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FILLING ATATÜRK'S CHAIR
TURKEY PICKS A PRESIDENT

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Moderator:

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Panelists:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

AMB. PARRIS: We're going to get started here in a minute, so if people would like to come in, and there's plenty of seats up front here.

Good morning. My name is Mark Parris, and I'm the director of the Turkey 2007 project here at Brookings. As probably most of you know, Turkey 2007 is a special one-year project that we're doing here at Brookings in recognition of what we anticipate will be an unusually rich menu of events in and around Turkey during this calendar year.

We're proud to be undertaking this project in partnership with the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association, TÜSIAD, which is represented today by its Washington representative, Abdullah Akyuz, and we're particularly glad that they have from Istanbul Ambassador Cem Duna, an advisor to the Board of TÜSIAD -- Cem Bey, where are you? -- there you are - - who has played a very important role in helping us get this project started. So, we're glad to have him.

Our program this morning is going to focus, as we promised last time, on an event that has the

potential fundamentally to change the way that Turkey looks and works in the years ahead -- the selection of a new president.

One of the enduring legends of the founding of the Republic of Turkey is the story of how Atatürk decided he was going to build a new executive mansion on the hills overlooking Ankara, his new capital. After it was built he famously engaged in bouts of drinking and card playing and all kinds of distinctly secular activities in that famous mansion. It has acquired over the years sort of a symbolic status of Turkey's strong secular orientation and in recent years as a bastion of secularism as where to draw the religious-secular line has come under discussion increasingly in Turkish politics.

There's every likelihood that in next few weeks "Çankaya", as the Presidential mansion is known, will be filled by someone from the political party of the current prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose party, the Justice and Development Party -- or AKP -- is described by many in and outside of Turkey as "Islamist," and is described by AKP members themselves

as "conservative and democratic."

The prospect of Çankaya falling into Islamic hands has focused minds in Turkey, and it's our hope today to focus some minds here on that same prospect. We are well equipped to help do that today.

In keeping with our business model of trying to introduce American audiences like you to the best analytical minds in Turkey, we have three people who are uniquely qualified to help us understand the impending presidential succession and what it entails. In alphabetical order Kerim Balci is the Ankara Bureau Chief of Zaman Newspaper, often described as religious in their orientation but not necessarily pro-AKP. No one, in my experience, gets more deeply into the warp and woof of Turkey's internal politics than the people who run Turkey's big newspaper bureaus in Ankara, and we're delighted to have Kerim Balci with us to share that perspective.

Mehmet Ali Bayar, next on the podium, has had the experience of actually working in the office of Turkey's president during the presidency of Suleiman Demirel. Mehmet Ali was one of the president's top

foreign policy advisors. He and I did quite a bit of work together. We probably would not be prepared to answer questions about that here today.

(Laughter)

AMB. PARRIS: Many of you know him as Turkey's political counselor -- very successful political counselor -- during the period 2000-2002. He comes from a family with deep political roots and has been involved in Turkish politics as a practitioner or an observer all of his adult life, maybe earlier.

Professor Hasan Bülent Kahraman, our final speaker, of Sabanci University, has written widely on Turkish politics and culture. His most recent book, *The Turkish Political Right and the Justice and Development Party (AKP)* -- which will come out this year is a timely study of -- is it already out? -- sorry, I knew it was out in 2007 -- already out -- is a very timely, even more timely study of the rise to power of Prime Minister Erdogan's AKP.

We're going to do this the same way we did the last session that many of you attended. I will pose a question or two to the members of the panel and

we'll get a little discussion going here, and then we'll open it up for questions from the floor.

To the extent possible -- and I realize what I'm asking here -- I would like you to try to focus the questions on the subject of today's discussion, which is Turkey's presidential succession. I know that there's a lot of competing stories out there. I have no illusions I will be able to restrain you from asking questions on those subjects, but let's try to keep the focus on the presidency as much as we can.

As a prelude to our discussion, and at risk of getting a few of them wrong, I'd like to give a few basic facts on the mechanics of how Turkey picks a president, because it's a little complicated and could get more so in the days ahead.

Turkey's president is picked not by popular election but by parliament. The current parliament was elected in 2002. Of its 550 deputies -- the numbers are important here -- 354 or 353 -- I've seen both figures -- are from Prime Minister Erdogan's AK Party; that is, he is roughly 13 short of a two-thirds majority, which would be necessary to either change the

constitution or to elect a president on their own. So, purely in terms of the math, AKP should be able to elect the next president.

The process starts next week, that is, next Monday, the 16th of April, and will -- the process of selecting a candidate -- will run through April 26th. At some point thereafter -- and forgive me the uncertainty, because this is literally changing by the day -- as early as April 26th, according to what I've seen, or as late as May 3rd, parliament will convene to begin the process of actually electing a president from the list of candidates that has been assembled. There will be up to four ballots. On the first two ballots, a super majority of two-thirds plus one, that is, 367 votes, is necessary to elect the president. The final two ballots -- that is, on the third ballot, or in case there are still two candidates standing after this process, a fourth ballot -- only a simple majority, that is, 275 plus 1 -- 276 -- are necessary to elect a president.

So, it seems likely that under almost any

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circumstances, given the math, by the third ballot AKP should be able to elect its candidate, and that would probably be around May 3rd or, at latest, May 8th, again according to the figures I'm seeing today. And my colleagues, if I've got any of this grossly wrong, will no doubt correct me.

If it proves impossible to elect a president after four ballots, under the constitution parliament dissolves and there are new general elections. No one expects the process to go this far.

There are arcane variations, which we may get into as the panelists and as your patience permit, but I think I'm going to stop here, move over there, get miked up, and we'll begin the conversation.

And I'd like to start with a question to you, Hasan bay

PROF. KAHRAMAN: Yes.

AMB. PARRIS: The process of selecting a president will begin next Monday in Turkey. We will elect our own president in about 18 months. We know the names of a dozen or so candidates who are viable prospects. Nobody in Turkey today can tell you who any

candidate will be for your presidency. It's clear that Prime Minister Erdogan would like to be president, it seems to me, based on the evidence. He could have saved us a lot of speculation had he not wanted the job. Is it conceivable that he will not be the candidate for president and, if so, why?

PROF. KAHRAMAN: Yes, I believe it's conceivable that he may not be the candidate for the presidency, and he may not become the president, because I believe -- there are two points in Turkey. The first one is the presidency and the prime ministry. He's now, in a sense, the powerful prime minister of Turkey. He has conducted the economy in good terms in the last five years. He has done a lot. He has a great majority in the parliamentary, and he is expecting another five-year's term in parliamentary.

So, if he comes out and if he says now, "I am the candidate," then there is no question about that he will be the president of Turkey. Buy if, instead of going for the presidency and creating a kind of mess both in Turkey related to the tensions and strains between the establishment and the presidency and, too,

the mess in the intra-party relations, he (declares) he will continue as the head of -- the chairman of AK Party, the AKP -- and run for another term, another five years for the prime ministry. In that case we can make further progress as far as Turkey is concerned. We can improve the terms and conditions of the economy.

Regarding all these issues: globalization or the Middle Eastern situation, Turkey is or has been playing an enormous role due to its strategic position and so on and so forth. So, instead of being and becoming the president of Turkey which, itself, is a matter of disputation and hot debate in Turkey, Erdogan could say he will stay as the prime minister and, in that case, ask the people to work for AKP and get another majority in Turkey. I believe in that case AKP will be, I think, the first party in Turkey since 19 -- maybe -- 50 who will be increasing its votes and its majority, duplicating its success that had come in the year 2002, and he will be a very, very powerful prime minister.

Now, this is what common sense in the -- common reason tells me. But I'm not sure about this way of reasoning as long as Erdogan and his political,

you know, roots and origins are considered, because I believe to become a president for a politician coming from the pro-Islamist politics in Turkey -- this is a project spanning over the last, maybe, 30, 40 years -- this will be a kind of quota if he becomes the president.

So, there is a kind of conflict between common sense and the ambitions of the project itself, the ambitions of the, let's say, pro-Islamic political groups in Turkey.

I still see the possibility that he may not be the candidate, because in that case, if he is the president of Turkey, in that case I believe there will be continuous tension between the elements of the establishment in Turkey -- the army, the bureaucracy, and the presidency itself. And nobody can guarantee that AKP will continue as a political party as it is now, because my argument is that AKP has not become yet a real well-established, well-grounded political party.

And I believe as soon as Erdogan becomes the president, the intra-factions in AKP will fall into a

kind of debate and I assume that there might be, you know, a breakdown of the party. So, everything points out the condition that he should continue with the prime ministry, but the rest is left to his ambition.

AMB. PARRIS: So, your sense is that a sense of political self-interest for himself and the party could lead him to -- could overcome the pull of a sense of mission -- this project that you said has been underway for so long -- to allow another candidate to stand.

PROF. KAHRAMAN: Exactly.

AMB. PARRIS: Mehmet Ali, would you agree? In what you see of the prime minister and in terms of Turkish history, I mean, prime ministers don't generally walk away from this job, do they?

MR. BAYAR: Well, that's the main reason Prime Minister Erdogan actually, maybe rightfully, seeks the office. Two of his strong predecessors in the center right thought that it was their divine right to just move up to the presidency because they had the parliamentary majorities. So, they opened the way for the prime ministers having the parliamentary votes to

just automatically get themselves elected as president.

AMB. PARRIS: Like Erdogan.

MR. BAYAR: Yeah, exactly. Tayyip Erdogan says, "They did it. I'm the prime minister, I'm a successful prime minister, I have the votes in the parliament, why not me?" Now, here --

AMB. PARRIS: Isn't that a good question?

MR. BAYAR: Well, that's a good question. But in our system -- and especially in this election -- we're not electing. This is not an election. We're not electing a president. The majority party -- the ruling party -- will appoint a president. For a real election you need candidates, okay? Now, what are the facts? Now, 70 percent of the people don't want Tayyip Erdogan to be president.

AMB. PARRIS: According to the polling.

MR. BAYAR: According to the respectable polls. Okay, I just read in -- one of our most prestigious columnists in Turkey, Hasan Cemal, who knows what he writes. He read the polls, even some unannounced polls. We know that 70 -- even -- maybe more percent of the people don't want him to be

president. Seventy -- maybe even more percent of his own party group don't want him to be president.

Business community doesn't want him to be president.

AMB. PARRIS: The Financial Times doesn't want him to be president.

MR. BAYAR: Financial Times doesn't want him to be president. So, he wants to be president now, because he can. He's not going to be elected. He or someone that he chooses to be president is not going to be elected. He's going to be appointed. Another fact is that as we speak, no opposition party will enter into this election -- I mean, physically they will not enter into the hall. It will be the AKP Party group becoming parliament.

AMB. PARRIS: I want to come back to that point, but your bottom line seems to be that you think the likelihood is he will be a candidate, is that fair?

MR. BAYAR: Well, I -- yes, I disagree with Hasan Bulent Kahraman. He has made up his mind on this

--

AMB. PARRIS: That's your reading.

MR. BAYAR: That's my reading. He will be a

candidate, and he will be elected, all other things being equal.

AMB. PARRIS: Okay.

Kerim, do you think there's any chance that when they close the enrollment period on the 26th that Recep Tayyip Erdogan will not be a candidate?

MR. BALCI: Well, speaking about Turkish politics, usually our wishful thinkings prevail over our reasoning, and --

AMB. PARRIS: Yeah, but you're a bureau chief.

(Laughter)

MR. BALCI: Well, the point is this. We are being informed mainly by AK Party deputies because they outnumber the other parties' deputies. The scene seems to be that even if Erdogan decides that his candidacy will be problematic for the country, for the relations of AK Party with the establishment, with the military, with other secular circles, the grassroots of AK Party will force him to become a candidate. Well, common sense is not so much common within the grassroots of AK Party. We know that already Prime Minister Erdogan is

speaking to his own deputies and up until now nobody dared to tell him that it will be better for him to stay five more years in the prime ministry and then if he wants to ascend to the presidency.

We have to take in consideration the health condition of Tayyip Erdogan, that we are making calculations and saying that okay, he can stay one more one more term for five years. Maybe Professor Kahraman is right that if he actually gives up his rightful candidacy, the public will actually endorse his position and he may well be, you know, again, one of the two parties in the parliament and outnumbering even the numbers that they have now. But the reverse can be also true if Erdogan is somehow prevented from being a candidate or prevented from being the president even though he is elected. AK Party uses suffering. Prime Minister Erdogan used his own suffering to actually get votes, and we all know that about 20 percent of the votes that AK Party received in 2002 elections are because of Tayyip Erdogan's own suffering. He actually

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AMB. PARRIS: A sympathy vote.

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MR. BALCI: Sympathy that goes with the suffering. He was in prison because he read -- you know, recited only a poem, so I believe Erdogan himself may come to a point to say, "Okay, because of the, you know, repercussions I foresee, I don't want to be a candidate and my dear friend, Abdullah Gul, the foreign minister, is more fit to the post." But I don't believe the grassroots of AK Party will be able to receive such a position.

AMB. PARRIS: It sounds as if -- well, you wouldn't put a lot of money on it. Your sense is that he'll probably be pulled towards candidacy, would that be fair?

MR. BALCI: Yes.

AMB. PARRIS: Okay. If he's a candidate, and let's assume that he's a candidate despite the potential for a different outcome that Professor Kahraman has described, is there any way that he can be stopped from becoming the president, given where we are. It's late in the game. We're -- there'll be a new president if the system is not stopped between now and the middle of May.

Mehmet Ali, is there -- can you foresee any circumstances where -- and I think this gets back to one of the points you were going to make in terms of parliamentary procedure -- where this train could be stopped if Erdogan is the candidate?

MR. BAYAR: Well, of course, my -- let me give you my personal view first of all. I mean, the system should work. And if he is a candidate under the current system -- others were elected by this system, and these rules were not designed by Tayyip Erdogan; these rules were designed long ago by the establishment.

AMB. PARRIS: Right.

MR. BAYAR: So if he's elected, he's elected.

The point is that his party received 34 percent of the votes cast. This was 24 percent of all the votes, but, you know, we don't count that. With 34 percent of the votes, unless you are a unifying politician going beyond your power base, reaching out to those who have second thoughts about you or misgivings or fears even and convince them that you would be the president as a president should be, then

should you be elected?

He, I think, squandered this chance, and I'm appalled that Tayyip Erdogan -- and we're assuming -- he would be the candidate, and I believe he would be -- he squandered this chance in the last four and a half years or five years, with the huge success that he has achieved as prime minister, with a miracle economic turnaround albeit with many problems but nonetheless we far better than four years ago. He squandered this chance.

Now, why are we talking about this problem now in Washington and everywhere --

AMB. PARRIS: All over the world.

MR. BAYAR: All over the world. There's got to be some reason. (A) The fact is he's not embraced by the majority of the people. They're not seeing him as the president that they want to see -- the majority -- I'm talking about the majority.

AMB. PARRIS: Based on the polling.

MR. BAYAR: (B) He hasn't done well with the institutions. It seems so because yesterday -- you know, I don't want to get into this unless you insist,

but there's this convoluted issue here. The minimum quorum some claim that should exist in the parliament prior to the election process --

AMB. PARRIS: For purposes of elections.

MR. BAYAR: For the purposes of the presidency. The constitution is very vague about this. Some claim that there's got to be 367 plus 1 --

AMB. PARRIS: Present.

MR. BAYAR: Present in the hall.

MR. BALCI: And it (the constitution) says if there is 184 --

MR. BAYAR: -- Now, yes, the speaker of the parliament, could treat this as a regular vote and say, "I'll do what I do for any law. If there is 184 I'll open the session, okay?" Now, there's a debate here, a constitutional debate, all of a sudden, out of the blue. Yesterday, the head of the Constitutional Court, made a statement responding to a question and she said that if there's no 367 quorum, and if the first round is held, as you just described, we know that there isn't going to be an election. Nobody is going to be elected because AKP doesn't have the numbers.

MR. BALCI: They have 13 short.

MR. BAYAR: She (the head of the constitutional court) has said that, if the main opposition party then runs over here to the Constitutional Court, they have the right to apply --

AMB. PARRIS: To appeal.

MR. BAYAR: -- and appeal that this election is not valid --

AMB. PARRIS: Because there's not a quorum.

MR. BAYAR: There's not a quorum. She said that the Constitutional Court will hear the case in three days, because the second round is in the three days.

AMB. PARRIS: Right, right.

MR. BAYAR: Okay. To me, this is a serious issue. I mean, it transcends maybe all other issues, because this is the first time we will have such a constitutional issue, problem, or debate, and we do not know how we're going to get out of this, how we're going to solve this if --

AMB. PARRIS: Let me stop --

MR. BAYAR: -- if the case is heard and

decided.

AMB. PARRIS: -- and make sure people understand the dynamics here, because it's -- this is the arcania that I was referring to a moment ago.

To have a quorum, normally you need a 184 to pass legislation. You need the super majority --

MR. BAYAR: Not to pass, to open the session.

AMB. PARRIS: To open the session --

MR. BAYAR: To pass is 139.

AMB. PARRIS: Okay. To begin the process of selecting a president, one view holds that, even though the constitution doesn't specify this, you need a quorum with as many people as you would need to elect the president, logically, but not necessarily constitutionally. So, the issue is whether or not the opposition party, and other parties represented in parliament that are not part of the Republican People's Party, will not attend the session, therefore depriving the speaker of the 376 members that might be needed, under some interpretations, to convene the process of electing a president.

Now, there are a lot of things that can go

wrong with that in addition to holding a vote and appealing to the Constitutional Court. For example, if the other members of parliament who are not members of the Republican People's Party attend this session, right, then there would be a quorum according to the numbers. Then you could elect the president.

MR. BAYAR: Yes.

AMB. PARRIS: So, it's complicated. It's in flux. I think --

MR. BAYAR: But, now it brings us to my basic point --

AMB. PARRIS: That it could be stopped.

MR. BAYAR: (A) Tayyip Erdogan did not prepare the country for one way or another.

AMB. PARRIS: Right. Yes.

MR. BAYAR: Becoming candidate or not becoming candidate for the results or for the expectations; (B) Tayyip Erdogan -- Prime Minister Erdogan has not prepared his own party group or his power base for any outcome; (C) he hasn't reached out, not only to the opposition within the parliament but to the country beyond its power base to prepare themselves

for his potential presidency. Now he is coming around to the existing two other parties other than the main opposition party. All of a sudden after five years he realized that there were other parties within the parliament. Now he's trying to cut a deal with them.

AMB. PARRIS: With those parties and deputies who can hold the balance between whether this issue just goes away or becomes the constitutional crisis that you were describing a second ago.

MR. BAYAR: Exactly.

AMB. PARRIS: So, there is -- I mean, I think the bottom line here to take away is there is the possibility of a constitutional crisis that could keep Erdogan from becoming president, at least in theory.

MR. BAYAR: At least in theory.

AMB. PARRIS: Are there other scenarios that could keep him from becoming president?

PROF. KAHRAMAN: Well, I will continue --

AMB. PARRIS: For example -- I mean, the question you hear in Washington when this issue comes up is will the military stop this, for example.

PROF. KAHRAMAN: Well, I will continue with

Mehmet Ali's great point. Now, Mehmet Ali's point is completely right. Now, we're trying to elect a president. Why is there an issue? (Because) the most powerful candidate for presidency doesn't go out and talk to the other parties. The issue of candidacy didn't pop up over night. This has been the problem and the question for the last three years, for the last two years. He didn't act as a leader, and he didn't prepare -- I completely agree with Mehmet Ali-- didn't prepare his party, the nation, the country that he might become the president.

AMB. PARRIS: Right. I think we've established that there's -- perhaps a lack of a preparation --

PROF. KAHRAMAN: Well, the point is: yes, he may be stopped, if this is the case, if this is the answer that we're all trying to come up with. This is -- this I find non-democratic. However, part and parcel of this condition is Tayyip Erdogan's not preparing the country and the other elements of the establishment for his presidency.

AMB. PARRIS: Here's where I want to go with

this. If there is a constitutional crisis in Turkey in the next three weeks, or if there's another set of events that stops this process in its tracks -- we can speculate on what that might look like -- what's the impact going to be on Turkey in terms of its interests, its economy, its self-image? Is this going to be cost-free or -- I mean, what --

MR. BALCI: Well, first of all, we have to also note that the opposition is not prepared about these elections either. They actually used up all the ways to stop Erdogan's candidacy.

AMB. PARRIS: I want to push it a little beyond it.

MR. BALCI: Yes.

AMB. PARRIS: If they do, there will be consequences. Have they thought through those consequences?

MR. BALCI: -- only two ways. They have used up all other ways to stop Erdogan. You know, forcing general elections before the presidential election was a notion and they used it. Civil society marches, protests -- they've all already been tried. So has

possible legal action against Erdogan personally. So, they have only two ways to stop Erdogan from becoming a candidate or, if he is a candidate, becoming elected. One is this 367 issue, totally a torture on the constitution, and this is not my own words, this is the words of the former head of the Courts of Appeals. He said two days ago that this kind of financial interpretation is a torturing of the text of the constitution. Well, this may well work, and it is a constitutional crisis, and there is no solution for it because it is not a crisis that pushes the country towards a solution; it is a crisis that pushes the country towards a real crisis because we don't know -- if the Constitutional Court decides the first round is illegitimate, then if you don't have a first round you shouldn't have the second round. And what will you do then? You will pick new candidates? Why? There's nothing written down in the constitution or within the bylaws of the parliament what to do when your --

AMB. PARRIS: That's a crisis. We know what a crisis is and what --

MR. BALCI: -- and the image -- of Turkey

both in Turkey and outside Turkey will really be disturbed. I don't foresee the second option of a military coup or open intervention. Today the chief of staff said already that the decision is the decision of the parliament but they, as the military, will like to see somebody in the presidency that is not Kemalist and is a secularist both in his words and in his heart.

AMB. PARRIS: Um-hmm.

MR. BALCI: And that is all. Anybody can say there are secularist in their heart.

AMB. PARRIS: Everybody does.

MR. BALCI: And as we see -- we saw Erdogan already for five years. His heart is -- is not that much dirtied, let me say, by Islamist tendencies as far as the army is concerned. And so the first option seems to be working, and it seems that if AK Party cannot manage to bring 367 people there, then it will be a crisis. But then what will happen? Probably AK Party will gain from this gain.

AMB. PARRIS: Yeah, I mean, what does the Istanbul stock exchange do the day after the Constitutional Court rules that the quorum was invalid?

MR. BALCI: Well, it will probably -- we have to understand in the past when the military speaks, the stock exchange used to go down. Nowadays when the chief of staff says something -- excuse me -- stupid, it goes up and --

AMB. PARRIS: But you've kind of made the point I was trying to get. There will be winners and losers in this scenario. Your sense is AK would actually end up -- could end up being a winner because they would again be viewed as being the victim, as you suggested earlier.

MR. BALCI: Yes.

AMB. PARRIS: Do you guys agree with that?

MR. BAYAR: Well, you know, depending on the situation, if I may.

AMB. PARRIS: Yeah, please.

MR. BAYAR: I will try to describe the crisis. At your assumption we move beyond the election. He gets elected.

AMB. PARRIS: No, I'm saying if there is a crisis, a constitutional crisis.

MR. BAYAR: You're talking about --

AMB. PARRIS: A situation in which a president cannot be elected.

MR. BAYAR: If there is a constitutional crisis, ladies and gentlemen, it's far worse than a potential or whatever military coup because our institutions -- our checks-and-balances system or lack thereof doesn't work. We don't have a checks-and-balances system. That's the reason, actually, we are not very comfortable with the idea of a single party with only 34 percent of the votes controlling all three powers, that is, legislation, executive, and -- legislation, legislative, executive, and -- legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

AMB. PARRIS: Um-hmm.

MR. BAYAR: Okay, because we lack credible built-in stabilizers or checks-and-balances systems. Now, if we have a constitutional crisis, (A) we do not know how to solve this constitutional crisis because we've never had such an issue.

AMB. PARRIS: Yeah, but doesn't that pose -- put a real responsibility on, for example, the CHP as the appellant or the other members -- the other members

of parliament who are not members of the CHP not to get into the situation --

MR. BAYAR: Well, first of all, the issue for CHP or other opposition parties, to begin with, is a political issue. The political issue is that they don't want their formidable opponent, with his own party, to become even more powerful, as I said, with grabbing the presidency as well. That's why they will not enter into the selection. But the fact is that the other two parties, that is True Path Party and Motherland Party, do have members in the parliament.

AMB. PARRIS: They could be the swing votes (for a quorum).

MR. BAYAR: Swing votes. They may be negotiating, but that doesn't solve -- the main problem is that -- okay, I pose a question, actually, at this stage. Had we had a direct suffrage, direct vote by the people to elect the president, would Erdogan have been elected? No. We know that he would not have been elected.

AMB. PARRIS: I mean --

MR. BAYAR: Especially in a two-tier

election.

AMB. PARRIS: Yeah.

MR. BAYAR: This is the main problem, which is reflected among the institutions and in the political elite.

AMB. PARRIS: Hasan bey?

PROF. KAHRAMAN: Both good points. First of all, I'm not as pessimist as my colleagues here. This might be due to age problems. I believe Turkey will get rid of this problem even if we have a kind of constitutional problem, (A); (B) I don't see that army will directly intervene in the election of the president in Turkey, and (C) Tayyip Erdogan if he is the president after all and if he jumps over all these constraints of the constitution, which I believe they are all artificial constraints, then he will become the president. No doubt on that point. But later, then there will be what I call the tension, friction, stress, and strain between, let's say, the army or the judiciary and the president because --

AMB. PARRIS: He happens to be the National Security Council chairman.

PROF. KAHRAMAN: Exactly. Now, we're talking about the future crisis in Turkey. We already, I believe, have a crisis in Turkey.

AMB. PARRIS: Um-hmm.

PROF. KAHRAMAN: That's the crisis of politics in Turkey. There is no other political party than AKP in Turkey. I call it as a kind of not yet party -- type of party in Turkey. We have CHP, who is, you know, the historical party of Turkey, who has not since 2002 conducted a constructive type of opposition. There is no True Path Party, there is no Motherland Party, the parties of two former presidents. So we already have been facing a democratic crisis. That's what I call the crisis of politics in Turkey. No parties at all.

AMB. PARRIS: That's a very important point. I -- and it gets into the next issue that I'd like to address. I mean, we -- let's assume that you're right, professor, and that Turkey gets through this process and Erdogan becomes president. You've suggested that this will be a period of tension. Everybody that I know in Turkey has sort of shared that same sense with

me. Even members of AKP, I think, anticipate that this will be a period of tension.

When you ask Turks how will this be expressed, you hear about boycotts or lawsuits or a variety of symbolic steps to demonstrate dissatisfaction, lack of confidence, all of the kinds of things that you, Mehmet Ali, were talking about and, Professor, in terms of the lack of preparation of a consensus, the lack of a broad effort to draw in and prepare the ground. Here's my question. When Turks watch -- see empty seats at a reception, and the news is on the national day -- you know, and it's an all-civilian affair or other ways are found of expressing dissatisfaction, and assuming that the new president does not embark on an immediate radicalizing path, what's the most likely reaction among the Turkish public to these kinds of tactics? Will Kerim bey be correct that AK will again, or the president in this case, be the recipient of a vote of sympathy for their victim-hood or is this something that people will fall in behind? Let me give you a chance to express a view and then come back to these fellows on that.

MR. BALCI: Well, the point is this. We have to see that there is already a kind of cohabitation between the secular establishment and AK Party government. And I believe that, okay, there will be a period of crisis if Erdogan himself or any other candidate from AK Party or from the line of AK Party is selected as the president. There will be a period of crisis, but in the end the secular establishment will find a way to control Çankaya, the palace of the presidency. You have to just go into Google Alert and watch "Çankaya" to understand how our secular establishment retains a strong hold over the civil establishment, the government, and the presidency. You look at the map you will see Çankaya here and around it all the military establishments. No prime minister can find a way to go into the presidential palace without being seen and watched by the army. So, you know, it is only a kind of Moses in the palace of Pharaoh.

AMB. PARRIS: So, is your point that there won't be tension or that will be --

MR. BALCI: There will be a tension for about six months.

AMB. PARRIS: And are you saying that's a show or genuine?

MR. BALCI: It can be a genuine tension, but in the end, you know, army people, secular people are also clever people. We see here secular people getting into terms with somebody like Erdogan. Probably Erdogan with the radical Islamist mindset he may have had maybe ten years ago will be an unacceptable bed guy, let me say, bedfellow for these people. But they are now accepting -- giving life, you know, place for him. When Tayyip Erdogan came to power he changed, and we saw AK Party being pushed to the center after being the incumbent party, the government. I believe Erdogan if he -- or Abdullah Gül or anybody else other than Bülent Arinç, speaker of the parliament, anybody that comes from AK Party to the presidency will actually move towards the establishment within six months. Within that six months we will see what -- the army generals will not be attending events in Çankaya palace, the presidential palace, and especially the ultra-seculars -- lawyers, judges within the High Court of Turkey -- will not attend the events. And then what

will happen? In the elections next November people will actually complain about whom?

Deniz Baykal, the opposition leader who actually made all the fuss about the presidential elections -- he will lose lots of votes and the AK Party, whether it will be headed by Abdullah Gül or Tayyip Erdogan, we don't know, it will gain some extra vote, and as I said there is already a friction between the public and the secular establishment, especially the army. As I said, the army -- the chief of staff speaks, you know, criticizes the government and then we see stock exchange going up. This means that they will actually -- the AK Party will gain --

AMB. PARRIS: Let me stop you. That was very helpful. You brought me exactly where I wanted to go, and now I want to ask these fellows do you agree with the sense that ultimately the establishment and the presidency will reach an accommodation and, perhaps the more important point for the long term, that a summer of tension or a couple of months of tension if the elections are brought forward redounds to the benefit of AKP, at least potentially, when general elections

happen as they must before the end of November?

Let's let the professor go first and then you finish up on this.

PROF. KAHRAMAN: Thank you.

Well, first of all, politics is not for three days or for six months. If he's elected, he will be the president of Turkey for seven years.

AMB. PARRIS: Right.

MR. BAYAR: He's 63 years old.

PROF. KAHRAMAN: He's -- yes, and this is a very long period of time. What I see is Turkey comes from a big state tradition, and what I call the stress and friction between the, you know, components of the establishment and the state, this doesn't mean that there will be a kind of, you know, complete discommunication, disconnection between the presidency and the other elements of the state. Of course there will be all these communications and meetings and ceremonies and everything. But what I believe is that -- let's say the Army, the military, or the other civilian organizations -- they will never give up opposing Erdogan, and of course they will try to find

another remedy and solution to get rid of the presidency of Tayyip Erdogan, and this again, according to me, boils down to the point of creating a new political environment in Turkey. The problems of politics in Turkey should be solved politically instead of going and applying the army or the military or asking or waiting for the intervention of the army. So, the main problem is, I believe, politics trying to come up with a solution to the existing problem. Other than that, I believe, yes, they will reach a kind of certain understanding and accommodation between the groups.

The point is that in Turkey this state tradition, on the one hand, will never give up this understanding of coming up with a new, let's say, president. But on the other hand, the point is that AKP is a continuation and is the end of a long-term project that started maybe 40 years ago. My concern is not the presidency, specifically the presidency of Tayyip Erdogan. But think about a Turkey in which the spokesperson of parliamentary is from AKP. The president from AKP. The prime minister is from AKP.

And all other, you know, administrative staff is from AKP, and there is no other parties or political groups in Turkey active as AKP is active.

AMB. PARRIS: Well, and they've had five to seven years to replace the bureaucracy, etc., so it's a -- there's a big difference.

PROF. KAHRAMAN: That's a big issue actually. And the party with, let's say, 20 percentage absolute majority or 24, 34 percent, you know, majority vote should not seek to come up with a complete project of social, political, and cultural transformation. This is what makes some, even the democratic people come up with a kind of fear in Turkey, and nobody knows what will be the, you know, end of this. On the other hand, I'm not seeing that AKP is a kind of radical fundamentalist Islamic Party, because it has proved itself through its relation with European Union, and it was the more pro-Westernization party than CHP in Turkey in the last five years.

AMB. PARRIS: Okay, let me --

PROF. KAHRAMAN: This means --

AMB. PARRIS: Yeah.

PROF. KAHRAMAN: -- we should come up with a new understanding of politics, democracy, and, let's say, the grassroots in Turkey.

AMB. PARRIS: Some would say we need to do the same thing here, but --

(Laughter)

AMB. PARRIS: Mehmet Ali, hot summer. Who wins, who loses? You've seen this both from the Çankaya perspective and --

MR. BAYAR: I'll give you, not a hypothetical case, but what happened between the two extremely secular politicians -- or statesmen. In one NSC meeting four years ago, four and a half years ago, lo and behold a secular president threw -- the constitution -- the book called *The Constitution* -- threw it at the secular prime minister --

AMB. PARRIS: Okay, and the next day?

MR. BAYAR: Exactly. The country lost half of its wealth. The entire system was turned upside down. So, the point is not if he's secular or if he's not secular, if the system -- whatever, will work. The point is the issue of governance. Now, the prime

minister, had he had his way in the last four or five years, he would have done in certain matters differently probably because we had reasonable amount of checks and balances. The president was staunchly, or is staunchly -- the current president says that he's staunchly secular. He even blocks certain appointments, vetoes legislation, sends them back. You know, to his credit, to a degree I -- 99.9 percent I disagree with Sezer's position on life itself maybe, but in certain legislation he was right to send it back, because parliament is a rubber stamp parliament.

No matter what you do, you can never come near their majority. I mean, they pass anything they want any way they want. Since we don't have a second branch -- I mean, second house, like senate or whatever -- it went straight to the president, and the president acted like senate, as opposition, as senate and as the Constitutional Court before it sends it finally down to the Constitutional Court. So, there has been some degree of checks and balances when it came to certain agendas.

AMB. PARRIS: Okay.

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MR. BAYAR: The problem, as I said, is the governance. What's going to happen when (A) you have no checks and balances; (B) what's going to happen if the elections are held in, let's say, July -- not in November. If the elections are held in July, which is the smartest thing for the AKP to do in both cases, whether or not Erdogan gets elected.

AKP will carry the elections. Because I agree with Hasan Bulent Kahraman that we are actually - - we should be talking about the colossal failure of the opposition to come up with any sensible alternative to this party. After all, when I lost the elections on the -- actually, I won in my district, my party lost, we couldn't make it to the threshold. The morning of the fourth of November 2002 I said something in response to NTV television when they said what do you think about this landslide winning of AKP, which only got 34 percent, which is a good opposition vote in Europe. And I said, look, Turkey is larger than AKP. But I still believe that Turkey can move beyond AKP.

PROF. KAHRAMAN: And AKP believes they are larger than life.

MR. BAYAR: This is the problem. Now, are we talking about an economic crisis? Well, we -- if you remember last May -- preceding to May -- a single appointment, which was the easiest thing for this government because it's their strongest trump card, the simple appointment of the Central Bank governor became a bigger crisis or problem than itself, so we ended up with 30 percent of devaluation of Turkish lira, stock market taking a dive over this appointment. Now, what I'm trying to say is that the problem -- it, first of all, will be the lack of checks and balances coupled with the fact that we have no credible opposition or potential candidate for a new government that can be brought to the Turkish elections.

AMB. PARRIS: The point that you're making --

MR. BAYAR: So, winner can be, in the short run, AKP.

AMB. PARRIS: In terms of general elections.

MR. BAYAR: General elections. Loser -- if this cannot be managed well, loser can be the country itself. We still haven't talked about its potential foreign policy implications. Well, there I --

AMB. PARRIS: Not yet, not yet, we're going to get that.

(Laughter)

MR. BAYAR: You asked -- it was part of your -- a very earlier question. That's why I --

AMB. PARRIS: No, I do want to get to that. I mean, we're at a point now where we're really beginning to talk about the difference that an AKP president makes in the system. You know, the Turkish presidential system is different than ours, different than the French. It's often described as a presidency of limited powers, but those who have watched it closely know that in terms of the power to say no on certain things, the power to do foreign policy in the right hands -- there's a lot of latent power there, and when people here in Washington hear, you know, the Islamists are about to take over the presidency in Turkey and will control all of the institutions, I think the first thing that flashes through people's heads is Taliban. I think everybody here would agree that that's a false analogy. It's not Taliban. But is it Erbakan? I mean, is this -- is a presidency in

which the AKP has got another five-year mandate, maybe a stronger mandate. Is this a presidency --

MR. BALCI: In certain people's mind, it flashes as the evangelists.

AMB. PARRIS: Well, but, what would your guess be, Kerim? Do you think the next prime minister -- is what we're really talking about -- would seek to pursue a radical agenda to change the baselines of where religion and the secular society meet in Turkey that have been there for so long, or are we talking about a more pragmatic approach that would avoid the downside that Mehmet Ali and the professor had been describing both political and economic?

MR. BALCI: Well, when I enrolled in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem about -- it's already ten years -- my advisor, told me -- asked me whether I want to be an academician or a journalist, because I was dealing with both, and I said well, you know, since I am in the Middle East, I would like to be an expert on the Middle East -- an academician I said. And he said listen, in the Middle East you cannot do social science. It is better to be a journalist here because

one of the main axioms, you know, principles of social science is that you believe man is rational, and he said in Middle East that axiom does not go. Man is not rational in the Middle East.

PROF. KAHRAMAN: Isn't that a very Orientalist approach?

MR. BALCI: Well, this was from an Oriental man -- a Syrian Arab actually. But the point is this. We are thinking of the possible repercussions of an AK Party president, an AK Party prime minister, and while you are thinking what will happen we are making reasonable, you know, calculations, but we don't know if they will be reasonable when they come to real power. We have to look forward for one more week, for example. We had -- I don't think in United States it was well observed. We had already a one-year-old crisis about the appointment of the higher judges.

The Court of Appeals and the Court of the Council of state lacks 23 posts -- working posts, okay?

The higher judges have not been appointed for one year. Why? In the first half of the year, the judges, the higher council of judges, and prosecutors, didn't

want to appoint them, because that council appoints higher judges. They didn't want to appoint them. Why?

Because then the government had the upper hand, they wanted to wait until two more judges are appointed to this council by the president -- secular judges, of course. And when they were appointed, then the government didn't want this council to work -- to appoint the judges. In the end, the government is trying to somehow put in more people not hostile to the AK Party, while people in the higher courts, and the judges themselves, are working as the opposition or, actually, as the real state, the establishment. They want people, from their mindset, to be that.

On the 15th, which is a Sunday, the minister of justice and the judges in this council decided that on a Sunday they will come together and solve the crisis, meaning they will appoint higher judges. The point is it's a Sunday. Higher judges do not work on Sundays. It means that it will be skipped to the Monday, and it is the 16th. It means on the 16th, we will know probably who will be the next president -- or at least a candidate -- who will be the candidates, and

then will start discussing about the business -- not the higher judges. I say if AK Party does not give up its promises and if the higher judges are appointed next week, this means that the next president and the next prime minister from AK Party are actually ready to compromise with the secular establishment. But if they play a game on the appointment of the judges -- next week we will all know this -- this means that they are waiting till they can hold the presidency: who is the last person to speak about the appointment of the judges. This means that they are actually coming to real power and they have a plan in their minds to change the mindset of the country.

I believe -- and as a journalist, we have some information that two kinds of people are packing already. Packing, yes. Abdullah Gül's office is packing. They are packing to move where? I don't know. Maybe to the presidential palace or the prime ministerial palace. And we know of some other names in the office of the president --

AMB. PARRIS: Prime minister --

MR. BALCI: Prime minister's office -- they

are packing also. We don't know why they are packing, whether they are planning to the presidential palace with Erdogan or they are planning to move back to the academia world they came from or the streets. But they are packing. This is insider's information.

AMB. PARRIS: That's a wonderful Ankara perspective. Thank you very much. That's what you'd expect a bureau chief to know.

I'll let you go first, Hasan.

MR. BAYAR: What was the question?

AMB. PARRIS: The question was Erbakan? Oor Taliban? Or something more benign? Once there are -- once you have a new prime minister and you have a new president and they're both from the same party and they have a new mandate, we've all -- you've all said that you expect the short term -- the likely scenario is AKP returns to power in some way.

MR. BAYAR: Well, as the --

AMB. PARRIS: Are they going to be radical, or are they going to be pragmatic? I mean, is this the old Refah Party?

MR. BAYAR: First, if they were the old

Refah, they would not come to power with 34 percent. We have to agree on that. They reformed themselves. They reformed themselves and they moved beyond the secular establishment's 45-year-old dream of becoming part of Europe, integrating with Europe. They fulfilled major landmark steps but nonetheless, as you say here, the jury is still out on them, and for very tangible reasons, as Kerim bay very well described. While we're discussing all these things, some people are not only packing to move somewhere else, but they're also packing the courts, as the Americans say.

AMB. PARRIS: They do that in some democratic countries.

MR. BAYAR: Exactly. Well, you know, let's say -- okay, okay, I -- you know, I don't want get into this, but you have a checks-and-balances system here.

AMB. PARRIS: Yeah, okay.

MR. BAYAR: At least somebody checks on these guys.

AMB. PARRIS: Fair enough.

MR. BAYAR: At least -- even this president cannot pack the court to move the fundamentalist social

agenda through the court. I mean --

AMB. PARRIS: Not since November now.

MR. BAYAR: Okay.

AMB. PARRIS: Right.

MR. BAYAR: Well, is it true? I should pack and go back home.

(Laughter)

MR. BAYAR: Power corrupts, as you say, and ultimate power corrupts ultimately. Now, we are going beyond the power to -- ultimate power, now -- with this presidential -- potential presidential election. That's my -- that's what I'm scared of now. I happen to very much have faith in what Woodrow Wilson once said, that -- I'm paraphrasing -- "the seat of the government gives wisdom to the person who occupies it." We do not know until -- when that person gets into the seat, we do not know how he or she would behave under certain circumstances, but we can only judge these people by their previous experiences. These people come from the fundamentalist Islamic political traditions. They don't deny this. What they say -- we are changed.

Now, had Mr. Gul gained 20 more votes out of 1400 votes in the Virtrue Party, now closed, Virtue Party convention, he would have been the successor to Mr. Erbakan. He lost the chairmanship in the convention. They got kicked out of Virtrue Party or left Virtrue Party, and Virtue Party was banned. The - - not Troika but the Poliburo of the Virtue Party formed its own party, which is Saadet. These guys (AKP), since they couldn't get their way into the new party, split and formed their own new party. But they came from this 150-year-old tradition -- the main branch of political Islam, if you can loosely use this term -- Mr. Kahraman is the expert.

Now what I'm trying to say is that the country is right to second guess, to be careful, to be cautious -- when it comes to judicial appointments, when it comes to the education system in this country, when it comes to certain other issues. We have every right to. But all I'm trying to say -- since our system failed to change the constitution and have a better, proper-functioning election system which would bring in the real people into the people. Now, the

original 2002 elections produced only half of the people or brought only the half of the people into this parliament. Forty-seven percent of the electorate are not represented in the 2002 parliament, which at the end of the day elects this guy as president. This is our main problem. Since our election system -- and this has nothing to do with AKP. AKP -- it's not AKP's fault. They're playing by the same rules as the others did. The establishment failed to see that the system did not work. That system collapsed long ago -- long ago -- under the corrupt politicians and all that. They didn't change the system.

Now, this convoluted system, this warped system, is producing a president with 34 percent of the vote, not representing the entire country but having an incredible power -- incredible power combined with other branches of the government, and what do we do if there is a real crisis? What happens to the economy? What happens to our way of life? We do not know. The jury is still out on this, and there is only one way of stopping this from happening. Mr. Erdogan can go on to become a very successful prime minister even with

higher votes. As Dr. Kahraman just said, the first time a prime minister increasing his votes in the second term. He can't do that. I think the country will give him that chance, and then we would have, again, some way of checks and balances that would continue and hopefully reforming the system in the next parliament.

AMB. PARRIS: Okay, I'm going to give Professor Kahraman the last word, and then I'm going to open it to questions.

Professor.

PROF. KAHRAMAN: Well, I'm a little bit sick and tired of Turkey having all these continuous crises. The difference between yesterday, today, and tomorrow is we have crises each and every day. The difference is that yesterday's crisis might be, you know, smaller than today's or tomorrow's or expecting to be no larger than today's crisis. I have never seen one single day in Turkey in which we don't face this notion, concept, and the practice of crisis, whereas Turkey is becoming a real crisis country and the crisis society.

Think about a Turkey in which the democracy

has been constructed but what I call a historical block. This means the conglomeration of the army, the bureaucracy, and the intelligence -- the intellectuals.

This was the thing that started in the early 20th century. Now the bureaucracy and the army are resisting against this AKP. This is one leg of this whole bunch of crises.

But, on the other hand, what do we have? We have the foreign policy issues. Turkey is trying to find a president for itself in such a period in which we don't know whether United States will be attacking Iran, and there is already a large, big unseen crisis existing in the Middle East.

What do we have in Turkey? We have the rising nationalism in Turkey. I know, some of my colleagues don't agree with me on this, but there is. I insist that a rising nationalism in Turkey in different, various parts of Turkey conducted by what we call the -- I don't know -- the "Deep State", and we have the Kurdish issue in Turkey. We don't --

MR. BAYAR: The rise of Kurdish nationalism.

PROF. KAHRAMAN: Exactly.

MR. BAYAR: Not only Kurdish nationalism.

PROF. KAHRAMAN: Of course. Feeding each other.

So, what we have -- already is this project of transforming Turkey into I don't know. But if the question is whether AKP is the Refah Party, no, it's not.

I agree with Kerim bay on his point that the establishment will find a way to get out of this crisis and of this problem. It's not Taliban; it's not even Refah. Erdogan is not Erbakan. However, this doesn't mean that in Turkey sooner or later there won't be feelings against the AKP, or that we won't see politics in Turkey generate a kind of anti-Semitism. Some of the intellectuals in Turkey and the politicians and the decision makers already argue that, for example, the establishment of this Kurdish state is a project conducted by Israel and America, and there is this, again, rising of anti-Americanism in Turkey. Some of those making these arguments have been secularists and, in that sense, Kerim bay suggested that I am secularist; I'm not, and I have never been a secularist

in that sense, and I've never been a secularist or a Kemalist in those terms. I have, of course, enormous, great respect for Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, but I have never been a Kemalist or a secularist in the official sense.

So, not the only the crisis of presidency, but we have the crisis of the foreign policy issues in Turkey and -- or let's say crises fed by the foreign policy issues and other things like the nationalism and the Kurdish issue in Turkey. I was once a very good chess player -- sometimes winner takes all, gets all; sometimes winner loses all.

AMB. PARRIS: Sometimes it's a draw.

PROF. KAHRAMAN: Sometimes a draw.

AMB. PARRIS: Yeah.

All right, I'd like to thank the panelists for what I think was a good and spirited discussion and for their candor.

I'd like to invite questions from the audience. Please wait for the microphone. Please identify yourself before you pose your question. We have one right here. Suat?

MR. KINIKLIOGLU: Suat Kinikhoglu, the German Marshal Fund. We Turks have been discussing this issue now for a year and probably intensely over the last six months. I would be curious about whether we could step back and look at this from a step back rather than concentrating on Erdogan or Gül as a person, but why don't we view this as a process where Turkey is coming to terms with its population, with its culture, and its democracy maturing actually. Why is this discussion solely based on the polarization between the secular and the so-called Islamist axis, and why don't we see this -- and it's probably difficult for most of us in this room to accept -- as a normalization of the country, as an authoritarian state's power which structured the presidency purposefully as a balance in case something goes wrong, to be now, soon, probably in a party that it wouldn't agree with on many issues?

But I agree with Mehmet Ali. What you said specific -- we can't blame the AK Party for this scenario to take place now, but I wonder why we accuse the AK party of being so successful. Why are we not putting emphasis -- if the name of the game is

democracy, why don't we spend more energy in investigating what went wrong with the opposition? Why cannot, over the last five years, one single political party offer at least some hope? We're now talking about parties that barely can make it to the 10 percent, and I think --

AMB. PARRIS: Do you want to direct that towards anyone?

MR. KINIKLIOGLU: Yes, to anyone, and just -- that's my comment. And one question to Mr. Balci. You alluded at the very beginning about the health condition of Tayyip Erdogan, and I was wondering if there's anything we don't know about his health that you would like to share with us. Thank you.

AMB. PARRIS: As bureau chief, huh? Let's do that one first.

MR. BALCI: Well, actually, we have gossips, some of them by persons in AK Party, who want, you know, to distract attention from the personality of Erdogan as the future candidate. AK Party has this strategy. You know, the first question -- Mark asked how come you don't know your future president

candidate? That is exactly the strategy of AK Party. AK Party does not want to concentrate -- the opposition to concentrate -- on one single name. And there is gossip of some health issues, as well.

AMB. PARRIS: Briefly, in response --

MR. BAYAR: (A) Nobody's blaming AKP for its success. To the contrary, I've been praising AKP for its success, and I'm trying to understand why they're squandering their chance to read the normalcy, their chance to prevent the country from getting into a democratic, constitutional, whatever crisis, their chance to be -- the chance to exist as a mainstream political power for a long time to go. I don't understand.

That's my point, (B); (C) I made -- explicitly -- I made that point explicitly -- that it's a colossal failure of the opposition, and I repeat it.

It's a colossal failure of the political system to produce after the 2002 elections, to change itself. I am part and parcel of that process. Even my own party cannot stand me saying certain things that I say due to lack of any democracy within the parties, including the

AKP. AKP is a top-to-bottom, very dictatorial political party. Nothing happens if Tayyip Erdogan doesn't want it. Everybody know this.

We have people, like Professor Kahraman here, who know this moment and its parties better than anybody else. Because of his expertise, he can say a few things about that maybe. But my point is that we can talk about the country. We can talk about the population. These are other issues. This is politics actually. The politics comes up with responses to what country looks like or asks from the system. That's beside the point.

My point is related to the system. We don't have a properly functioning system. I mean, are we going to say that since the country is more conservative today that we should all do away with the elections and continuously elect President Bush or someone like him?

Far be it for me to intervene with your own political life -- but this is beside the point.

All I'm trying to say is that who is going to stop, who is going to make sure that our system is not

going to become a chronically crisis-ridden country in the next five, six years? I mean, going to back to my earlier point, checks and balances. We do not have a checks-and-balances system properly functioning. We have no built-in stabilizers in the system except able prime ministers fielding coalitions within the system and with the country.

Some succeeded in the past, like Ozal with variations; like (Demirel) with variations, okay? Some could have, like Sezer. It's all arbitrary. It's all by chance. We are now playing a Russian roulette. It's not about Tayyip Erdogan or not. Even if I were the candidate with my party controlling every branch, I would be scared, because again, as I said, Turkey's (inaudible) democracy -- you know better -- (inaudible) democracy has not found the right suit tailored for its problems and for its realities. This is the remnant of 12 September 1980 military fascism, which we haven't sold or recovered from.

AMB. PARRIS: Okay, can I just -- let me take two or three questions and you can come back and (inaudible).

Carol Migdalovitz first.

MS. Migdalovitz: Yes, thank you. We haven't talked too much about the foreign policy implications of an AKP presidency. From an American point of view, there are some signs or some concerns voiced here that AKP was using the EU agenda simply to avoid interference by the military in Turkish politics and it is not sincerely a pro-Western party per se and that its agenda is not really pro-Western and that there are indications, like the meetings with Hamas and other outreach to the East perhaps, that maybe AKP wants to change the traditional foreign policy orientation of Turkey. What do you see happening in an AKP presidency and an AKP prime ministership? Do you see major changes coming?

AMB. PARRIS: Yasmin. Yasmin Congar.

MS. Congar: Thank you, Yasmin Congar, Hurriyet. One word we heard most often in this morning session is "crisis." I find it a little surprising that when you look at the actions and reports of the international investors, usually the first line in the reports, recent reports, is that they don't expect a

crisis, and on the first national election in Turkey.

AMB. PARRIS: It's a good thing they're not here.

MS. Congar: The speakers here -- no, certainly they made a good case for why we might have a crisis, but in the reports of the international investors -- and I think exemplified by their recent actions -- they're more concerned about the possible effects of the presidential election on the upcoming general elections than, you know, a constitutional crisis, let's say, or military intervention. So, I want to ask you about that. Let's assume that international investors are right, we don't have a constitutional crisis, and Mr. Erdogan becomes president. How would that affect the chances of AKP in the general elections if we think general elections will be held as early as July, as Mehmet Ali Bayar has suggested? Could they still come to power as a single party? Would Mr. Gül be as effective as Mr. Erdogan has been as the party leader in the election campaign? Thank you.

AMB. PARRIS: Let's answer those two and then

we'll come back for these two. Let's do foreign policy first and maybe, Professor, you could give us a couple of brief sentences on that if the others can --

PROF. KAHRAMAN: No, no, let's let Mehmet Ali give an answer to the foreign policy. He is more into that. I'll talk about the coming elections.

AMB. PARRIS: Go ahead.

MR. BAYAR: My mentor is sitting right here, Ambassador Ozdem Sanberk, so he's watching. I don't know what to say about foreign policy.

AMB. PARRIS: You're the diplomat, right?

MR. BAYAR: The president in our constitution is the head of the National Security Council also. It's the constitutional body where soldiers and government come together. It's an awkward body but come together and work out mainly national security and foreign policy issues, along with other issues but mainly. He is the commander-in-chief.

Now, foreign policy is a collectively arrived-at solution or decision-making process in Turkey. The president heads that council. He has authority over it. But again, as I said, the state is

also part of that council. So, it's not very easy to radically alter Turkish foreign policy orientations. Anyhow, under secular presidents, like we've seen under the Mr. Sezer, we may have not so pro-West foreign policy, and at times Prime Minister Erdogan looked more pro-Western than President Sezer in his foreign policy. So, I'm not extremely concerned by that prospect.

My issue is bigger than that. A foreign policy crisis would be only a derivative of a larger crisis, and I agree with -- may I just respond to Yasmin's very quickly. Well, international investors -- four days, not forty -- four days before 21 February 2000 crisis gave incredibly flying colors -- high-flying colors to the Turkish economy. We all know this. International investors only follow the facts and make predictions based on facts. They don't have the facts. None of us have seen the facts. All I'm trying to say is let's be aware that we are walking into a mind field, not because of the person himself but because of the ultimate accumulation of power in one single party, whatever that party may be.

AMB. PARRIS: And in terms of the second part

of the question, I thought I heard all three panelists suggest that the most likely scenario is that AKP's position in the next general election is enhanced almost under whatever scenario. Is that a fair statement? I don't want to speak for you guys, but I do want to be brief, and so I'm summarizing what I thought I heard. Is that fair?

MR. BALCI: Well, the point is this. AKP itself is also looking for the answer.

AMB. PARRIS: I see.

MR. BALCI: And they are making public surveys to know whether -- Erdogan being the president -- AK Party will lose vote or gain vote. Some people claim that he will, but then -- a warning -- I'm telling you gossips, and these are not -- these may not be reliable information. For example, the brain tumor -- I didn't find it published. I am in Ankara at Zaman newspaper which didn't publish this, you know. I once suggested journals to publish those. It's a gossip.

But there is a gossip that some people from the office of Abdullah Gül is actually making up surveys, claiming that Erdogan in Çankaya will be

helpful to AK Party with Abdullah Gül as its chairman in the next elections. This is actually Abdullah Gül and this group is pushing Erdogan to Çankaya. I know it to be the prime minister because AK Party is already becoming an old party by the ages of the deputies. Abdullah Gül has a young group, and Abdullah Gül knows that some people from the Refah Party background should be actually kicked out of the party. Erdogan himself wants to keep them within the party. So, AK Party does not know itself still to answer whether a president in Çankaya and Erdogan will be helpful to AK Party or not, but it seems that the wind blows towards bringing Erdogan to Çankaya and is starting to speak about a presidential system.

AMB. PARRIS: Sure. That's another question I don't think we have time to get into. I'm going to let Ali ask a question and this gentleman here and then the panel can respond to any of them that it chooses. Ali?

SPEAKER: Ali Aslan, Zaman newspaper. Welcome all. I wonder what would be an acceptable solution for the establishment -- I mean, so that, you

know, we get rid of a possible crisis. Would Mr. Gül be a good choice for AK Party, or what would be the best scenario for the establishment?

AMB. PARRIS: And, sir?

MR. YENNER: Thank you. My name is Demmer Yenner. I'm with the Bearing Point International Consultants. I work in Egypt. And glad to be looking Turkey and, you know, at least we got a nice debate what's going on in Turkey, and being a native Turk I came here with lots of questions in my beloved country, but I now have more questions than I ever came in with, and while all those relative questions have been asked and some of them have been addressed by yourselves, my question is if history is any yardstick, and if Mr. Erdogan somehow makes it to the presidency and his party will be led by maybe Abdullah Gül, I'd like to see him as the next prime minister, because I cannot see anybody else who knows the rest of the system.

But Mr. Ozal, when he left (inaudible) and became the president, it led to the demise of his party in the long run, maybe in the short run, and knowing one more thing, that a lot of the political parties in

Turkey have one-man-show attitudes --

AMB. PARRIS: We need a question here.

MR. YENNER: Well, the question is what do you think? Where do you think this will go?

AMB. PARRIS: Professor --

PROF. KAHRAMAN: Well, actually --

AMB. PARRIS: You can answer any of these questions.

PROF. KAHRAMAN: All right, thank you. Let me start with this question. I have already, I believe, answered this question and also, Mehmet, that he gave an answer to the question.

If he goes to Çankaya and becomes the president, then the party will -- we'll see the demise of the party. I'm hundred percent sure about that. So, we have people with great ambitions pushing Erdogan to become the prime minister of the party, the head of the party, and the prime minister and Erdogan trying to be the president. So, they will crash, fall into a crash at some point and we'll see even the fragmenting of the party into different groups.

The second point about the foreign policy.

Actually, that's a very important question. What -- I'll try to give just an answer with one sentence. In Turkey's recent history, I have never seen a period in which the foreign policy has more impact on the domestic politics than the domestic politics itself. This is due to the conditions of the Middle East. This is due to, you know, an energy problem. This is due to the relations with Russia so and so forth, and also I will count into that Turkey's internal relations with America, with Israel, and of course with Kurds.

Coming back to that point, the opposition -- while CHP, Atatürk's party, just after the 2002 elections -- created a certain condition for the domestic internal politics, that's the polarization, and that forced Turkey into a polarized country on the basis of secularism and Islam, and out of this now we're trying to foresee here what will be the results of the coming elections. My sense of that is this. According to the polls that have been, you know, ordered by the Ankara mayor, Melih Gökçek, AKP with Erdogan will get 42 percent of the votes and AKP with Gül is about 30 to something, very much like that.

This shows the difference between Erdogan and Gül. What I am expecting is while there will be no surprise for these coming elections, it will mean that in 2002 after the turmoils that we have faced in the 1990s, Turkey found its governing party. For the coming elections, not for the 2007 but also for the others, Turkey's aim is to find its opposition, and I think these elections will be about looking for the future main opposition party. Thank you.

AMB. PARRIS: Mehmet Ali, last word?

MR. BAYAR: I go back to my beginning -- is that (A) we are not electing a president; we're appointing a president by a single majority party in the parliament. This is not good for democracy in any country: (B) We lack checks and balances -- I will must stress this. On Ali's question, I don't know what will be -- who is the establishment? I don't know who even is the establishment. If you mean the military, the gentleman just spoke today. I'm not part of the establishment. I don't know what the establishment is looking for. And I don't think that the establishment knows what it's looking for, because the establishment

should have done its homework in the last decade. That would have prevented the republic and the democracy come under such normally frivolous questions about who would be the president or what would happen to the system. It hasn't gotten its house in order in the last decade or so -- the establishment. It's now going to pay the price one way or another. All I'm trying to do is to lessen or mitigate or help mitigate the negative effects of an outcome which would not be democratic, which would not be workable, which would not be healthy. We Turks love to create unnecessary crises ourselves and try to solve it afterwards with bigger energies.

AMB. PARRIS: You're good at it because you've had a lot of practice.

Let me stop you there.

MR. BAYAR: Yeah.

AMB. PARRIS: Kerim, last word.

MR. BALCI: Well, about the foreign policy, I believe AK Party was not sincere in the first one or two years about its support of European Union accession process, but then they realized that thanks to the

European Union reforms, economy (inaudible), actually, to help them a lot and today's economic boom is the foremost cause of AK Party in the elections. Whenever they come to speak about presidential issues, ideological issues, the prime ministers turn back and say look at the economy, and they know that the economy is doing well, not only because AK Party is not, you know, stealing but also because of the European Union formation. So, they turned in that sense, and I believe if Erdogan or anybody else in the line of AK Party will be the president -- Erdogan himself said that we are looking for three characteristics of the future president and one of them is that he will be or she will be active in foreign policy.

Erdogan gains a lot from his trips abroad. Our previous president, Sezer -- went only once to -- once or twice, so he didn't want to show up on the global scene, but as journalists, we didn't like Sezer's trips abroad, because he was a short man. He was -- you know, we didn't like to publish the pictures, the photographs, you know? In the European Union, for example, the leaders of the European Union -

- my father does not give any -- didn't vote for AK Party in the last elections, but as soon as he realized that Erdogan himself was one of the tallest guys in the (inaudible) summit of the European Union, he said okay, I will vote for Erdogan in this one. Now, this is not funny, but you have to understand that in the last elections some people voted for AKP just because Erdogan is a good-looking guy, and women voted for him. So, we have this, you know, posture issue. It works for him, so he will travel. I can suggest that half of the year he will be around the world.

What will this do to our relations with the United States? I wrote an article on this. Turkey is actually forcing its boundaries by means of foreign policy. In the past, South Africa was not within the area of interest of Turkish foreign policy. I know, you know, diplomats from the foreign affairs -- Minister of Foreign Affairs. They used to say I'm going to South Africa. This means I will be sleeping about three years. It's a kind of holiday for me. But now they're working a lot because Turkey started to deal with sub-Saharan Africa. Turkey started to deal

with Latin America. Turkey started to deal with, you know, Indonesia, Australia -- and is not only a European Union issue. And this is growing area of interest, Turkey becoming a global player in world politics then the overlapping between Europe and American politics and Turkish politics is indispensable. We will have problems with United States politics in Iraq and Iran but also Somalia, and in the past we wouldn't accept Turkish president to speak about what happens in Somalia but we will see the president speaking. The acceptable solution --

AMB. PARRIS: I'm going to have to stop, because they're going to literally throw us out of this room in a minute. What you've just said is actually a good advertisement for our next session, which we're going to try to do in June and it's going to be focused on Turkey's foreign policy -- regional global U.S. Turkey with the new president, who will -- we'll know who he is at that point -- and where it may be going and we'll maybe have a better sense of who the next prime minister and foreign minister will be at that point, too. So, you'll be getting invitations to that.

I want to thank our panelists for what I thought was a really high-quality discussion in terms of its depth, in terms of its scope, in terms of its timeliness, and I'd like to ask you to join me in giving them a hearty round of applause.

(Applause)

AMB. PARRIS: Thank you all for coming.

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