

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

TURKEY 2007: HIGH STAKES IN A DEFINING YEAR

Washington, D.C.

Tuesday, February 13, 2007

MODERATOR:

MARK R. PARRIS, Director, Turkey 2007  
Visiting Scholar, The Brookings Institution

PANELISTS:

FEHMI KORU  
Senior Columnist *Yeni Safak* (Turkey)

SOLI OZEL  
Department of Political Science  
Bilgi University, Istanbul

MURAT YETKIN  
Columnist, *Radikal* (Turkey)

\* \* \* \* \*

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

MR. PARRIS: My name is Mark Parris, and I am a newly minted Visiting Fellow here at Brookings, and the Director of Turkey 2007. Turkey 2007 is a special 1-year project that Brookings is pleased to undertake in partnership with TUSIAD, the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association, and one of Turkey's most-distinguished NGOs. I would like to recognize Abdullah Akyuz, who is here somewhere, TUSIAD's representative here in Washington who is with us this morning. Abdullah has been a prime mover on this project which operates here at Brookings under the joint auspices of the Center for the U.S. and Europe, and the Saban Center for Middle East Policy.

In addition to Brookings and TUSIAD, Turkey 2007 is funded by individual contributions by some of Turkey's most-respected private companies, and we deeply appreciate their generosity in making this project happen. I want to add that Turkey 2007 is not funded in any way by the Turkish government. I would nonetheless like to express our appreciation for the solid support and encouragement we have encountered from Turkish officials whenever we have discussed this project with them.

Why are we doing a special project on Turkey here at Brookings, and why are we doing it now? The fact is that the Washington think tank community is already blessed with a number of quite good programs on Turkey, and I am pleased to welcome the directors or the representatives of several of them here this morning. Nor is Brookings new to this game. Under the leadership of Phil Gordon and Omer Taspinar, the institution has turned out some first-rate scholarship on Turkey in recent years, and Brookings each year

organizes with Sabanci University of Istanbul the Sakip Sabanci Essay and Lecture Series of which we are very proud.

The other fact is that 2007 has the potential to be an unusually momentous year for Turkey and quite possibly for U.S.-Turkish relations. The program we are launching today grew out of a series of conversations among Phil, Omer, Abdullah, and myself, where we realized how much would be in play in and around Turkey this year and how much could be at stake. This could be the year that literally defines the kind of country that Turkey is for a generation, and that led us to conclude that a 1-year program sharply focused on Turkey's political calendar and on emerging regional dynamics would represent added value in terms of this city's discussion of Turkey between now and the end of the year.

The business plan for this project will be a little different from Brookings' past work on Turkey and perhaps from that of other Turkey programs here in Washington. Our goal is not to parade on this stage a series of high-level Turkish politicians, officials, or generals. We would probably accept offers to appear, but our hope, rather, is four, five, or six times over the next year to expose you to some of Turkey's best analytical minds, scholars, journalists, commentators, people who make their living try to figure out what makes Turkey tick, who are unusually good at expressing it, and who usually do not have the opportunity to be exposed to audiences like this here in Washington.

The timing and subject of our programs will be roughly tied to Turkey's political calendar and to what is happening in its region. Our goal is to be ahead of the curve in terms of giving our audiences a sense of what is coming at them and what it means for U.S. interests.

Our initial panel discussion today will be an attempt to highlight in chapter heading style what the year ahead may hold and to define some key relationships in terms of timing and substance. Subsequent events will allow us to narrow the focus on specific things like, for example, the presidential succession. We could not have a better group of Turkish guests to help us launch this program. In alphabetical order, Fehmi Koru is a seasoned journalist currently writing for the daily Yeni Safak which as many of you know is often described as reflecting the views of the ruling A.K. Party. Yeni pointed out to me yesterday evening that in addition to reflecting the views, they often precede the views and often shape the views of the ruling A.K. Party.

Soli Ozel is one of Turkey's most respected political scientists. He lectures at Bilgi University and does a regular column for the daily Sabah. Many of you know Soli from his work here at the Wilson Center last summer.

With a name ending in Y, Murat Yetkin is often last to be introduced, but is never the least in terms of his contributions. He has a long and distinguished career covering Turkish politics and foreign affairs in both the electronic and print media. He is currently a senior writer for Radikal.

Our format this morning will be as follows. I am going to ask each of these gentlemen a question or two to get the ball rolling. We will have a conversation for half an hour or so, and then I will open it up for Q and A. In the Q and A session, because there are so many of you here despite the snow, and because there will be a lot of ground to cover, I will use the prerogative of the chair to limit the number of questions on an individual issue. If you have a

question on something that has already been addressed once or twice, please do not pile on. I want everybody to get a chance to ask their question as well.

With that, I think I am going to ask the first question from here and then go and put on the mike to avoid complications. It is a baseline question, and I will pose it first to Soil Ozel, if I may. The point of departure of the question is Foreign Minister Gul's visit here last week where he saw a lot of people. At each of his stops he gave an account of how things are in Turkey which was highly positive. He pointed to years now of steady economic growth, a growing record level of foreign direct investment flooding into Turkey, the emergence of Turkey as an energy hub for an entire region, activists and successful Turkish diplomacy in the region which has enhanced its diplomatic clout and respect, generally speaking, a very positive picture. The implicit thrust of that is that Turkey has never had it so good after nearly 5 years of leadership by the ruling party, the first time in Turkey's recent history that a party is within touching distance of completing its full 5-year mandate.

My question for you is, this message which sounded very much like American State of the Union addresses where everything is rosy, is it fair picture or not?

MR. OZEL: Thank you. The grass is always greener I suppose in capitals of countries, although I should not be unfair. It is indeed true that since the elections of 2002, Turkey has enjoyed serious political stability with a one-party government. Coming on the heels of the 1990s, a very turbulent and to my judgment a wasted decade in Turkey, this was obviously welcome. And of course, the elections of 2002 themselves came after the single most devastating

economic crisis in Turkey that took place in 2001. The ascent of AKP to power came at a very critical time when the reconstruction or the rehabilitation of the Turkish economic with the program financed by the IMF or with the support of the IMF was underway, when the European Union was supposed to make its decision on whether or not to give a date to Turkey to start accession negotiations. Also Kofi Annan presented his plan for the resolution of the Cyprus problem only 8 or 9 days after the Turkish elections took place. And course, the world or the United States was gearing up for the Iraq war at a time I suppose at least in this town there was much more hope that the Iraq thing would be not just a cakewalk, but the rest of it would be just fine as well.

Under those circumstances, obviously it did help that Turkey had a one-party government, one that had two roadmaps to guide it, and it is far to say that the AKP government had done the best it could by sticking to the roadmaps by following its instructions and by taking Turkey to safe waters. During that period of time, Turkey had an average growth rate of about 7-1/2 to 8 percent annually. The economy is stabilized, the political scene is functional, and money keeps flowing in.

I would argue though that the picture although it appears to be so good, and as I said, the grass is certainly very green on that picture, first of all, there are certain weaknesses, delicate situations, that are hidden by this particular picture. Secondly, I think this picture has come with a certain price tag attached to it, and I think we would need to discuss as well.

I will try to dwell on them a little bit. I just want to make a remark, though. When we talk about Turkey, especially Turkey 2007, one of the

reasons as you explained to me to have these meetings was to go beyond the day-to-day debates concerning Turkey and Turkish-American relations in particular. As I am sure certainly when the question and answer period will come, we have the PKK problem with the United States, we have concerns about what will happen in Kirkuk in northern Iraq, whether the Kurds will try to take the province into their region, and we have of course the issue of the pending Armenian resolution in Congress to which the Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi is committed.

These are important issues in and of themselves, they will have a bearing in the future of Turkish-American relations, and even in Turkey's domestic politics seriously. But I think it would be better if we can also go beyond those immediate issues and actually discuss Turkish-American relations and Turkey's place in world politics in a more structural and long-term dimension.

When you look at those, I think Turkish-American relations themselves will need to be redefined. I do not think we can actually repair or we can actually touch the Turkish-American relations that existed prior to the Gulf War. And whatever we do, we will have to redefine what the common interests are, what the common purposes are, and what exactly the language and the kind of relation will exist between the two parties are going to be. If we miss that longer-term picture, if we miss how Turkish and American interests actually coincide at the time when the world is being built anew and it is being built around Turkey, I think we would miss a lot sticking only to the short-term problems, and they are problems. And as I said, they may cause a lot of tension and friction in Turkish-American relations. I think our analysis ought to take both

the short-term problems into account and the long-term commonality of not just interests, but perhaps of vision or the need to reconstruct that vision in Turkish-American relations.

So when I look then at the last 4-1/2 years, you are correct to say that this will be the first party to have finished a 5-year electoral cycle in peace and come to the end of its term. I am not quite sure personally that to finish a 5-year term was necessarily good. The most important issue in our domestic politics beyond the rising nationalism and all the troubles that this creates for the country is of course the presidency and who is going to be the president, whether the prime minister will become president and what kind of problems that might generate inside the country.

I think an election in 2006 would have served Turkey well. It would have reduced the tensions and the governing party could still elect whoever it wanted to, assuming, and I think it is a fair assumption, that they would have won a clear majority in an early election. But they have not done that and I think there is a price tag attached to it in terms of the current tensions in the country in the sense of vulnerability and struggle around the presidency that is actually putting a lot of strains in the fabric of the country and in the politics of the country.

Economically, there is no question that Turkey has done wonders, but there is a vulnerability stemming from the trade deficit, the fact that Turkey's economic is growing because of a tremendous influx of money, a gift of wonderful liquidity in the rest of the world, but that means that should something go wrong outside, then the Turkish economy's financing is going to be a lot more



difficult. And today, under these auspicious circumstances, Turkey pays a 10-percent real interest rate to those creditors who invest their money in the country and obviously that for the long-term generates some problems. I will cut it here and then I will come back.

MR. PARRIS: That was a terrific overview, and thank you. You put a lot together in a very short period of time. One of the more interesting things I thought that you said was your comment about they should not have tried to make it to 5 years, that the country would have been better served had they relegitimized their mandate at an earlier stage in advance of the very important presidential succession that we are facing this spring.

MR. OZEL: In my view, yes.

MR. PARRIS: Fehmi, I would like to ask if you agree with that basic thesis, and if you could give us your sense of what is at stake in the succession. Often in this town the issue tends to get posed in terms of a ruling party with a crypto-Islamist agenda on the one hand, or diehard Kemalists defending the last bastion of civilian secular influence in the country. Clearly, it is more complex than that, but could you give us a better context and perhaps reply to Soli's point?

MR. KORU: Of course, anybody can say that the elections can be held earlier than expected because in the Turkish case, we always hold elections in 4 years, although according to our laws, it is a 5-year period. But in the case of the A.K. Party, I think this is deliberate because they are trying to normalize the political system to the effect that each year has its own agenda. Before the campaign of the elections of 2002, they announced an immediate plan of political

agenda, so according to that plan, they had their year to year application of their political, economic, and social policies. So if they were in the position of holding elections earlier, they felt that they would have not made good of their promises to the public. This is for one thing.

There is also a political reason for holding the elections in 5 years, because they feel that they have enough seats in the Parliament to apply any kind of political programs they have. So what is the rush going to elections 1 year earlier than it is due?

MR. PARRIS: Do you think it creates a legitimacy issue in terms of the results of Parliament's decision this spring?

MR. KORU: I don't think so. This legitimacy issue is not the real one because in the year 2002 the general elections showed us that the public had no idea of suspicion in their minds for voting for the A.K. Party. So I do not think this is the case anyhow.

But to the second part of your question which is much important than the first one, I believe, it deserves to be replied in full. One thing is certain, that if that kind of a question was raised in a democratic state in any Western country with a full-grown democracy, people would have taken it as a kind of joke, a party holding, occupying two-thirds of the seats in Parliament and there is a time that they can elect anybody that they wish for the presidency, and we talk about the idea of giving away that right and go for reelections. This is I believe in a democratic sense, nonsense.

But there is some legitimacy for that question in the Turkish case because some people within Turkey itself have some suspicions about the real

intentions of a party which has been in power for the last 5 years and they question its right to elect a president within their own ranks. They say they should find somebody else outside the Parliament, or if they go for somebody within their own ranks, they should speak to some type of people so that the public at large cannot get intimidated. So we have been dealing with these kinds of matters in Turkey for the last couple of months and I do not think it will go anywhere, and if you ask me who would be likely to become the president --

MR. PARRIS: I was about to, yes.

MR. KORU: I believe Mr. Erdogan himself who is the Prime Minister right now would announce his candidacy for the presidency very soon.

But what is the reason for the legitimacy of that question? I think this has something to do with our psychology. We have been leading a life in Turkey full with fears, fear from communism, fear from ethnic separatism, fear for religious fanaticism, so all are also legitimate. We have the largest, longest borders with the Soviet Union in the past, so communism was right outside of our borders. And we are residue of an empire with too many ethnicities living in our country so ethnic separatism is something that we should really take into account. Thirdly, religious extremism, we are in the Middle East in one sense, so the Middle East as we all know has the hotbed for that kind of fanaticism.

In the framework of the A.K. Party, I think this is out of the question. For one thing, of course, some leaders of that party come from another party which was banned by the Constitutional Court on the basis of religious extremism and on the basis of going against the Constitution itself. But all who are familiar with the Turkish politics know that those leaders themselves had

changed. In the last 5 years, for example, when this party is in power, they have not done anything to harm the constitutional framework. When we look at the leader of that party closer than usual, we see that that gentleman, Tayyip Erdogan, was the mayor of Istanbul in the early 1990s and before he put his name as a candidate of the mayorship, many thought that would turn the city of Istanbul into something like in the lines of Tehran or Jeddah, but what happened was exactly the opposite of what the people of that kind expected of him to do.

MR. PARRIS: That was very helpful. Let me ask you to pause. I want to ask Murat a follow-on question which stems from something I have heard often when I have been in Turkey and from Turkish friends, and it goes something like this. Most of Turkey does not want Erdogan to be president. Many of the members of this party, some would argue a majority of the members of this party, do not want him to be president. If he becomes president regardless, his party is going to be punished at the polls in the succeeding election because people will have viewed this as sort of a grab, the tension that his candidacy will create will cause negative economic impact on the country either before or after he moves into the Cankaya. You have been watching Turkish politics for a long time; you sit in Ankara and watch it from there. What is your sense of the potential impact on Turkey's politics looking toward the general election of his becoming president? Is there a scenario where AKP is no longer the ruling party at the end of the year?

MR. YETKIN: There are lots of scenarios. Ankara is full of scenarios, as is Washington. We can analyze the situation as such. There are two opinions on what is going to happen in Turkey and what is going to happen to

AKP Party if Erdogan will make himself elected as the president by the Parliament. One opinion says that this is going to destroy the party because after Erdogan's party will dissolve and there is going to be a lot of faction fights within the party, and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul who is likely to be Prime Minister if he goes off to Cankaya, will not do as well as Erdogan. This is the first opinion that says if Erdogan goes off to Cankaya as president, the party will lose votes and it will affect its performance negative in the November general elections. I am putting a reserve on that because there are some scenarios in Ankara as well that the general elections could be made right after the presidential elections in the Parliament in May, so like late May or late June there could be elections.

The other scenario, the other alternative, says that if Erdogan will make himself elected as president, that will boost the morale of the AKP Party incredibly so that they would consider themselves as they reach the ultimate target in a very short period of time, in 5 years, from being nothing. We have to recall that the AKP Party was formed just slightly more than 1 year before the 2002 elections, so in a very short period of time by using democratic tools and means they got the ultimate target and that will have a positive impact on the possible outcome of the party. So we are discussing these two possibilities.

Personally, I believe that it may cause a boost in the morale of A.K. Party and it may affect the outcome of the general elections positively on behalf of A.K. Party.

MR. PARRIS: AKP.

MR. YETKIN: Of course, there are a few points that I have to make at this point. This is not the only factor. There are lots of other factors. For

example, I believe we have to discuss some issues that Soli and Fehmi raised, but we are talking about a rise of reactionism, of nationalism, in Turkey which really poisons the political atmosphere a lot and it seems that it will further increase until the elections.

On the economic front, the election is going to be made in November as it was decided by the Parliament now. That means the parties will campaign during the summer months. Agriculture is there badly affected from the current situation because of two reasons. Because of E.U. harmonization laws which cut the subsidies to farmers, maybe we have to tell the audience, maybe there are people who do not know Turkey very well, that still the rural population is like 45 percent of the population. By saying farmers we do not mean the farmers in the United States. The rural population is high and they are not very rich.

The second reason is climate. We have a serious drought in Turkey this year, the global warming as they say affects Turkey very negatively, so the harvest will not be a very good one, and that will within the farmers' minds which react to everything very quickly and never forgets, the summer months will be destructive. So that is why the other scenario I just mentioned to you could occur.

MR. PARRIS: The nationalist phenomenon and the state of Turkish agriculture could affect where third and fourth parties come out in the elections.

MR. YETKIN: Definitely. Definitely.

MR. PARRIS: And therefore change the balance in Parliament under proportional representation.

MR. YETKIN: Definitely. Definitely. So the presidential election is not the only factor, but it is a very important factor.

MR. PARRIS: Would the two of you agree with that quick and dirty of analysis?

MR. OZEL: Why they would they call early elections?

MR. PARRIS: No, of the impact of an Erdogan presidency on the dynamics for AKP going into general elections, leaving aside the fact that issues like nationalism, issues like the economy, could obviously --

MR. OZEL: I would think that even if Erdogan himself were not to be president, they would still want to go to early elections for all the reasons that Murat has cited.

MR. PARRIS: To avoid the consequences?

MR. OZEL: Yes, to avoid the consequences of the drought and also some other things. The earlier they call the elections, I think the more vulnerable their opponents are going to be.

MR. YETKIN: On the first part of the question, if Erdogan leaves the day-to-day political scene, this would affect the outcome of the election negatively for the A.K. Party. This is very important, because Tayyip Erdogan is a charismatic leader who controls the majority of the votes going to the A.K. Party.

MR. PARRIS: Even after he becomes president that would be the case?

MR. YETKIN: That would not be the case because our presidency requires from the president to remain aloof from day-to-day politics, but the boosting of the morale of the party's grassroots sending their leader to the presidency, I think this would create a kind of atmosphere in that party which would get benefit from the fact that Tayyip Erdogan is in the presidency. So it works both ways, actually. Anyway, of course they may lose some of the votes because of his leaving the political scene, but also they would gain some votes because they have sent him to the presidency.

MR. PARRIS: Would you all agree that they remain the party to beat in the next general election?

MR. YETKIN: Yes.

MR. KORU: Well, it depends on many things, of course. We have at least 7 or 8 months until the next general elections will be held so one can expect many things to develop between now and then. So if the things go according to their plans, if, for example, this Armenian issue in the States can be controlled up to a point or some of the moral issues which are affecting Turkey right now after the demise of Hrant Dink, who was the journalist friend of us of Armenian extraction, which is his demise is creating a lot of problems right now in Turkey. All these I think are the factors which would affect it.

MR. YETKIN: The political statistics in Turkey show us one thing. If a party wins the election and establishes one-party government, usually, not usually, all the time, it won the next election.

MR. PARRIS: Is that so?



MR. YETKIN: Yes, it is so. But it loses the third one. That is a statistic. So many people in polls agree now under the current circumstances without things getting radically changed, that A.K. Party might become the first party. But it will be quite important whether the next Parliament will be formed out of two parties like the A.K. Party and the Republican Peoples Party as the second, or more. That will affect the Turkish foreign policy; that will affect the economic policies Turkey will follow the next term; and that will affect many things.

The developments until the general elections like the items Fehmi counted will affect whether there will be two, three, or maybe four parties in the Parliament which has the capacity to destabilize the political atmosphere because we have seen the disadvantages of fragmented parliaments before in Turkey.

MR. PARRIS: That will be the defining factor the day after the elections, how many parties are in Parliament?

MR. YETKIN: Definitely.

MR. PARRIS: If there are still two, you are likely to have a unitary government again. If it is more than that, it is less of a certainty.

MR. YETKIN : The strong government, strong opposition model may fall.

MR. PARRIS: One of the things we have not talked about but that Washington inevitably talks about when we discuss these kinds of things is the role of the military. The only reason I raise this is that there have been articles written and suggestions made that "they" will not allow Erdogan to become

president, that if he becomes president they will make life hell. People have put odds on the chances of a military coup this spring. Soli, is this the real world?

MR. OZEL: If you live in Ankara it is.

MR. PARRIS: That's why I asked you.

MR. OZEL: For most people in Istanbul who travel to Ankara who are already depressed obviously in Istanbul we do not have an easy life either. You are ready to double the depression when you go to Ankara because everything looks even darker.

I personally really do not think that there can or will be a military coup in Turkey because Mr. Erdogan is elected, but if you ask people in Ankara who are either in a position to know or in a position to speculate and pretend that they know, you can expect that he will be boycotted, that he will be incarcerated in the presidential palace, that there are all sorts of civic ways of making him regret that he has ever wanted to be the president. I do not know if these things will happen, I just do not know, but I personally do not see the conditions domestically in the country to support a military coup, and I would like to think that the conditions for international support for such a coup are not there either because after all, no military coup can actually survive until and unless the United States and the Europeans and the world at large actually gives it the legitimacy that it needs, the recognition that it needs. And I just hope that it will not happen anyway.

MR. PARRIS: Let me ask your Ankara resident colleagues.

MR. KORU: Actually, I have left Ankara for Istanbul because of this reason.

MR. PARRIS: Have you? You got tired of the dark mood there?

MR. KORU: Yes. But anyhow, I hear that kind of wording here in Washington more than when I am in Ankara.

MR. PARRIS: Murat, would you agree with that?

MR. YETKIN: In Ankara we believe that the pessimist is a well-informed optimist. I agree with Fehmi that we hear this word more often when we come to Washington than we are in Ankara. I do not know why it so fashionable here. It is not a good thing. Maybe it comes from the fact that we have had major interventions in our political history, but I can easily bluntly say that the circumstances have changed a lot in the mean time especially after the big economic in 2001 and the economical reforms taking place afterwards, and political reforms taking place in the framework of the E.U. harmonization process in which almost a third of the Constitution was changed and more than 1,000 law articles have changed. I think the circumstances have changed and the Turkish army knows the value of democracy and neither in Turkey nor among the friends of Turkey a lot of people would support that. I think we should stop talking about it.

MR. PARRIS: Let's go here and then we will finish up with Soli.

MR. KORU: These kinds of things are being spoken in Turkey every time that we have a new president in the presidential palace. I remember myself during the time when Mr. Ozal himself was eager to get elected and the talk started in Ankara that if he gets his intention and becomes the president, then the presidential palace will be a kind of hell for him. Later on everybody gets used to seeing Mr. Ozal in Cankaya and nothing has happened, actually.

The scenarios circulating around in Turkey right now about the possible outcome of Dr. Erdogan election has something to do with some prejudices. Everybody expects him to behave the way he does as a political figure right now, but it was the same with Mr. Suleyman Demirel. He was the leader of the extreme right at one time. Then he became a statesman. When he became the president he behaved differently. Even he was more military than the military themselves.

MR. PARRIS: People grow.

MR. KORU: People grow, and the position is also determining the way that the person acts in their position.

MR. PARRIS: Soli, last word.

MR. OZEL: My question was actually to you. Is there anyone in Washington who wants to see a coup in Turkey? I personally would be much more concerned about the hysteria that is enveloping the country today, the nationalist hysteria, the xenophobia, the sense of being threatened and under siege and what have you which will be poisoning and which does poison our political atmosphere. In fact, if I can come back just for a second to the first question that you asked, beyond that rosy picture is the fact that, for instance, our talks with the European Union are almost suspended, that the process has come to a halt. Beyond that rosy picture is the fact that this government has not done all it could and it should have done in order to actually stop the temperature of that frenzy from rising.

I think the AKP from that perspective has governed the country for let's say 3 years and then it has abdicated, and I am not sure that they are really governing.

MR. PARRIS: Is that just election year politics? That is, when you have a partner like the E.U.? However you want to interpret that remark.

MR. OZEL: Nobody should have a partner like the E.U.

MR. PARRIS: That is sort of the point I was getting at.

MR. PARRIS: But that being the case, in an election year is it a surprise that this basically going to be a lost year for the E.U. operation?

MR. OZEL: I think the E.U. has decided that they want a time out for about 3 years, and in 2007 neither they nor we could really do much. By the way, technically three chapters have opened for negotiations, but the eight chapters that are suspended almost make up 70 percent of -- and all of that. I think 2007 in that sense will be a lost year. It is up to us to see whether or not 2008 and 2009 are going to be any better.

MR. PARRIS: Let's change the focus a little bit. We have been talking largely about what is going on in Turkey. I would like to talk about an issue that we are all going to spending a lot of time on over the next weeks and months and which has the potential for affecting all of our next discussions. I have in mind the prospect of an Armenian resolution passing the House of Representatives at least at some point this spring almost exactly, I would point out for those of you who do not follow it as closely as these fellows up here, at the moment that Turkey will be choosing its next president.

Maybe I will start, Fehmi, with you on this one. Could you give a sense as to what the discussion of this issue in Turkey has already done to the political dynamic, what it might do if you actually get to the point of a resolution being passed, and how Turkey would likely respond in a realistic sense? We always hear about draconian responses, and we have seen Turkey take them on occasion with countries like France and others. The United States is not France for a lot of reasons. Can you give us a sense as to what we can expect on that front?

MR. KORU: Actually, I would not like to see that resolution passed from the Congress for a variety of reasons. One reason is that this is a very delicate issue in Turkey, the Armenian issue I mean. We have been discussing this for the last let's say 10 years openly. Before that it was only official issue. Once in a while some countries including some states in the United States passed that kind of resolution and our government of that time reacted to it.

But lately, I mean for the last couple of years, we started talking about this matter, about our history, about the people have been living together for many years. Finally we found out that we have been living together for more than a thousand years and we discovered that we had some good days and some bad days, but it is a healthy thing to discuss these kinds of matters. But all of a sudden this resolution came out in the United States, the issue of it, and now we expect the United States to give the final decision on this matter which has some historical practice to it. I do not believe any country including the United States has the right to give the last word on any historical issue, but the same kind of resolution was passed from the French Parliament, from different countries'

parliaments. We did not like that passing, we did not like the attitude we found from our friend, but the United States is really different. It is not France as you said, and also we feel that we have been doing our utmost to help the United States in many ways possible especially this government has almost been following a line which is very accommodative to the United States line. If there will be any kind of surprise this year because last year it was the same case and the year before, we always expected that the thing can be postponed until next year, and we do the same actually right now.

What Turkey can do? I do not know, but the disappointment will be disastrous, its effect on the minds of the people, and the government will find no other way but to do what is necessary to do. The public will expect something from the government to react to that kind of --

MR. PARRIS: Something that will be significant.

MR. KORU: Very significant and maybe historical. I do not know what kind of reaction the government can really do.

MR. PARRIS: Maybe our friend Murat would like to speculate. Let me make your task a little easier, perhaps. The kinds of things that you hear people talking about here are closing off American access to Incirlik through which a significant amount of support for our effort in Iraq has gone for some years and is going today, or cancelling American business contracts, either defense or other.

It seems to me the problem with those kinds of solutions is Turkey probably has no higher foreign-policy objective right now than for the United States to succeed in Iraq in some terms on the one hand, and the Turkish military

has made abundantly clear that their preference is for American products when they can do it. So we are talking about steps that would involve real costs to Turkey to show that you are angry with us. That being the case, and I see you nodding, what could one expect if something like this happens?

MR. YETKIN: I believe both the Turkish and the American governments should act responsibly. The Chief of the Turkish Joint Staff, General Bukukanit, is in town today or will be in town in a few hours' time. He is going to have a lot of contacts in Washington including military and civilian, and I believe he is going to see legislators as well on this issue.

On his way from Turkey he answered questions of some colleagues in Germany and he gave the example of France as you mentioned, and he said because of some reasons, we have cancelled a military satellite project with France and started talking with Israel and then it failed, and now we do not have a satellite, so we missed the chance.

I think this hints at what is going to happen, that there is a sense in Ankara that we should not burn the bridges. Because of the poisoned political atmosphere, I keep saying because I believe in it, the poisoned political atmosphere in Turkey, this issue, the Armenian genocide resolution issue, is highly exaggerated because of political parties and because of political competition in an election year. So if the resolution passes and we believe that if it is going to be voted it is going to pass, then despite the fact that it is not the fault of this government, it is a long, long -- not only the American government, the Turkish government as well, it's a long problem, this government, the Erdogan government, will be blamed.



MR. PARRIS: Pay a price.

MR. YETKIN: It will be asked to pay the price by other parties.

MR. PARRIS: By other parties.

MR. YETKIN: By other parties, and especially it will give rise to the reactionist nationalist movements and it will cause an increase in the growth of nationalist parties, and this applies for the PKK situation as well. So it is an issue which is closely relating foreign and domestic policies together.

MR. PARRIS: Soli, can you add something? This will be the last intervention and then I will open it up to the floor.

MR. OZEL: I really have nothing to add to what they said except that in principle I am against legislating history, adjudicating history, on countries passing judgment on legal matters about the history of other countries. The France that passes this resolution suggesting that it is criminal to deny that there has been an Armenian genocide is the very country which when questioned about Algeria says that it need be left best to the historians, so you really cannot have that kind of double-standard. And I think ultimately the point is as is suggested for Turkey to come to terms with its history, all these pressures and the language that is being used is basically impeding that very effort. By the way, for those who do not know, there are Turks who actually write in Turkish publications suggesting that what had happened in 1915 is a genocide, and there are others who may acknowledge what had happened in 1915 as something horrible but do not consider it -- this is not a definitional matter, but the fact of the matter is that the debate in Turkey has progressed considerably and I think what this will do, if the aim is really to get to the bottom of things what had happened historically

which will mean what kind of responsibility the Germans, the French, and the British have had on the evolution of that problem, at any rate, that debate is going to be cut cold and I do not know when we will be able to come back and pick up the pieces, and in that sense it is also counterproductive.

MR. KORU: A very small intervention, actually. There is a newly released Turkish film in Turkey right now entitled "Americans at the Black Sea."

MR. PARRIS: One we are not going to like I would guess.

MR. KORU: You are going to like it. It's a comedy. "The Russians Are Coming." It is about a town, the people of it leading a very quite life without knowing that there is a missile right in the middle of them about to explode. The missile was sent from a U.S. air carrier which was sailing its shores. We see in that film some American ineptitudes, clumsiness, and CIA people came there and couldn't do anything. But at the end of the film, this same aircraft carrier sends another missile which bounces back and hits at that aircraft carrier.

MR. PARRIS: I am waiting to be happy about this.

(Laughter)

MR. KORU: I am afraid that this Armenian resolution issue is a kind of a missile which can bounce back at the United States, but how I do not know.

MR. PARRIS: With that, I sense straining in the audience to ask questions. The rules are the usual rules; wait for the microphone and identify yourself, and I am happy to take questions. Barry Jacobs?

MR. JACOBS: Barry Jacobs with the American Jewish Committee. Ambassador Parris has said that Turkey should have no higher

foreign- policy objective than a unified Iraq, but there are many people who follow events in Turkey including our State Department and Defense Department who feel that Turkey is obviously very concerned with the Kurds and Kirkuk, but for the Iraq it still does not have a policy. How would you respond?

MR. YETKIN: Turkey actually has a policy on Iraq, the whole of Iraq. Turkey does not want Iraq to actually dissolve. Divide is not the word used nowadays; it will be starting to talk about the dissolution of Iraq, the vanishing of Iraq because of the possible increase within Iraq of civil war.

It is correct that Turkey's main point is not to let the Kurdish entity in the north to become an independent Kurdish state which according to Barzani, the leader of the Kurdish region now, could evolve into a greater Kurdistan claiming territory from Turkey, from Iran, and from Syria. This is the main concern. Because maybe the Turkish government puts too much stress on this point and because the terrorist organization the PKK is basing in Iraq and carrying out attacks into Turkey from that region and it is not possible so far to stop it there. Possibly because of the situation in Iraq and other parts of Iraq, the whole policy of Turkey on Iraq is shaded. I agree with you on that. But this, as I said, in an election is a big, big issue in Turkey and maybe that is the reason why the Turkish government is not capable enough to express itself.

MR. LARRABEE: Steve Larrabee, Rand. Over the last couple of years the Turkish government has tried to get the United States to take some action jointly with them against the PKK. The United States government obfuscated and beats around the bush and has not done very much. I would like to ask each of the representatives on the podium whether they think if the United

States continues to dilly-dally and not really show any responsiveness, whether they think that Turkey will take unilateral action, and what would be the consequences of that?

MR. PARRIS: Soli, we will start with you and just go across.

MR. OZEL: Also just one sentence on Barry Jacobs's question. It seems to me that Turkey has more a position on Iraq than a policy, and part of the reason why it cannot have a full-fledged policy is because the president does not cooperate with the government. I think we have problems of dialogue between institutions and when you have that, it is really difficult to have a coherent policy as opposed to a position, which, one thing, the breakup of Iraq, is a position, it is not a policy.

What Mark Parris skipped when he said the Armenian genocide resolution is going to come on the agenda just about the time when the Turkish presidential elections will take place, but that will also be the time when spring arrives to the mountains of northern Iraq and Turkey and that the PKK will probably resume its terrorist activities, and the coincidence of all three is going to make our lives in Turkey very, very difficult. I think if we have a repeat of what had happened in July and August of this year, that is, every day five, six, or ten killings by either mines or terrorist assaults and what have you, it is going to be very difficult to actually keep the pressure of the public away from those who are responsible to do something, and obviously the United States will be blamed.

Again, it is very difficult today to sell to the Turks the following lines: "We do not want to hurt the feelings of the Kurds or we do not have enough soldiers," when only about a month ago American soldiers had busted

into the Iranian consulate in the city of Irbil to the great displeasure of the Iraqi Kurds and basically apprehended six guys and put them in jail. You cannot really sell that line when evidence suggests that unofficially American and Kurdish PKK commanders are frequenting the same hotels in Irbil and Sulaymaniyyah. It is impossible to take these things seriously in Turkey after so many years and after the record shows what can happen if you are Iranian as opposed to PKK.

MR. PARRIS: Fehmi?

MR. KORU: Maybe the United States has been doing everything in its power to accommodate the people of Turkey on the PKK issue. There is this latest development in France, for example, some leaders of the PKK have been apprehended maybe the orders to the United States, I do not know. But this is not being perceived as such in Turkey. Turkish people do not see that the United States has been doing everything in its power to do something about this PKK issue, and this is dangerous for the United States.

At a time when the Iraqi issue is in shambles, in a time when some other considerations are being cooked in the United States right now about some other neighbors of Turkey, and the perception of this issue in Turkey by the Turkish people is a little bit harmful to this kind of cooperation.

MR. PARRIS: Is it harmful enough for people to take it into their hands and deal with the problem directly?

MR. KORU: I do not know.

MR. PARRIS: It would depend on what happens later on I guess.

MR. KORU: But this question itself has something to do with that Turkey should do something about that matter, and people think in the same way, but thinking something and doing something is something else.

MR. YETKIN: To give a more clear answer to the question of the gentleman, yes, Turkey can carry out operations into Iraq. It is carrying out operations in Iraq right now as we speak. This is no secret. In a closed session of Parliament recently according to the information --

MR. PARRIS: Which is secret.

MR. YETKIN: Which was secret, but many deputies appeared on screens and told what should be kept secret. So we know that as the prime minister told to the Parliament, thousands of Turkish soldiers are in Iraqi territory on the other side of the border and carrying out occasional operations I believe in the knowledge of the U.S. army there against the PKK camps, but we are talking about bigger-scale operations aren't we? The name of the gentleman?

MR. PARRIS: Steve Larrabee.

MR. YETKIN: We are talking about big-scale operations. It is possible. There is a special representative to coordinate the efforts to fight against PKK terrorism in the United States, General Joseph Ralston is in charge of that, Edip Basar, a retired general -- is the Turkish counterpart for him. They are working together and they both say they are having some improvements on that and they promise to the Turkish public all the time that very soon there are going to be more results. The Turkish public is waiting for that.

To be more clear on what Soli said, the PKK has actually promised in its papers that its so-called ceasefire will expire on May 16th, the exact day that

the new president will take office. As with the Armenian issues, we are talking about a dangerous mixture of domestic and foreign policy on this case.

MR. PARRIS: Here on the aisle.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) my question is for Dr. Soli Ozel who has suggested looking at the long-term implications of the president election, and also to Mr. Fehmi Koru who writes in the newspaper and whose ideas suggest sometimes precede and shape the AKP Party's policies. It was former Prime Minister and President Turgut Ozal who first pronounced a transition to a president system from a parliamentary system. Do you think Prime Minister Erdogan becoming president would trigger such an aborted transition to a presidential system?

MR. OZEL: Whoever sits in Cankaya has this irresistible desire to change the system into a president or a semi-presidential one, and I do not see why Prime Minister Erdogan should be an exception to it. Whether he will have the numbers, I doubt it. I doubt it.

MR. PARRIS: The numbers in Parliament?

MR. OZEL: The numbers in Parliament. One quick addition to the earlier question's answers, there is in my view a serious problem of communication between the Turkish and the American sides which Ralston and Basher actually may be taking care of. But there is certainly a problem of communication between the American administration and the Turkish public, because obviously the United States sees the PKK issue not just as a terrorism issue, but as something bigger that is related to Turkey's own domestic Kurdish

problem. There is where I think the circuits break and that I suppose presents problems as well.

MR. KORU: The power of our presidency is so widespread that we can consider it as a semi-presidential system. I do not think we need any more power for our president, and Prime Minister Erdogan when you look at the things from outside maybe is seen as applying for a higher position with smaller or less powers. But if you are the president and with the party you created occupying the larger seats in the Parliament, you can almost behave as if you are the president of a presidential system. But we will see.

If they behave, I mean the people in the A.K. Party behave and the president to be elected will behave, we will see, and I do not think the presidential system is fit for Turkey.

MR. PARRIS: There is an interesting nuance in your answer in terms of "behaving". Would we be right in assuming that what that means is that they do not press straight ahead with radical social legislation?

MR. KORU: Because I put my bet actually that they are going to behave. Yes, this is the reason why I feel that. I talk about the fears in my answer to the first question, that we have been living in a country with fears. To get rid of fears, you have to go against them, you have to deal with them, win over them. So now some people in Turkey feel that if Tayyip Erdogan becomes president he will behave as if he is the president of an Islamic country. I do not think this will be the case.

MR. PARRIS: You don't expect that?



MR. KORU: No. I believe that he will behave within the constitutional framework. So if he does so, it means that we will lose our fear that they will do something very strange when they become more powerful.

If this is the case, then I expect that Turkey's democracy will become more flourished and many other things that we cannot even think of right now will come about afterwards.

MR. PARRIS: Al Moses?

MR. MOSES: Thank you, Alfred Moses, former presidential envoy when Mark Parris was United States Ambassador.

My question goes to the Armenian issue. As long as any of us in this room can remember, this issue has been around. Some of us have gone up to the Congress trying to persuade the Congress to go forward with the Armenian resolution. It is a recurrent problem and it is a present likelihood of reality this year than in the past -- number of factors. The impetus generally comes from the Armenian community concentrated in California, the second and third generations today. The relationship between the United States and Turkey has not improved over the last 10 years or immediately after the past 4 years as a result of Turkey's refusal to allow U.S. troops to transport through Turkey at the time of U.S. intervention in 2003 I think in part because of the failure to get the Cyprus problem resolved whoever is responsible for that as a result of the fact that you have now a government that is led by that is identified as Islamic, and some of the things that have occurred including the recent assassination or killing of someone who was identified with the Armenian issue.

There is less support as I see it in the body politic in the United States for Turkey today than there has been up until quite recently. When your foreign minister was here he went to various interest groups and was unable to get the kind of support that he had gotten in the past, groups such as the Jewish American Committee and the Jewish community in this country.

That being the case, and let me just add as a footnote that the Armenian issue is seen as a headline issue in Turkey, in the United States 99 out of 100 people do not know what you are talking about.

MR. PARRIS: Do you want to add a question to your footnote?

MS. MOSES: I am going to. There is a little inside the Beltway, but not much outside except in the Armenian community.

Why doesn't Turkey put an end to this issue by getting a hold of it by appointing a commission or whatever it might be so this issue will be put to bed, because otherwise it is going to be there and it is going to be the tail that is going to wag the relationship unnecessarily.

MR. PARRIS: Soli first, and then I will let the other two comment.

MR. OZEL: Again, there are people in Turkey who have suggested that Turkey should have opened the border with Armenia a while ago, and this is one of the things that this government has been either or unwilling to pursue, fearing that it would cost them some votes as other governments have, or it draw the ire of the Arzeris onto them.

I am not sure that Turkey has been very creative in its Armenia-Azerbaijan diplomacy. That was one thing. As for what you suggested about

forming a commission and what have you, I think Turkey is on record having presented to the Armenians by the prime minister that such a commission ought to be formed.

In the past month and a half, there have been two op-ed pieces, one by the Armenian defense minister Serge Sargsian -- just about 10 days ago. The first one was obviously far more encouraging than the second one, but even the second one between the lines suggested that the Republic of Armenia was actually willing to play ball with Turkey. I am afraid that under the circumstances, this government is not going to take the ball with it and run with and I regret it.

MR. KORU: I am sure the Turkish government would be ready to do something about at least easing up our relationship with the Armenians, but the problem lies not with us, the Turks, but with the Armenians, and the Armenians are not a unified community as far as I know. There are Armenians living with us, the Turkish Armenians, there are Armenians living with us that are the citizens of Armenia, they are guest workers in Turkey without any legitimate papers in their hands, but they are welcome, and there are Armenians living outside of both Armenia and Turkey. So it is easy to do something, kind of an empathy and kind of a relationship with the Turkish Armenians which has been really the case after the sorry demise of our friend Hrant Dink. People went into the streets and chanted that they were also Armenians, in fact they had nothing to do with being an Armenian. So it is easy.

Maybe it is also easy to deal with Armanistan, Armenia, because they are in need of much assistance, and Turkey can provide them with this. I have never been to Armenia, but I know some friends who have been. Many

things are being served in Armenia, sold in Armenia, that come from Turkey from a different way indirectly because we do not have open borders between us. For example, we can open our borders, we can do something for the Armenians, but I do not know if these kinds of reaching out would help us to get some kind of understanding in the minds of Armenians living in the United States, for example, or in France. How can we solve that problem? I don't know.

MR. YETKIN: Sorry, my voice is going minute by minute. I think the time is getting ripe for the Turkish society to take some steps forward on this despite the rise of reactionist and nationalism just mentioned to you. If this resolution passes, that will add fuel up to that fire of nationalism and that will, as Soli said very correctly, stop the intentions to turn into action.

On the other side, if for a year at least this time it could be stopped from voting in the House of Representatives, I believe the circumstances are getting ripe to take some positive steps to get this problem solved, not momentarily, of course, but gradually.

MR. PARRIS: It will be ripe in terms of where Turkey will be by the end of this year based upon --

MR. YETKIN: It depends on that, of course, but everything is connected to each other.

MR. PARRIS: I am going to take two sets of three questions in the interests of time and giving everybody a shot.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) I am with the Armenian Reporter newspaper in the U.S. Perhaps you would like to hear from a live Armenian on the Armenian issue, so-called. I posit that the debate in Turkey and the resolution

in the House of Representatives or affirmation in the U.S. generally have somewhat of a relationship. Had it not been for efforts to affirm the genocide in Europe in the U.S., I doubt the issue would have reached the level of debate it has reached in Turkey. That is one point.

Another point is I would like to poll the columnists here regarding the view expressed by some Turkish columnists saying essentially that the issue of the genocide resolution has been used by the United States probably to achieve other compromises from Turkey and that Turkey should maybe let it go and have it done and be finished with the resolution and kind of move on. That is one question. A second question on Hrant Dink's murder. If that murder, and obviously Hrant Dink was prosecuted for mentioning genocide in his articles, if that murder has had an impact either on you or your colleagues in terms of talking about this issue. Thank you.

MR. PARRIS: Thank you. The lady in the back there?

MS. MEYER: I am Cathy Meyer with PSC Energy. Currently we have some state department officials over in the region making Turkey sort of a linchpin for the global energy vision. I am interesting in how this U.S. focus on Turkey as a pipeline nexus has been impacting the message of Turkish politics and even potentially Turkey's relationship with Russia.

MR. PARRIS: A question there?

QUESTION: (Inaudible) I am with the International Institute for Homeland Security. You have talked a lot about AKP and their domination of current Turkish politics. My question is about the opposition. Is there any sense

that the opposition is unified in any way, especially after being so fractured in the 1990s? Thank you.

MR. PARRIS: Armenia, pipelines, and the Turkish opposition.

Who wants to take the first crack?

MR. YETKIN: I will go quickly over that. On Hrant Dink, Hrant Dink used to be a friend of all three of us here. Of course, we are very sorry and we put our reactions in very blunt terms against this murder. I think I can speak on behalf of all three of us that we understand the big crowds chanting slogans as we are all Hrant and we are all Armenians. That was a show of empathy, actually on what is going on.

In the recent few years, it surprises me but for all of us ourselves as well that we started to discuss everything in details. There are court cases. It is a transition period, and the struggle to overcome the problems, the democratic struggle, is going on. We are all part of that. So there is a debate and there is a healthy debate. I wish Hrant were with us today.

On the pipeline issue, in that region it is not possible to do anything without Russian contribution. I think everyone should understand that. They are upstream, they have the gas, they have the oil, and everyone doing business there should find a way to cooperate with them. Yes, there are very important pipeline projects, Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, Mark Parris himself contributed a lot. It is his son in a sense.

MR. PARRIS: I wish I could get some of the profits.

MR. YETKIN: The importance of that line is that it is the first in that region which is not under control neither Russians nor Arabs nor Persians.

We can call it a secular pipeline, right? It is true. It is under Western control totally.

Now another project is being discussed in varied details now, it is about to be realized on paper very soon, that to connect oil and gas from Russia over Turkey to Israel on the Mediterranean Sea by pipelines to be transferred there to India and China and Japan and wherever which will bypass the Suez Channel and the Persian Gulf, together two problematic focuses of the region. So these big projects, these are strategic projects and all of that needs more attention, more cooperation.

Regarding the physical security of all these projects which if all of them will be realized will be equal to one-seventh of the world's hydrocarbon trade, is mainly provided by Incirlik Air Base which is important. Without refueling it is the operational radius of Incirlik Base is 1,000 miles which covers the Black Sea, Caspian, Persian, Mediterranean.

MR. PARRIS: Take a first cut at --

MR. OZEL: Which one?

MR. PARRIS: State of the opposition.

MR. OZEL: The state of the opposition. I think polarization is actually helping the opposition to increase its share of the vote. The latest one I have seen suggests 30 percent for AKP, about 15 percent for CHP, and 14 percent for MHP. Especially for MHP this may rise depending on what transpires and the Armenian resolution passes, if PKK attacks or whatever, these will all be helping the nationalist forces that will be criticizing the government. And obviously the nightmare scenario for some in Turkey is that AKP only gets a plurality and CHP

and MHP form a coalition, it is, if you will, double-jeopardy, one, it is a coalition, two, it is MHP and CHP. On the other hand, that is the political framework today.

As for the Armenian resolution, the Armenian issue did not come on Turkey's agenda because of resolutions that passed or did not pass. The Armenian issue came to the agenda of Turkey when between 1975 and 1982 -- of 47 diplomats and nondiplomatic personnel of the Turkish foreign ministry. In the good old parlance, this was terrorism undiluted. This is really what triggered the debate in Turkey. This may be good, this may be bad, because the Turks did not know there was such a problem, did not know their history, and that was the beginning of the process of confronting that history.

Hrant Dink was not sentenced because he wrote that what happened in 1915 was genocide. He was sentenced deliberately and I think breaking all the legal procedures in the country, and it was because he was Armenian in my judgment that he was sentenced. He was the only one sentenced on Article 301 which this government in my judgment scandalously refused to change and passed it, obviously. But he was not sentenced because he used the word genocide. In fact, what really made Hrant so very different from everybody else was that as an Armenian he could go and use these words, and even when he was faced with the nationalist crowd he would make them listen to him. That is why he was in my judgment found to be so dangerous for those who did not like the articulation of such views in the country.

MR. KORU: Very few things actually come to my mind. Anyhow, it is not really the way of making topics debatable in a society by pushing a country into a corner with resolutions like we face right now, or using



terror. So we do not know if those killings had not happened in the past against the Turkish diplomats and if the resolutions passed through the parliaments of European countries and now the United States would not have happened, we do not know what would have happened actually if that was the case. Maybe we would have had a healthier atmosphere to discuss these kinds of matters relating to our history. This is one thing.

And as Soli said, Hrant was not really killed because he has been going around using the word genocide in Turkey or outside, but he was trying to find a kind of understanding between the people. That is the reason why he was killed, because there is an atmosphere in many countries, including Turkey, which would create their own fanatics and let them go around and preaching their fanatic ideas without being hindered by anybody, but Hrant was not a fanatic. He was representing a healthy way of pushing that debate into the Turkish agenda. This is one thing.

And opposition of course is a very important topic in Turkey, and the only thing that could be viable is to create a new party in the line of the A.K. Party on the right, but nobody from the leftist ranks dares to choose that way. So we are stuck with old CHP and the leadership of that party has been doing as the witness right now. They never let the others come closer to their party. They handpick their own candidates from the party lists and make the elected to the Parliament. And until the next election, they really play against the time.

MR. YETKIN: I want to add a few more sentences to the opposition thing. A unified opposition, that is not going to take place, but in practice I believe votes not only for the lesser leftist parties, but also from center-

right parties like DYP or -- the urban and secular portions of those parties will give their votes or lend their votes for one election to CHP in the next election.

MR. PARRIS: There are more questions. We are unfortunately out of time. Before we close I want to do a couple of things. First I want to, in response to Murat's kind words about my role in the Baku-Ceyhan, point out that we have with us the fellow who first ever pronounced U.S. support for that project, Mark Grossman, former Under Secretary of State who is with us today and whom I would like to acknowledge.

I would also like to thank you all for coming and braving the storm. This is the kind of quality I hope that you will see up here in the future, and I look forward to seeing you there in the future. Thank you for giving this a good strong start. Thank you.

(Applause)

\* \* \* \*