Muslim. Every time we open one of the 13 chapters with unanimous vote of all member states of European Union, we were predominantly Muslim. The fact that we are Muslim today cannot be an argument against Turkey's aspirations to join. If that was a problem, if Europe was meant to be a Christian club, then they should have made sure that Turkey's application was not accepted back in 1959, and in all the other processes that came afterwards.

Historically, I agree with you. Those opponents have cyclically whispered that Turkey's too big, too Muslim, and too poor. Well, those arguments have weakened by time. The argument that Turkey is

too poor is no longer accurate because Turkey is richer than seven, eight member states already. The fact that we are Muslim is an advantage, rather than a disadvantage, because Europe needs to deal with her own Muslim citizens.

By 2025, 10 percent of Europe will be Muslim, and I think the youth, the Islamic European youth, needs to hear the right messages. If you consider the violent activities in Paris where the kids turned the cars over and burnt them and attacked the stores, none of those kids came from Algiers or Morocco or Tunisia. They were all born in Paris. They grew up receiving French education, but they were exposed to the wrong messages. The terrorists who attacked London did not come from Pakistan. They were all born in UK. They received British education, and they chose to be violent terrorists because they were exposed to the wrong messages. Even the perpetrators of 911 did not go directly from Saudi Arabia, despite contrary belief. They spent many years in Germany, received German university education. They were

exposed to Western way of living. But because they were exposed to the wrong messages, they chose a wrong path and killed thousands of innocent people.

Turkey, a country where culture of Islam and cultural of democracy have co-existed for more than 200 years, can give a very positive message that being modern is not anti-Islam. Being modern, increasing living standards of your people, is actually something that Islam would search for because Islam itself ensures science, thinking, exploring, researching, and I think that's where countries like Qatar and Turkey play a very important role.

And the fact that Turkey -- the argument that Turkey is too big is now an advantage because Europe needs big markets. Markets that can consume. Markets that are full of young, dynamic people who can produce and who can consume at the same time. That's why Turkey's membership is not a question of if, but a question of when. And the biggest impediment against Turkey's membership is prejudice, for which we have to fight, and we will. And at the end, the sun will

come, and they will wake up and smell the coffee.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: (off mic)

MINISTER BAĞIŞ: Well, what happened in 1915 cannot be classified as a genocide as far as I'm concerned, but I have to admit I was not around in 1915. I don't think you were either. I'm a politician. My job is to determine the future, not the past. That's why there's another science called history. Historians should decide on what happened in history, and politicians should try to make decisions to ensure what will happen in the future. For any parliament in any country to determine what happened a hundred years ago is nonsense. It's childish. It's foolish in the simplest terms. Parliament should try to adopt rules and laws to determine what will happen in the next hundred years, not the past hundred years. And we have a saying in Turkish, "No nation's history is hundred percent clear." Every nations has dark periods in their past, and if we were to start questioning each other's pasts, believe me, some

countries who claim to be cradles of democracy and civilization would be in a very awkward situation.

MR. SHARQIEH: Sir, your question?

MR. KARWI: Isham Karwi (phonetic) from Doha Institute, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. Policies are not just about what to expect. It is also about what you don't expect. If you have a plan A, you have to also prepare a plan B. Now, for example, when we look at what happened since the Arab Spring in the region, Turkey is indeed in this region. It is, first, a Middle East country, we see that the foreign policy that has been settled from Ankara, which can be summed up as a zero option for the neighboring countries, is no longer valuable. I mean, Turkey seems now more involved with their neighbors, and moreover, they are asking for Turkey involvement in the problems of the region. So, from this side, when we look at Turkey, Turkey is still looking toward Europe. The question is, why are you still looking to Europe when we can do better here in the Middle East. What is your plan B if Turkey -- if Europe rejects you

more than one time? I mean, if they don't want Turkey, they don't want it because they have their reasons. And what is your plan B? Why not be involved with more in concert with something we, the Middle East, we, this country, with these emerging countries first?

Second, when we look at what is happening on --between you and France, for example, one, it seems that you are bringing politics, international politics, from Russian reckoning interests that's (inaudible) to emotions. I mean, we cannot -- you cannot make some choices that could be criticized as involvement in with France's own domestic policy. And that's exactly what they say. If you lose France's support, and France is more than important to you if you want to go inside, to be accepted as a member of the EU, you cannot fault to put France against you by being involved with domestic issues like the one that has been recently -- that has been passed through, that has passed by the Senate and by the French legislators. So, this seems that this is



contradictory we have here from Turkey, which on part one -- which from, one, they are looking to Europe, but they are not doing the right thing to get the support of those who are really important for Turkey. And, two, Turkey seems completely involved without will -- without willing to be involved. So, how do you explain this?

MINISTER BAĞIS: Well, in response to your first question, why is Turkey not active in the Middle East? Well, if Turkey's Minister for European Affairs is in Doha today, I think it's a very clear response to your question that Turkey is very active in the Middle East. Turkey is all around. Our foreign minister today is in Serbia. I'm here in Doha. My prime minister is in Ankara, and my president today is in Abu Dhabi. We are all somewhere. We are all running around, and yesterday we were all in the Council of Ministers, and we all have our responsibilities. But the fact that Turkey is active in one geography doesn't necessarily mean Turkey is not active in another geography. In the last 10

years, we have opened almost 30 new embassies, predominantly in Africa, for example. We are opening new trade offices. We have increased our international trade by four times in the last 4 years. Turkey is very active, not only in the Middle East but in every part of the world. Last year I was in Brazil. On behalf of my government I signed the MERCOSUR membership agreements when Turkey became an observer member of the Free Trade Zone in Latin America. Turkey is a member of 40-plus different international organizations. We are in every international platform; Council of Europe, OECD, United Nations, World Bank, IMF. Even in the Organization of the States of the Americas for which we have nothing to do, but we have interests and we follow our interests. So, is Turkey becoming more active in the Middle East? Yes, we are. It's no secret that my prime minister was recently in Egypt, Tunisia, and in Libya. His plane landed in Cairo airport 2:00 in the morning, and there were 20,000 young Egyptians who went there to greet him. Not only

because he's a handsome man, because he represents their aspirations for their own country. He's been elected three times, consecutively, with increasing number of votes, and he has increased the living standards of his own people. Just like the way they want their country to increase their living standards because they want to have better jobs. They want to have better income. They want to have better food. They want to have better standards in every field.

The second question about France. We're not interfering in the domestic politics of France. France is pulling us and exploiting Turkey in their domestic politics. What President Sarkozy tried to do is, actually, he wants to copy the extreme right parties in Belgium and the Netherlands by attacking Islam. But he could not attack Islam because 10 percent of France is already Muslim. The French people with Algeria and Tunisian and Moroccan backgrounds constitute 10 percent of the society. So, instead of attacking Islam, he chose to attack Turkey. He did this last election and he brought down in the

polls. The lap in votes were around 17 percent. He brought them down to 5 percent. He could transfer the extreme right votes to center right.

Now he's trying it again by this law which would limit freedom of expression. The law that he has sponsored, which the French senate voted on, has nothing to do with Turkey or Armenia or historical evidences. It has to do with limiting debate. They would criminalize denying what happened in 1915 as a genocide. What if historian comes up with a new document? What if someone comes up a new evidence? And to give you a background, my prime minister wrote a letter to president of Armenia and said, "I am ready to face my own history, if you are ready to face yours." Let's open old archives. Let's establish a joint committee of historians. Let's have scholars look into it, and we will take that scholarly report in front of us and discuss it politically. The Armenian government was not courageous enough to accept that offer. Now, is it up to President Sarkozy and 60 French senators to decide what happened hundred

years ago in 1915? To decide if it was a genocide or not?

Do you think he cares about Armenia? Do you think he cares about Turkey? I doubt if he cares about Europe or France at all. He cares about the upcoming elections, and he sees that he might lose. And that's why he's trying the only (inaudible) that worked for him last time. But today there were 67 courageous French senators and parliamentarians who signed the petition to the French Constitutional Court to nullify that decision of the senate because it's against the French constitution. It's against the very values of the French Revolution. So, we will follow this development in France, as you call them, domestic developments, and then Turkey will make her decisions and her judgments. But I believe those who really have common sense in France are much greater, outnumber those who don't. So, I'm sure common sense will prevail in France as well.

MR. NEFARI: Thank you very much. I enjoyed your presentation. My name is Hassan Nefari

(phonetic). I believe that this due to Europe, Turkey achieved continuous success. Europe was the market for the manufactured goods of Turkey and the transfer of technology from Europe to the Turkish industry. The transfer of capital also, from Europe to Turkey, and the job opportunities that were given to Turkish in Europe. I love Turkish people, but I also love the truth. It is due to the Americans that -- the Americans have used their influence in order that Turkey to be accepted within Europe. There was a rejection in Europe itself. They didn't want Turkey. There was an influence from my friends, the Americans. The secularism played an important role to the growth of the economy that you mention, the tourism that you were talking about, \$50 billion generated in Turkey, the main market was Europe. And then the per capita income jumped to \$11,000 in Turkey is due to the geographical location of Turkey, near Europe. If you take Europe -- if you take Turkey, and put it somewhere near Afghanistan and Pakistan, it wouldn't make that growth. And I am saying that secularism is

being ignored in Turkey now. Whatever achievement you are making today in Turkey is due to the seculars. Secularism and liberals played an important role in the growth and the success of Turkey. And if you have more extremism and more extremists coming at the expense of liberals and seculars, then Turkey would push itself away from Europe and (inaudible).

MINISTER BAĞIŞ: Hassan, I am so touched. It really means a lot to be reminded of the importance of secularism here in Doha. When my prime ministers spoke in Libya after attending the 5-day prayer with our Libyan brothers, coming out of the mosque, he address them and he said, "I'm a devout Muslim just like you all are. I just prayed with you. But I want you to make sure you have secularism in your new constitution because secularism doesn't mean you have to abandon your religion." You can be secular and religious at the same time.

Secularism is for the government, and being religious is for the individual. They are two different concepts. As a matter of fact, in the

Turkish experience, we know very well that secularism means giving people a chance to believe in the religion of their choice as much as they want to practice that religion. Secularism guarantees one's right to practice a religion, so I agree with you. Secularism has been a very important part of Turkey's growth. That's why we are still a very secular democratic country with supremacy of law. There are many Muslim leaders who can go and pray with the Libyan or Egyptian people today. There are many Western leaders who can go and talk about marriage or democracy or secularism today. But there are not too many who can do both. That's the difference of the Turkish system. That's why we are the most eastern part of the West and most western part of the East. That's what we've been best at: combining different cultures and values and in a very peaceful manner.

And you mention that Europe is a very important market for Turkey. You're right. More than 50 percent of our bilateral trade is with Europe. Sixty percent of those tourists that I mention come



from Europe and 90 percent of investments, global investments, that are in Turkey have come from EU member states. In 2011, 92 percent of global investment that Turkey attracted came from the EU, which shows that the European business community and economic decision-makers are much ahead of their political counterparts. They see where the potential is. Hundreds of years of growth in Europe has created a wealth, a large asset, and that asset needs to flow somewhere to invest. And they're looking at their own geography. They have issues. What's the best alternative? Of course, Turkey. But I would like to see more Italian investment in Turkey as well.

(Laughter)

MR. MITHONI: Hi, my name is Hay Mithoni(phonetic). My question is, you mentioned and I really admire the way that you being optimistic and look into the future as a politician. How would you react as a politician, and achieve EU commissioner regarding the -- with the Cyprus side -- see it as occupation and the historical claim of Turkey and

Cyprus? How would you (inaudible) that?

MINISTER BAĞIŞ: When the sun shines every morning on that beautiful island, it shines on two different countries, two different states, two different elected presidents, two different elected parliaments, two different school systems, two difference health systems, two different republics. The world might choose to ignore one. We might choose to ignore the other. But the fact remains that there are two countries. Now, the goal of the international community, led by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, is to unite those two states into one, a goal that we support as the Turkish government. Any deal that the Turkish Cypriot leader and the Greek Cypriot leader can agree, shake hands, and convince their respective public opinions would have 100 percent support of Turkish government, as long as it is based on political equality. We do not want to end up going back to the island. And the only way to ensure that its situation will be sustainable, everlasting, is for it to be based on political equality. I'm not saying

geographical equality. I'm not saying economic equality. I'm not saying social equality, but political equality, where one nation doesn't feel superior to the other, and the other one doesn't feel inferior to the other. As prophet Mohammed said, "Arabs don't have any superiority over the Persians or the Persians over the Arabs. We're all human beings." And on the island of Cyprus, you have to respect individualism.

Unfortunately, we have seen enough bloodshed, but the fact that there have been Turkish troops on the island since 1974 have prevented the bloodshed. Not even a single soul has lost a life in a casualty of war since Turkish troops were based. So, they have been guarantors of peace and stability on the island. If we're going to withdraw them, as we would during the Amnon (phonetic) Plan we had agreed to, if the Greek Cypriots had voted in favor of the U.N. plan, there would be no Turkish troops left on the island by now. But because it would ensure political equality, that's why we are now encouraging

the two leaders. They have gathered again in New York and we're hoping that President Christofias and President Eroğlu can reach a settlement which would be embraced by their respective societies as well.

MR. OLDEN: Good evening. My name is Gerhart Olden (phonetic). I hold an Austrian passport, but I've lived in many European countries and actually I pity the fact that the Council of Europe, which is nothing but the sum of heads of states and heads of parliaments of Europe, have never taken advantage of the fact to explain to European citizens what the European Union is positively about. And so, my question is, if the European politicians have not achieved the fact to make also political union out of an economic union, what's your vision, if Turkey becomes a member of the European Union? I'm not sure how keen you are to become a member. As you said, process is important. You might as well have 500 bilateral agreements like Switzerland, which is good enough. But if your Turkey becomes a member of the European Union, what's your vision about fostering

that process of integration, of making a political union, of helping citizens to understand the advantages? And at the same time, could you imagine a Turkish-German axis being the second or largest economy, second biggest country in terms of population, replacing the engine of France-Germany today? And a little question at the end -- how European is a country that has 90 percent of its territory on the Asian continent?

MINISTER BAĞIŞ: Well, if Turkey becomes a member of European Union, Turkey would contribute to the decision-making process of the Council of Europe and the Council of European Union as well. We are actually a full member of Council of Europe. The previous speaker of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly was a friend of mine from Antalya, the only city in the world where you can find an Iranian and an Israeli tourist swimming in the same pool. And I think that gives an impression of Turkey's contributions.

If Turkey becomes a member, we would ensure

that the rules of European Union, which are very strict to candidate countries, would be as strict to member countries because there's a concept within Europe right now: all the sweat, all the effort, is until you become a member. The day you jump into the club, you become a member, then you're free to do whatever you want. The current European attribute is do as I say, but don't do as I do. I'm working with the BG competition, to open the competition chapter in Turkish negotiations with European Union. And they are so diligently strict on so many specific issues. And I wonder if they were as specific to member states, some of the countries that are going through bankruptcy right now would not be in that kind of situation. So, we would strengthen a strong central economy, a strong central bank, better regulation, and more cooperation, but some issues to be decided local level rather than Brussels making decisions.

The problem at hand is, some of the Europeans who work 65 hours a week are tired of paying the bills of some other Europeans who are pretending

to work 25 hours a week. People want to have their own regional parameters of their choices, and they don't want to pay for each other. But some issues, like defense, need to have central approaches. So, Europe must go through a restructuring, and this was one of the hottest topics in the World Economic Forum in Davos this year where I was two days ago: how to restructure Europe. I think in the next couple of years the international thinking will spend a lot of time on this. And Turkey will try to contribute, as I did in the Davos meetings on how that new structure should be shaped. I strongly believe a new Europe is possible with Turkey in it. It's the wisest thing for both sides. Turkish-German cooperation is only natural. There are 3 million Turks who live in Germany. There are 7,000 Turkish-German companies functioning in Turkey. Turkish-German bilateral trade is the highest. We get around 2.5 million Germans as tourists every year to Turkey. We are in NATO together. We are in every international organization together. But the current chancellor in Germany has

doubts about Turkish membership to EU. But I'm sure she will change her mind. I'm confident that the numbers, especially the upcoming numbers, are in favor of Turkey.

To cite an example, there is this fear that there are already 3 million Turks in Germany. If there was visa-free access, all the remaining 74 million Turks would leave Turkey and all migrate to Germany. But that's wrong. I conducted a poll among Turkish university students recently and ask them, "Would you rather work in Europe when you graduate?" I would expect 70 percent would say yes, but you know what? Seventy percent said no. Because Germany is growing at the rate of 2 percent. Turkey is growing at the rate of 8.9 percent. They see where the opportunities are. In 2010, 27,000 Turks migrated to Germany. During the same year, 35,000 Germans migrated to Turkey. Some of them are German citizens of Turkish background but some of them are German pensioners, retired individuals, who make a much better living with 900 Euro per month pension money in



Alanya, enjoying beautiful Mediterranean sun, than their regular expenses in Cologne. So, things are changing. Time is in favor of Turkey. All these fears will eventually disappear.

When we first came to power 10 years ago, when my party was elected, and I want to talk about the visa issues, many European counterparts would not even want to talk to me on the visa issue. Those days, our per capita income was \$3,000. In 10 years we have tripled that. Now it's around \$11,000. Without me asking for it, they're trying to find ways of easing the visa facilitation. By the time we reach \$18-19,000, without me asking for it, they would lift the visas, I'm sure. If countries like Russia and Ukraine have lifted visas to Turkish citizens, it's not because we're nice guys. It's because Turkish tourists go there and spend money, and Turkish businessmen go there and invest and create jobs. Ninety percent of our territory being on the Asian continent, last time I checked 120,000 pages of (inaudible), Europe was not the geographical union.

EU is an idea. Ideas do not have boundaries. Turkey is much more European than Malta, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus, in any way you can look at it. But for those of you that do not know, the word Europe was the name of a prince that lived in today's Turkey. Just like the word Paris was.

When we were going through the toughest time of our history, when Ottoman Empire was breaking apart, we were called sick men of Europe. No one ever called us sick men of Asia. If we could be European during the worst time of our history, we're definitely European today because we're having the best time of our history.

SPEAKER: Turkey has made tremendous progress in -- under JDP development -- Justice and Development Party government. There's no question about it. But his progress was very much dependent on the stability, political stability, at home which was thanks to the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. And now his term, his third term in office, and then he several times said that "I'm going to leave the

office after the third time." And now there's a bigger possibility that he might move into presidency at the end of this (inaudible) term. I'm wondering how sustainable this progress is without Recep Tayyip Erdoğan?

MINISTER BAĞIŞ: First of all, Prime Minister has been elected for the third time in June of 2011 for a period of 4 years, so he is going to be our Prime Minister until 2015, God willing, *enshala* (phonetic), if there's not any unique developments. But some claim, as you mention, that he might run to be the next president of the country in the summer of 2014, a year before his term is up as Prime Minister. As someone who's a very close working colleague of Prime Minister Erdoğan, I do not think he has made his decision yet. At Harvard they teach you not to make your final decision until you have to make your final decision because by the time you need to make your decision, data might change. Things might change. So he will evaluate the needs of his nation, the needs of his country, and he will make his decision based on

the interests of his country, I can assure you of that, not based on his personal interests. He has never put himself forward, behind -- before the country. He has always preferred the country and the nation to prosper even when there was a court case to bend the political party. He was very different than one would expect, and he came out and said, "If it is going to be better for Turkey, let them ban my party." It takes a lot of self-confidence to say that. Yes, my party has this third-term rule. I'm also a third-term elected parliamentarian. I will not be running for the fourth term for my party, but that doesn't mean I will abandon politics. I can be a member of the party. I can be an advisor. I can work in local government. I can work as a bureaucrat. I can work in a think tank. Maybe Brookings Istanbul Center (laughter), God knows, but I can still create ideas and contribute to the well-being of my country. And I think our party will prove one thing for the first time in Turkish democratic history -- that institutionalization is very important. That is why

he is so specific on this three-term rule from the day he established the party. It's not a rule that he announced recently. When he was establishing the party, he limited himself because he observed people wanted new ideas. And when you put these term limits, then you give chance to others, some young blood, to come in. Right now, in our parliament there are 550 seats, 326 of them are from our party. Only 73 out of 326 are in their third term, so we have already prepared. So, it's not going to be like all the experienced guys leaving at once. No, there are second-terms and there are first terms. And those who leave now can always come back 4 years later, after taking a gap of 4-year break. And in the meantime, they can work in different ministries. They can work as outside advisors, they can work in municipal governments, they can work in embassies and think tanks and business. They can still contribute to the country. And I think Prime Minister Erdoğan himself will make his decision based on the interests of his country when he needs to make that decision.

SPEAKER: Good evening. [inaudible) from Iran newspaper. I'm pleased to meet you today. My question is different to all questions you have been asked in this (inaudible). My question is, 3 years ago we witness the whole war with this very strong Turkey role to Palestinian issue. Especially what we have seen during that was in France 2 years ago. But nowadays, we have, as we see that Turkey role to watch this issue (inaudible). Not like before, very strong. Would you please explain what's going on? Is it for the (inaudible) to develop its relation with Israel after their relation became to age of conflict or hostility or something else happened on this attitude? Thank you.

MINISTER BAĞIŞ: I couldn't really understand your question. Can you be more specific, please?

SPEAKER: My question is, before the Turkey (inaudible) the Palestinian issue, as the whole world witnessed, was very strong and very active. But nowadays, we see that Turkey tipped toward this issue

with (inaudible), not like before. After the Turkey relation with Israel became the age of hostility or conflict. What is going on? Is it for the (inaudible) to develop relation with Israel or something happen on this issue? That's all. Thank you.

MINISTER BAĞIŞ: No, Turkey is as determined as she ever were on solving the Palestinian issue because we feel that the Palestinian issue is the mother of all problems in the Middle East. We have tried very hard to work with Israelis, to solve some of these issues. Turkey happens to be the first Muslim country ever to recognize sovereignty of Israel. We have convinced many other nations to do the same. I was personally involved in making a (inaudible) between Israel and Pakistan where they shook hands in Istanbul. I was very much involved between talks between Syria and Israel regarding the return of Golan Heights which was interrupted after (inaudible)'s decision to attack Gaza for the first time. And what happened in international waters 2

years ago, when nine innocent Turkish citizens were killed by Israeli military on their attempt to carry humanitarian goods to Gaza, was adding insult to injury. So, of course, it's not easy to deal with this attitude in the current government of Israel, but we still respect the Israeli people. And we think peace can only come through when people of Palestine and people of Israel can really work together. Just like I mentioned, in Turkey we are going through a phase ourselves about accepting each other the way we are. In the Palestinian question, every side has to accept each other the way they are. Being Israeli, being member of Hamas, being a member of Al Fata, all those might be different choices, or identifications that ones are born into, but they have to learn how to live together. And Turkey is doing her best to ensure that all parties try to have a better understanding. But after the execution of nine innocent Turkish citizens, Turkish Prime Minister made three conditions very clear. For us to normalize our relations with Israel they have to apologize. They have to help the



families of those nine individuals who have occurred great suffering, and they have to put an end to this illogical and illegal embargo against Gaza so that international aid can flow. The minute Israel complies with these three conditions, Turkish-Israeli relations will go back to normalization again. But until then, we don't think we can really help Israel make a deal. We have learned to be cautious.

SPEAKER: I guess we have come to a minute of silence.

MR. SHARQIEH: I want to thank you again for this open discussion and candid discussion. We have enjoyed it. I We have -- I personally have learned from your presentation so I thank you for this. We would love to see you again, and that you will come back and visit Doha. And that's why Brookings is here. So thank you again for -- (Applause).

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