

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

TURKEY DOUBLES DOWN:
WHAT'S AT STAKE IN THE JULY ELECTIONS?

Washington, D.C.

Tuesday, June 19, 2007

Moderator:

AMBASSADOR MARK R. PARRIS,
Visiting Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies;
Director, Brookings-TUSIAD Project on Turkey
The Brookings Institution

Panelists:

ASLI AYDINTASBAS
Ankara Bureau Chief, *Sabah*

CENGIZ CANDAR
Chief Columnist, *Referans*

OMER TASPINAR, Nonresident Senior Fellow
The Brookings Institution;
National Defense University

* * * * *

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. PARRIS: I am delighted to welcome you today. My name is Mark Parris and I am the Director of the Turkey 2007 Program here at Brookings. As many of you know, Turkey 2007 is a special 1-year program that we are doing here at Brookings in corporation and partnership with TUSIAD, the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association. TUSIAD is represented this afternoon by the director of its Washington office, Abdullah Akyuz, who we are always delighted to see on these occasions.

The premise of Turkey 2007 has been that this year would be an unusually eventful one in terms of what would be happening in Turkey and what would be happening around Turkey. Based on the first 6 months of this year, I have to say I think we got that right. A key element of our assessment that Turkey warranted special attention this year was the fact of course that 2007 is for Turkey a double election year. It was expected that Turkey would select a new president in early May and hold general elections no later than November of this year. In the first two sessions that we had here earlier in the year, we tried to grapple with some of the factors that would affect the election process, and our last panel in April focused on the presidential succession.

Those of you who were here will recall that our panelists did not precisely predict what would happen a few weeks later when Abdullah Gül tried to be elected president, but I think that this forum was the only place in Washington where there was a serious discussion of what was then the obscure

question of a quorum that ultimately caused the presidential selection process to go off track.

In any case, the failure by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling AK Party to elect Turkey's next president has plunged the country into uncharted waters constitutionally and it has dramatically raised the stakes in the general elections now scheduled to take place July 22nd.

The process of selecting a president has been suspended pending the outcome of those general elections. Given the interpretation by Turkey's Constitutional Court that served as the basis for aborting Abdullah Gül's presidency candidacy, it is not given as we meet today that whatever parliament emerges from the July 22nd elections will be any more able to elect a president than its predecessor. Attempts to ram through constitutional amendments that would have permitted a direct population election of a new president appear to have been pocket vetoed and will not be operative for purposes of the current election cycle. And what I suppose one could call a virtual intervention by Turkey's military the evening of April 27th has brought that institution dramatically back into the center of Turkish politics for the first time in a decade.

So with little more than a month before election day, there are a lot more questions than there are answers regarding Turkey's political future. I have come with a few questions of my own, and I suspect many of you have as well. We are fortunate in having with us this afternoon to help us answer those questions several of Turkey's most respected and best-connected political analysts. Asli Aydintasbas is the Ankara Bureau Chief of *Sabah* newspaper, one

of Turkey's leading dailies. She also knows this country well and is well known here, having been a contributor for many years before returning to Turkey to the *Wall Street Journal*.

This is not Cengiz Candar sitting next to her. Cengiz is in a cab probably about 10 minutes from here, and he will be joining us shortly. Cengiz is the chief columnist for *Referans* newspaper and for the *Turkish Daily News*, an English-language newspaper in Turkey. He has written widely on Turkish internal politics and foreign affairs, notable on the Middle East, and was an adviser to former President Turgut Özal. He is currently writing a book on Iraq, Kurds, and Turkey, and will probably be prepared to answer questions on that interesting subject this afternoon as well.

I should note that Gündüz Aktan who was to have been our third panel participant was unable to attend because he has been nominated to run for parliament as a candidate of the National Action Movement Party. This is not Gündüz Aktan, either. This is Omer Taspinar of Brookings and the National Defense University who was one of the cofounders of Brookings' Turkish Studies Programs some years back and continues to be active in writing and commenting on U.S.-Turkish relations and events in Turkey.

As in our previous sessions, we are not going to do speeches up here today. We are going to have a conversation and then we are going to turn it over to the crowd, and as I said, Cengiz will join us as soon as his cab deposits him.

I think Asli since you have come the farthest, I am going to start by asking you the first question. What I would like you to address if you could is precisely or as precisely as one can what happened that momentous final week in April and the first couple of days in May? When we last gathered here, except for this potential anomaly of the quorum issue, most people expected that it would go relatively smoothly and that we would talking in this session about the foreign policy implications of an AKP presidency. Clearly it is a different agenda. When people have looked at it from here, you have heard comments like the Constitutional Court and Denis Baykal hijacked the process set forward in your Constitution for how you elect the president.

There is the question of whether the military had to get into this act given the attitudes of the Constitutional Court and the success that the opposition party was having in moving this in their direction. Can you help us frame this discussion by giving your sense of what precisely took place? Why are we having this talk instead of the other one?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: Thank you, Mark, and I also want to thank everyone for showing up today because it is just really hot out there and I've forgotten how horrible it can be here. We forget bad things quickly.

Going back to your introduction, it is funny, 2 months ago we were sitting here talking about presidential elections, back in Turkey we were writing about presidential elections, and the only question we cared about was will he or will he not, in other words, will Erdogan decide to nominate himself or somebody else. That really was the entire atmosphere of the presidential election season.

And suddenly in a way that no one had expected, on April 27th the military puts on its website the virtual memorandum that you talked about, the virtual intervention.

What happened so far obviously has significantly shifted power balances in an unexpected way in Turkey. The most notable feature of the current political landscape I would say is that military is once again a major force to reckon with, a major player at the very center of politics. I am not one of those people who believes the Turkish military wants to run Turkey. I do not necessarily think they want to micromanage political parties to the extent that it is perceived in the outside world. I think certainly they have intervened and certainly they are a player on the political scene. But it not like 10 years which you probably would remember whereby every day on every single issue at every single reception you would have military commanders and generals and speaking out. It is quite different.

The intervention took place online, so it is not a situation where you feel the military pressuring the governmental politics every single day. I am comparing this to 1998, not to diminish the impact of what happened, but it is different. It is probably a reversal of the Oskok period that we have seen, the Hilmi Oskok period that we have seen in the last 4-1/2 years, General Oskok being the Chief of Staff until the current Chief of Staff took over. But it is not a return to 1980, and it is not a return to 1997. It is a unique period in itself.

I would say if there continues to be a very significant power struggle in Turkey right now, you can characterize it in different ways, the

military versus the AKP, the secularists versus Islamists, some people think it is democrats versus nondemocrats, or establishment versus whatever. But I think that one of the features of the current political atmosphere for us is just to see how emotional and existential both sides feel the debate is and feel the battles for the outcome of Turkey is.

I emphasize that a lot as a journalist because of course you always have political battles, but you really do not have this kind of a battle where people feel they are fighting for the soul of the country. The polarization I would say depending on where the polls are, political party affiliation is one thing, but in terms of polarization, the country is I think split in the middle. Fifty percent think it was a good thing, fifty percent think it was a very bad thing.

MR. PARRIS: Based on what? Polling?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: Based on polling, 50 percent think you need 367 to elect the president as with the Constitutional Court ruling which resulted in AKP's failure, and 50 percent think for democracy you need to get rid of -- et cetera. It has become a very polarized society often driven by fear, the fear of coup, fear of sharia, fear of changes in the overall structure of the state. Another thing we need to talk about before we go into the more detailed discussion --

MR. PARRIS: Can I just stop you for a just a second? If the military had not issued its E-memorandum, how would this have been different? If I recall correctly, the day that the military issued the memorandum, Mr. Baykal had sought the opinion of the Constitutional Court on the question of the quorum.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: Yes.

MR. PARRIS: The Constitutional Court had previously expressed a willingness to take on this issue suggesting it would be prepared to give the right answer from Mr. Baykal's perspective. Is it your sense that the intervention was designed to get the right answer or to make sure of the right answer or were there other factors involved here or will we never know?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: We will never know is the answer, but in some ways I think it is a shame from the perspective of civic life that we will never know the answer because it was up to the opposition to put up a mighty opposition to this government. In other words, you may or may not agree with him, but Baykal has been one of the major players of this whole process we are talking about, and it is a process by the way, we should describe what is going on as not one event but as an ongoing process or a power struggle.

But Baykal has certainly been very instrumental in bringing about this result. His role will always forever be overshadowed by the military memorandum. We will never know if he has achieved as an opposition leader what he wanted or not. But in many ways I think of the military's decision to go forward although it was going to go into the Constitutional Court not as a way of trying to affect the Court so much, but as a way of saying I am here, we are here, and we are a deterrence power. Hence, since then pretty much everything that happened in Turkey has been seen as a result of the memorandum. Again, the opposition only has itself to blame for this because they have not taken credit.

MR. PARRIS: The opposition meaning Denis Baykal?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: Denis Baykal cannot go out and say we brought about this result. They have to sort of share that.

MR. PARRIS: They have been overshadowed by the military role?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: Yes. Exactly.

MR. PARRIS: Omer, do you buy that? Is this a drama in which the secular opposition to AKP has been overshadowed by the military and can we expect that to continue?

MR. TASPINAR: One of the major problems in Turkey in the last 5 years was that everyone agreed there was no real civilian opposition. You may give credit to Baykal for staging this opposition, but other people would agree that a major program is that the AK Party does not have in the parliament a strong opposition against it, a civilian opposition. There is no real "left" in Turkey. We have the conservative government and many people believe that it is islamically rooted. They deny they are Islamists. They do their best to prove their republican credentials. And the story of the last 5 years is that Baykal has not been a very successful opposition leader.

On this particular issue, I wish it were a technical question about the quorum, the constitutional question about whether this parliament can elect the president or not. I think the question was much larger. I agree with Asli. It was posed in a kind of existential debate about the future of secularism in Turkey, the fear of sharia. It is astonishing that even the State Department believes that

this slogan of "Neither Sharia Nor a Coup" that people were chanting in the streets in the public rallies is actually depicting the situation in Turkey.

MR. PARRIS: You do not think it does?

MR. TASPINAR: It does not. I guess we can all agree that there is no real threat of sharia in Turkey.

MR. PARRIS: Do you agree with that?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: I would agree with that.

MR. TASPINAR: But there was a coup, on the other hand. The reality is that we had, call it postmodern, call it an E-coup, call it virtual, we had a coup in a country which tries to become a member of the European Union. In a country where we refused the idea of a privileged partnership with the European Union on the grounds that we should be treated as an equal democracy with the European liberal democracies, we had a blatant interference of the military to the civilian process. I agree with you that they did not have to interfere.

The military is a popular institution in Turkey, make no mistake. It is popular. People trust the military. But people trust the military in the United States as well. People do not trust their politicians usually. Politics is corrupt, and there is corruption in Turkey, but what makes the Turkish military in my opinion trustworthy is the fact that it does not often interfere in Turkish politics. So right now by interfering in this way, and this is a process, I once again agree with Asli that this is reminiscent of the 28 February process when you were ambassador, right?

MR. PARRIS: No, when Marc Grossman, who is here somewhere, was.

MR. TASPINAR: There is a process going on and the military is very much involved. We will get into the Iraq debate, but this is a process and it goes to the heart of the question of whether the military has a legitimate political role to play in Turkish politics. Many people believe so. Many people believe so.

MR. PARRIS: Asli said 50 percent believe so.

MS AYDINTASBAS: Yes. Turks have a peculiar voting pattern in the sense that they do not want the military running the country and they do not want the military in politics, but they do not like it when a party clashes with the military. So that has to do with the kind of respect because they want the military out there as a guardian. This is what the polls are showing -- that this is a way to interpret the sort of respect that Omer has talked about.

MR. PARRIS: Will the election clarify this tension in the minds of the Turkish body politic? Another way to put this is I think what is really at stake here? If it is not about sharia versus a coup, what is this about? Is this raw power?

MR. TASPINAR: There is a lot of raw power struggle of course. Turkey is transforming. There is a new elite in Turkey right now. Turkey is a very dynamic capitalistic private-sector oriented economy. We are not talking about Egypt here. We are talking about a very dynamic capitalist democracy. Since the 1980s we have had an export-led growth development model in Turkey. We have a new Anatolian bourgeoisie which is pious, more religious, and they

want their share of the pie. AK Party many would argue is the political manifestation of this transformation in Turkey's socioeconomic structure, and overall it has been good for Turkish democracy.

Here we are talking about the fear of sharia as if the last 5 years have been terrible for Turkey. Look at the record of this political party and what they have done in the last 5 years. I understand and I respect the perception that there is a fear about the head scarf and a hidden agenda, et cetera, but if we talk about concrete issues, they have been good for Turkey, for the Turkish economy, for Turkey's aspiration to join the European Union. Turkey stayed out of Iraq which is we can agree a good thing overall. We could have been in a big mess in Iraq.

MR. PARRIS: Then why the polarization?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: I think I have to play the role of Gunduz Aktan here for a little bit.

MR. PARRIS: Do.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: To have a little bit of spice in our conversation. I think the issue is not necessarily Turkey becoming sharia, although certainly there has been enormous economic growth and stability has been wonderful for Turkey for its democracy and for its economy and everything. But I think the issue has been a sense of a loss of checks and balances. For many in the establishment the idea that the AKP is so popular and is doing so well and it has 367 MPs with only 25 percent of the vote, it reached a point where many figures in the establishment in just the institutions themselves were like, "we have

nothing to counterbalance AKP's power and to protect the state structures against a political party which has its roots in political Islam.” This issue is not over in Turkey, this whole debate about what AKP's nature is. It is not over, and in the scenario that AKP would elect a president from its own Islamist roots, there was fear in many institutions that this would ultimately lead to a situation where there are no checks and balances within the system or that the country is gradually opening up a process of wider Islamization. I am not saying this would have happened, but I think this is the rationale that led to --

MR. PARRIS: Let me ask a question on that which I think will get to the point that you, Omer, are probably anxious to make. I want to be clear. The concern that you are expressing, and leave aside whether it is your concern or society's concern.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: Or let's say the establishment's concerns clearly voiced.

MR. PARRIS: The establishment's concern.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: And if we want to understand where the military is coming from, this is --

MR. PARRIS: It is not about one party controlling most of the civilian mechanisms. Özal, Demirel, who were roughly analogous

MS. AYDINTASBAS: It is like an ideology.

MR. PARRIS: So it is unique to the AK Party; that is, it is a function of, what? Piety? The way they look at the world from which they have sprung?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: That is the case, of course, the sort of -- the political Islamic background. But I think there is also the element of sheer power. The AKP was one of the most powerful civilian governments.

MR. PARRIS: It's not about power?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: But it is more about their background, their roots and what not.

MR. PARRIS: And isn't that really saying that some Turks are more equal than others at the end of the day?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: This is the argument in fact that AKP are leaders are making when they go around campaigning in the country now: don't let it pass that some persons are more equal than others, let's just make sure that the majority, the party that has the majority can elect the president and that's what the Constitution says. That's exactly the argument they will be making in this election season.

MR. PARRIS: Will it work?

MR. TASPINAR: A lot has been made of this absence of checks and balances in Turkey as if this is a banana republic where we do not have elections. The last time I checked, elections matter. We will have elections. These parties are legitimate political parties. They came to power within the electoral system of Turkey, and what have they done to really create this sense of mistrust that they are about to do something drastic in Turkey? Checks and balances matter, yes, and we have institutions in Turkey. Turkey is a deeply rooted state. It has a parliament, it has an independent judiciary, and it has an

executive and legislative body. The presidency matters, but in many ways there is this fear that as if authority is there trying to meddle all the checks and balances to destroy all the checks and balances with their hidden agenda, and this hidden agenda is what exactly?

MR. PARRIS: It is well-hidden apparently.

MR. TASPINAR: It is very well-hidden because if we have projections about the future, the fact is they have been in power for 5 years.

MR. PARRIS: But Omer, are you uncomfortable with the notion that Asli described a moment ago, that essentially this is 25 percent of the country's voters, 25 percent of the total electorate as opposed to those who voted in 2002, who are saying who the next president is going to be against the backdrop of an ideological push-pull which is pretty fundamental, and the next time you will have a chance to adjust this mix will be 7 years down the road or 5 or whatever? Are you not bothered at all by the fact that 25 percent will make such a big difference at the end of the day?

MR. TASPINAR: They want it to go to the people from this. They got the sense that there was such a threat perception. They do not see themselves as a threat. I am talking about the AK Party. They do not see themselves obviously as a threat to secularism. Their record should speak for itself. We are talking about an Islamic party which has done wonders in terms of Turkey's chances of joining the European Union, and this is an Islamic party which wants to join the European Union. If that is not enough to debunk the myth that there is an agenda, I do not know what is.

MR. PARRIS: It is clearly not.

MR. TASPINAR: It is not, but then we are talking about a scenario where whatever they do there is this concept of “takiya” in Shia Islam by the way that you do not show your real colors, that they have a hidden agenda, that we may never know what they are up to. They may appear very secular, they may declare they are atheistic, but surely there has got to be an agenda behind that. You cannot win against that. That is bordering on conspiracy theories.

MR. PARRIS: Asli, let me ask you about that a little bit. You made a point a few minutes ago following-up on something that I said actually that the military are now actors again, and you also said a lot of what we have seen happening has to do with fear, whether it has been generated, whether it is sort of visceral, but a lot of people seem to be reacting out of fear, whether it is of a hidden agenda or ideology, what have you. Here is the question. In a situation where the military is back in the act and where there is this fear abroad, can we expect that this election is going to go to full term and be free and fair or is there the potential for this to end badly?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: I think that the election will go forward because anyone looking at Turkey now could see this is the only way it could move, that you could get anywhere. I do not give much credence to theories that a cross-border operation could happen to derail the elections. I believe that the elections will go forward on the 22nd of July and I think that the country's own legitimacy very much depends on the election moving forward. And the opposition parties which are part of this sort of coordinated effort to diminish

AKP's power are interested in going to the ballot and coming out with something. But there are people out there doubting whether or not the elections will take place.

MR. PARRIS: What about you?

MR. TASPINAR: There are scenarios under which the democratic process could derail.

MR. PARRIS: Such as?

MR. TASPINAR: Such as an incursion into Northern Iraq, creation of a state of emergency. If there is a major PKK terrorist attack, all bets are off.

MR. PARRIS: Is there precedent for this happening in past Turkish elections? Have you ever had an election called off because of these kinds of --

MS. AYDINTASBAS: No.

MR. TASPINAR: We're going through pretty extraordinary times.

MR. PARRIS: And you say that because of April 27th?

MR. TASPINAR: Yes.

MR. PARRIS: You would not have said that had that not occurred?

MR. TASPINAR: I believe that this is a process and that the military is deeply involved in this and that they feel that they have societal support because of the demonstrations. The military has never intervened in Turkish politics without the strong belief that this is supported by civil society.

My concern is that they may misread the 1 million demonstrators in Istanbul and Ankara as support for intervention. People trust the military in Turkey, but they do not want the military to intervene.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: It is not my sense that the military wants to intervene.

MR. TASPINAR: Hopefully not.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: I would not characterize what happened as a military coup. It certainly is an intervention of some sort, but it is not my sense that they want to run railroads and trains and the economy and the Ministry of Justice, et cetera. I think it seems like they were led to believe all along that there would be a different kind of consensus candidate for the presidency and possibly it is one of the red lines from their point of view to see a constitutional duty and hence have issued this statement in an atmosphere where there already was an alignment against an AKP elected presidency. So they wanted to stake their claim.

MR. TASPINAR: But the memorandum's language clearly stated that they are ready to assume their responsibilities. Some people believe that these are constitutional responsibilities, that they have a constitutional right to intervene.

MR. PARRIS: We will get to the American reaction to this in a little bit. Asli, I want to tease out a little bit more from a couple of your statements. You said they do not want to run the country. If they are as smart as I know they are, I am sure that is the case. But what you seem to be suggesting is

that whatever this was on the 27th of April and to the extent that it has recurred on an ongoing basis, is it limited in its objective? Or does it seek to ...?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: Destroy.

MR. PARRIS: -- destroy a party or individual so much as it is to set limits? Would that be a fair way to describe it?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: That is my belief. That is how I read it.

MR. PARRIS: How would you define those limits? I will not call them red lines, but if you were channeling instead of Gungüz Aktan the military mind, where would you see the boundaries of this universe within which you do not feel the compulsion to resort to Email or anything more dramatic?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: This is a trap, Mark.

MR. PARRIS: Is it head scarves?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: I think they are probably an important part of it, as funny as that sounds to an American audience, and let us not forget that in some sense the establishment is out there with their institutions of higher education, with the judiciary, and with the presidency, and not having made peace with 4-1/2 years of AKP government. It is funny that all of this current government's key appointments and major laws, nearly all of them have been vetoed by the current President. It is rather appalling that both sides have not managed to agree on a workable formula. There is a war going on at the very top of the power pyramid, not to mention there is a perception at least on the side of the establishment of a culture war of some sort which itself is symbolized by the head scarf. I know these are all very disturbing notions and all that, but we cannot

assume that there was nothing before April 27th. I think that if the president here in this country ended up vetoing every single thing that Congress passed that it would be a dysfunctional situation.

Who is to blame? The President? the AKP? Both sides have their own arguments. I think that it is a shame that they have not found a working formula.

MR. PARRIS: But at a minimum, I would take from the conversation I have heard thus far that you could posit that there is a design to maintain a degree of check and balance, even at the price of preserving the stalemate of the past several years in terms of vetoing legislation and appointments.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: I agree with Omer that there is a mega plan out there in which the military is a player and so is the president, so is the opposition, but it is not my sense that they are interested in the micro details of who runs what. I think that the ultimate goal is not necessarily to destroy AKP but to set limits on power.

MR. PARRIS: Including in terms of who is the President?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: Probably the most important question is that.

SPEAKER: (Asks how AKP can have nearly two thirds of seats in parliament with 25% of the popular vote.)

MR. PARRIS: That is a function of Turkey's proportional representation system which is in turn a function of how many votes each party

gets nationally and how many they get in each electoral district. Un they get 10 percent nationally, it does not matter what you get in an individual district because all of your votes nationwide are thrown out and they are divided up among those parties that do go above the 10 percent threshold nationally. So a significant percentage, maybe half, of the votes that were cast in the 2002 elections basically were thrown out or went to parties that the people did not vote for in terms of the parliamentary representation. There are some fine points, but it is essentially that. Fair?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: Yes.

MR. PARRIS: I want to get you to speculate a little bit now. We are a month from elections. Polls have begun to come out. Probably none of them are particularly reliable at this point, and all of them show significant numbers of undecided votes which will refine the process. I wanted to ask you if you as the Ankara bureau chief had to tell your editor today what the results of the elections were going to be, what would you guess? And I realize it's only a guess. And what would you consider to be the factors that could affect that guess between now and the 22nd of July as you look forward?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: There is about still plus or minus 30 percent undecided in reliable polls. That is a really huge figure and because of the volatility of the economic landscape, it is possibly too early to talk about polls because if a major terrorist attack or major antiterrorist activity or incursion could also affect the distribution of votes. That said, conventional wisdom in Turkey right now is definitely that the AKP is the top party, bracketed anywhere between

30 and 40 percent I think would be fair to say, followed by CHP who in turn has also seen a boost in its own vote because it is seen as sort of the major force opposing the bulwark of a secularist state. And there is an upsurge in Turkish nationalism. MHP is seen as a likely party for 5 to 10 percent threshold and enter the parliament as the third party. That said, this is all very dependent on the major issue in the election campaign which is terrorism.

MR. PARRIS: It is terrorism? It is not secularism?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: I think terrorism has become the major issue in the campaign, not secularism.

MR. PARRIS: That is important.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: With increased number of PKK attacks and rising casualties, I think about 34 people dying only this month, and funerals have turned into major political rallies some of it somewhat organized by the opposition party, some of it is sort of spontaneous, but in either case either it turns into a huge outpouring of nationalist fervor or in some cases a sort of rally against the government.

So all that is going to affect the outcome of the elections. I think that a three-party parliament is not inconceivable. I find it quite unlikely for a fourth party to past the 10 percent threshold at this point. Though where the nationalist votes would go at the end, they do not single-handedly belong to MHP's ultranationalist party. Certainly CHP and AKP are trying to get some of the nationalist votes. The Prime Minister has been careful and reoriented his election campaign in a more nationalist style. And I expect some last-minute

surprises from the Youth Party run by Cem Uzan -- this is sort of the dark horse in the race. I do not expect the party to pass the 10 percent threshold but certainly every time they reach prominence in one way or another they bring down votes from other nationalist parties.

MR. PARRIS: Omer, would you buy AKP forming the next government in a campaign where terrorism is the predominant issue or do you see some nuances?

MR. TASPINAR: Unfortunately, on this terrorism question, the AK Party has been perceived as weak and the Nationalist Action Party and CHP have selected a position which has been basically mongering for a cross-border operation and thus AKP has a lot to lose if there is this wave of terrorism now. All funerals of fallen Turkish soldiers turn into anti-AK demonstrations. It has become impossible for AK politicians to just have a presence at a funeral, they are physically in danger, and people attack them. So there is this concern that the AK Party has sold out for the security of Turkey. To whom? Basically to Western --

MR. PARRIS: But it does not seem to be hurting them much in the polls.

MR. TASPINAR: That is the irony. I am anxious to see the results. I still think that they will win with a very strong margin, probably closer to the 40 percent mark than 30. They are very popular. People after all vote on bread-and-butter issues. Yes, terrorism is important and if you have someone God forbid who has fallen in your family of course you hate the government. But this government for the last 5 years has done really well in terms of the economy.

People have purchasing power. Overall the private sector has done well. Here is the real star.

MR. PARRIS: Cengiz Candar has arrived. We have been talking about the events of late April and early May and what they mean. We have been talking about the significance of the military's reemergence onto the political sphere and what that means both thus far and as we go through the rest of the electoral cycle, and about whether under those circumstances you can have free and fair elections in the traditional Western sense. We have been talking about the prospect for the elections themselves which is essentially where we are now, and Asli was sharing an Ankara bureau perspective that while it is impossible to predict with any certainty given the number of undecideds and given a month of campaigning and the possibility for terror and other factors to weigh on this, AK seems likely to pick up votes from 2002, CHP seems likely to pick up votes from 2002, MHP seems likely to get across the threshold, and that is probably going to be it for the next parliament. Do you want to comment?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: And the independents we should not forget from the Kurdish Party who are running on the independent ticket.

MR. PARRIS: And of course the independents. And maybe I could ask you Cengiz in view of your long association with the Kurdish question, to what extent do you see the focus on terrorism as something that represents a legitimate national security question or politics? And welcome, by the way.

MR. CANDAR: Thank you. I do not know if I should apologize to you or it should be United Airlines to apologize because we had a forced

landing. I was supposed to be here last night and we made this forced landing to Amsterdam so we spent the night. I had an Email recently saying that Mercury will be in retrograde from June 15th to July 9th which is the star of my horoscope.

MR. PARRIS: Looks like we picked the right guy for this panel.

MR. CANDAR: And one should refrain from traveling. So when it says Mercury is retrograde, familiar channels of communication become tangled and confused. So use this time for researching, problem solving, reevaluating, reconsidering, and the second aspect of what we are doing is reevaluating, reconsidering, but it takes travel to make it that one could be late as long as Mercury is in retrograde.

But I think Turkey was affected by Mercury long before the date it is in retrograde, and just responding to the question that you just posed, I think it is a very tough question. It is very difficult to interpret whether it is a national security question or politics but I tend to see it as politics rather than a national security question. Although PKK constitutes a national security matter for Turkey, but this is since long ago and there is no particular increased threat in the sense of PKK activity when compared to what it was in the 1990s or even 1980s. The new phenomenon is the emergence of a quasi-independent Kurdish entity in Northern Iraq so this brings some perceptions to Turkish polity in the sense of overdue existential problems and it coincided with the acute power struggle that is taking place in Turkey since several months which culminated mainly on the presidential election and now the general elections which has brought earlier than it is supposed to be that would be from a month from today and by July 22nd we

will have elections. So all of these issues converged and have become part of the intense and very telling power struggle in Turkey. So you cannot disassociate the PKK issue and what is going on concerning the outcome of this power struggle.

But apart from that, I am not sure how many PKKs do we have so I am not sure it is the PKK which is constituting the national security threat and are behind some explosions and bombings and some actions.

MR. PARRIS: Do you think though that it has already fundamentally changed the way people may vote, and does it have the potential to change it more between now and July 22nd?

MR. CANDAR: I am not sure. If you just refer to the journalists who act like pundits and most of them are mistaken, so whenever you read the Turkish press you always read that this escalation of violence behind which is PKK just plays into the hands of the Turkish Nationalist Party, the MHP. It is not that sure because the electoral base of AK seems solid as ever, although there are some disputing views on this that they might lose some of the appeal that they had in the earlier elections in 2002. But still, given the participation of the masses when the Prime Minister and the party leader along with Abdullah Gül are visiting several towns and city centers, since one month are mammoth demonstrations with people cheering and so on. And there is a silent electoral basis of the party that retreated after April 27th after the military intervention and as if they are waiting in ambush for the election date to make themselves by to the ballot box they are waiting to make themselves to be -- so all this escalation of the PKK activity or the violence and so on, if you just refer to the Turkish columnist

or the Turkish journalist it might play into the hands of the nationalists and it might emote some support from the government, but I do not see this would be the case.

And the independents who are affiliated to the -- the Sinn Fein of Turkey compared to PKK is as solid as ever also. And we have a wildcard called the Genc Party of Cem Uzan who is wanted maybe in the United States by his long years with Motorola, he also undertakes a very passionate undertakes a very passionate nationalistic and populist campaign which might bring some words that the MHP may enjoy because of this escalation of violence. The escalation of violence which is attributed to PKK mostly gave way to some speculation in Turkey that it might end up in Turkey's military incursion into Northern Iraq which might postpone the elections. Other than that, I do not personally feel that it would make a real impact on the electoral preferences.

MR. PARRIS: What I hear all of you saying in various ways is a month before the elections, and recognizing that a lot can happen in the next 4 weeks or whatever it is, it looks like an AKP government will be the next government of Turkey.

MR. CANDAR: We do not know that yet.

MR. PARRIS: How could they not if the results come out the way you guys have been describing them?

MR. CANDAR: There are now much meaningful measures that we can assess how the distribution of the seats in the next parliament will be if we could ever have elections. There is also another if.

MR. PARRIS: We talked about that. Do you think they will or will not take place?

MR. CANDAR: I am not 100 percent sure. I am one of the skeptics and I wish I would be on the wrong side of the forecasters.

MR. PARRIS: But if it happens?

MR. CANDAR: If it happens, so there are so many ifs in Turkey. If it happens, the elections, and let's assume that it happens, in the morning or at midnight of July 22nd, the morning of July 23rd, even if the AK might increase its percentage of votes compared to the earlier elections, given the unnormality of the Turkish election law, the distribution of the seats might not give AK as a solid majority as it enjoyed in the last election if, again an if, the MHP can get over the 10 percent national threshold, if CHP, the main opposition, increases its percentages, and if, and most probably it is beyond if, it will happen to be so, the Kurdish independents will get about 25 to 35 seats. So the distribution of the seats we have to see.

MR. PARRIS: They would still have an absolute majority in the parliament.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: Enough to have 267 for a vote of confidence.

MR. PARRIS: Is that really in question?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: It is under some scenarios. If they would get 34 percent and MHP gets 15 to 16 percent and CHP gets 23 percent, they would have --

MR. PARRIS: But does anybody really anticipate that?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: No, but technically I mean most likely AKP will form the next government, but technically it is possible.

MR. CANDAR: But they can't elect the president.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: They can't elect the president. But also just for the audience, especially the Turkish-speaking audience, there are some websites now where you can play around for those who are interested in Turkish politics -- has a nice sort of computer at -- whereby you can actually plug in percentages and it gives you a distribution. So -- is kind of fun to play around. And you can also do the independents and then it gives you the distribution of seats pretty accurately I would say.

MR. PARRIS: The other way of looking at what we have been discussing is that I take it from what you said you do not see a scenario where AK is likely to have 400 deputies.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: Or even the number of deputies that it has right now.

MR. PARRIS: Or even 368?

MR. CANDAR: Not impossible, but not likely.

MR. PARRIS: Not likely. If they do, is that a political crisis by definition?

MR. CANDAR: If they do get over 367, we have to ask our general staff how they will react. If you read the E-memorandum that they had that midnight of April 27th, they committed themselves to step in.

MR. PARRIS: That's the point I was getting at.

MR. CANDAR: So if they get some benign signals from where we are now in Washington they would not hesitate to do that.

MR. PARRIS: I do not want to push this too far because I do not think it is a likely scenario either. But it leaves you with the fact that the most likely is probably that AKP will form the next government.

The issue I want to get to next is, this mess started when Turkey was unable to elect a president. If AK is in power with a smaller majority than it has today, it means they will be no more successful in electing Abdullah Gül, for example, than they were the last time, which is to say they will fail again. Under this scenario, we are talking probably about a non-AKP figure are we not as Turkey's next president, or stalemate?

MR. CANDAR: I think possibly, that the party leader and the prime minister sufficiently pragmatic that it is very likely that a non-AKP figure -

-

MS. AYDINTASBAS: Or an AKP figure from more of an establishment background.

MR. CANDAR: No, I do not think so.

MR. PARRIS: Do you think it is too late for that?

MR. CANDAR: It is totally out of the question. Let me make an anecdote to you concerning this issue. Two weeks ago at the -- conference in Istanbul on the sidelines of the panelists a group of Turks including myself -- having a conversation on what has happened in Turkey and -- said that if it would

be managed more diligently and if -- we would not have the crisis. And I told her that I was totally out of the question. Anybody who knows AK from within or from a very close distance knew beforehand that it would either Abdullah Gul or Tayyip Erdogan -- given the internal balance of the party taking into consideration the upcoming general election.

Then she told me that someone had himself told her in person another name. I said I don't contest that there has been such a conversation between the two of you, but if that is the case -- he lied to you. It was not true. Maybe it was good music to your ears that you wanted to hear -- but it was totally out of the question. It will be either -- or Abdullah Gül from the very, very beginning.

MR. PARRIS: For reasons having to do with AK's internal politics?

MR. CANDAR: Yes, for AK's internal politics.

MR. PARRIS: Asli, the other way you could get to an AK president would be through direct election of the president. Is that project dead?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: It is dead.

MR. PARRIS: Is it dead?

MR. CANDAR: Is what?

MR. PARRIS: Direct election of the president.

MR. CANDAR: Yes. Legally it is impossible. Procedurally it is impossible.

MR. PARRIS: And that is important. I think there is a lot of misperception here in Washington that this is somehow a live possibility.

MR. CANDAR: It was. Until 2 days ago it was, but not anymore.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: I always had the sense that the government sort of wanted to look like they were pushing for election politics not to look like they were scaling back, but I think that I never thought it would happen in any case.

MR. TASPINAR: There is one point about Cengiz's argument that it was either Erdogan or Gül, yes, but that was then. We had something extraordinary happen in Turkey and we should not underestimate the learning curve of this political party. They are pragmatic.

MR. CANDAR: That is what I say. It was then until April 27th.

MR. TASPINAR: So now there is a strong chance that if they come to power they will compromise.

MR. CANDAR: It is possible. That is what I said. That is why I said given -- and the scope of pragmatism that Tayyip has, it is possible.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: In any case, technically it would be pretty much impossible to elect a president because now we have a new sort of a rule that you need 367 MPs to elect a president and that would mean having to come up with somebody who is acceptable.

MR. PARRIS: It would be harder in the parliament that we are talking about than it was in this one conceivably. I am going to ask one last question and then I am going to open it up to the audience and that has to do with

the American reaction to the events of April 27th. The initial American reaction was more hesitant and more nuanced than the E.U. reaction, and than the bulk of editorial opinion in this country. Condoleezza Rice subsequently realigned it to be closer with the prevailing editorial opinions and the European Union position. I would be interested particularly from those of you who were on the spot in Turkey covering this what conclusions did Turks draw from this? For the past 4 years I have been hearing Turks tell me that the AKP is the American's baby, you wanted them, you brought them, you supported them. Has that perception been shaken by this or where are we in terms of how Turks think the Americans are approaching this whole set of issues? Asli, why don't you start?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: I think our perception has been eroding for some time now over this last year with the AKP decision to invite Hamas and there is the cold winter we had in the Turkish-American relationship. But yet over this last incident, the April 27th memorandum, I think the perception that the AKP is Washington's favorite in Turkey is no longer the case. I think this has significantly changed this. I think generally Americans and the administration here were seen as hands off and yet Secretary Rice came out with a European aligned remark 3 weeks I would say after the memorandum but that was just way too late.

The thing that stayed with a lot of people was Dan Fried's remark that we do not take sides on Turkey and just the general atmosphere of silence here, silence seen as a tacit maybe approval is too strong, but it is sort of a tacit acceptance or acquiescence about what happened in Turkey.

MR. CANDAR: I think although it has modified somewhat after the initial reaction of Washington, even if it is modified, it took its toll. The first one took its toll especially for those segments of the public opinion which is favorable in a very anti-American mood in Turkey even though what you could call pro-E.U. or pro-Washington people were a bit disappointed and from that time on they have felt that Washington is not that reliable when it comes to siding with democratic principles and democratic tenets and there was some disappointment in the AK circles as well. But then from that time on it seems as I said earlier that there are several AKP's in Turkey, the perception is growing that there are several Washingtons as well. So there is a Washington which is caring for the AK and there is another Washington much closer to the orientation of the military and the Ankara bureaucracy or whatever.

MR. PARRIS: How does that cut in Turkish politics? Going into the election, it's an advantage or a liability to be viewed as favored by Washington?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: It is not an advantage at this point.

MR. PARRIS: It is not an advantage.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: I do not think the AKP is necessarily trying to -- it is true that the AKP was helped in establishing its credentials early on in its power and Washington's support was helpful, but now in this atmosphere with what is going on with PKK and the hypersensitivity in the Turkish public about PKK's presence in Northern Iraq and most Turks see the U.S. as partly responsible for this, it does not help to be seen as America's friend at this point.

MR. TASPINAR: But I would still argue that the U.S.'s perception and reality has leverage in Turkey. There is a strong perception, there is almost a conspiracy perception that the U.S. can do whatever it wants in Turkey which is absurd, yet the U.S. has leverage in Turkey, it has leverage, and what comes out of the mouth of officials really matters. In 1997 for instance during the post-modern coup I think the fact that Madeleine Albright was able to say we do not want any extraconstitutional coup in Turkey, this was taken very seriously by the generals. This time we had conflicting reports. We had someone argue that the military has this constitutional duty to do what it wants. That kind of doublespeak is giving I think opportunities to people within the military, I do not want to blame the whole military, but people are looking for a signal that this may be kosher, that they may actually do it and get away with it.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: In any case, to go back to your point, there has not been a strong statement from Washington to support democracy or even a strong statement or public statement saying we do not like what is going on in Turkey. In the absence of that, we can -- whoever wants to be emboldened is emboldened.

MR. CANDAR: I think again to back up to what Omer has said now, there is a perception in Turkey, a very general perception, that not with the U.S. but not without the U.S. as well, so it is a very paradoxical feeling. If the U.S. would not have that leverage, all this frenzy about the Hudson Institute issue would not get so much coverage, and not only in the media, in all the political circles and for the public opinion. So the U.S.'s position is important.

MR. PARRIS: I am not sure if most of the audience even knows what you are referring to. Unlike in Turkey, it has not been covered at all here. Apparently the Hudson Institute last week ran a closed think tank exercise where they laid out several scenarios that could affect the Turkish elections in the future, among them, the assassination of the head of the Constitutional Court, bombs going off in fashionable Istanbul neighborhoods, that kind of thing. To say that it has gotten a certain notoriety in Turkey is probably an understatement.

I am going to stop here and allow you to take this forward. Please as I call on you, identify yourself, wait for the microphone. Right here in front. I bet I know what the subject is.

QUESTION: I have a question for you. Why you did not provide anyone from AKP Party to have also their opinion whatever they thought as to the two Omer's and the lady? And my question to Omer is that you told us that the present politicians are corrupted without giving us even a simple truth, but the military are the trustful and innocent. Therefore, do you prefer a military rule in Turkey?

MR. PARRIS: I will go first. We tend in this forum not to invite representatives of the particular parties. Gündüz Aktan, I didn't even know he was a member of the MHP when I invited him, and when he became a candidate he took himself out, although I would have been happy to have him here. Our panelists do not represent political parties. They represent points of view as you have heard, but not political parties.

QUESTION: (inaudible)

MR. PARRIS: I do not think they would agree with that.

MR. TASPINAR: I thought I made it clear that there is -- military intervention and that this is very dangerous. It should not happen. I am against a coup in Turkey for the record.

MR. JACOBS: Barry Jacobs. The polls are showing some incredible numbers and I do not know how to judge them. When Egemen Bagis and Mevlut Civasoglu were here, they were saying that the polls showed up to 46 percent in favor of AK. If AK polls above 40 percent, that is a pretty remarkable event considering that it has been in power for 4-1/2 years and the one group that it has not been able to satisfy as I understand has been its own core of Islamic supporters, that the women are still allowed to wear head scarves in the president's house, really they have done very little on banning alcohol, thank God. My question is, how accurate are those polls, and do you not see that after 4-1/2 years if AK really does poll 39 or 40 percent, it is virtually an earthquake -- if it is an honest vote?

MR. PARRIS: Asli?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: I agree with you. Anything in the vicinity of 40 percent would be an earthquake especially given what has happened. With polls, there are procedures for polling and they are hugely manipulated in Turkey. That is a fact. Political parties have their own polling agencies, they each show their party is hugely on the rise, and I do not know about this particular poll that

you are talking about. The ones I have seen, and I have not brought any polls with me precisely for this reason, I think they are very manipulated. The ones I have seen show AKP something in the 35 percent range, 35 to 40 percent range, but it could change. It could be very effective campaigning. The Prime Minister, there is no doubt that he has come up with a winning list when he reshuffled his party group, his candidates, and he came up with a very significant change in party politics. The centrist candidates, getting rid of a lot of the more hardliner Islamist figures that have been in this political party for a long time. So that too is going to boost his popularity to an extent. We have no way of knowing how much. But I think 46 percent is beyond anything I have seen, but I do not really know.

MR. CANDAR: I do not know, but AK getting over 40 percent would not be a surprise. We do not feel it is the likeliest case, but 40 plus something is possible. And you are right, after maybe 5 years of power that means there has to be some power exhaustion and that one should expect that they might lose votes. But, first, Turkey is a very enigmatic country, that is number one, to explain how it can happen. It can happen. Can you imagine – the DSP party in 1999 had 22 plus something votes overall and just after 3-1/2 years it had 1.5. So it is very volatile the voting blocs, the electoral blocs in Turkey.

But more explainable or a rational explainable part of the thing, I think in the last few months especially after the military intervention and these huge demonstrations in several cities, anti-AK demonstrations, the Turkish society has become extremely polarized. It is a very, very polarized society. So

when you get such a polarized society, the voting patterns, they just galvanize in several one or two centers and it might add further the vote of the AKP and CHP.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: And just to add also, people are motivated by justice when they go to the ballot, in Turkey at least they are, the fact that Erdogan was in prison before the 2002 elections was really a major reason he got 35 percent. People felt it was wrong, that he was wronged, and it has always been a huge motivation for Turkish voters. Now in this case, people still, some 50 percent, Cengiz mentioned the country is polarized it is, and 50 percent -- among those who feel AKP is wrong, there will be some sense that they were not allowed to elect the president, they deserve my vote because it was unjust, there is going to be that feeling. And AKP certainly, in an unofficial way, that is what their campaign is about. The silent campaign is about creating a sense of victimhood, give us the power to elect the president because we were wronged. That is going to motivate a lot of people in Turkey.

MS. CONGAR: Yasemin Chongar. That poll I believe was actually done by IRI here in Washington and 46 percent was the vote of AKP after the undecideds were distributed right after the E-memorandum and right after those rallies. So I think it included that reaction and I think when the AKP people admitted that, it came down to 40 percent.

But my question is, if the AKP keeps polling let's say around 40 percent and has a high showing in the polls come let's say mid-July, do you expect that court case to be brought against AK in Turkey? And if yes, if you can assume that yes, how would that affect the voters? As Asli was just saying,

would they vote for justice and vote to react to that or would they just perhaps veer away from AK because they will see that their votes will be wasted and the party might be banned after all?

MR. CANDAR: I think if that would be the case it will fuel the outrage to these kinds of interventions and it will be to the favor of the AK further. But I do not think that given the competence of the social engineering in Turkey done by certain power centers they would do such a thing before the elections, just on the eve of the elections just to provide some more popular support to AK. If that would be the case, I think to prevent such a happening, what I am afraid is not that they would go to court, but we might hear too many explosions all around Turkey and we can hope this will not happen. But it is in the memory, in the minds of people that there could be a lot of carnage in Turkey which could render the situation ungovernable so the elections could be postponed. That is why I referred that there are still skeptics in Turkey whether we -- July 22 not in the sense applying to court, but just postponing the elections to deprive if that would be the sense of those social engineers that an absolute majority will be won by AK.

MR. PARRIS: Let's take a couple of questions now. There was one over here.

QUESTION: What do you think about the politicization of the judiciary? It played an important role in everything.

QUESTION: Will the outcome of this election have any effect on whether or not there is any initiated violence in Turkey toward the PKK?

MR. PARRIS: You mean a cross-border operation?

QUESTION: Yes.

MR. PARRIS: Let's take one more. Way in the back there.

QUESTION: I just wanted to follow on with what Barry was asking before. Do you think that there is any significance in this campaign the fact that AKP, their candidates on average are 10 years younger than the CHP? Do you think that will play out in ways that might influence the outcome of the elections?

MR. PARRIS: Asli, do you want to do the judiciary, and Cengiz and PKK, and I'll let you fight over the last one.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: The politicization of the judiciary is a fact and its activist judges you could call them and it is unfortunately not getting better either I think, in many ways getting worse. The Supreme Court has been problematic in the appointment process. I think at some point Turkey needs to get to a system whereby Supreme Court appointments first come to parliament sort of like in this country. The presidency has really great powers in Turkey with very little, zero, no accountability and that is something that in the long run needs to be redressed because in situations like the one we have where you have the presidency opposing the government it's just too many clashes.

In terms of the judiciary also I think there have been some efforts over the last 4 years to expand the base of judicial appointments, particularly the Minister of Justice I think, Cemil Cicek, tried in his own way to also balance some institutions, but even that is not a good formula. It is not a good formula for

political parties or for the president to use the judicial appointments as they have for ideological warfare and that is what has been happening in Turkey since the last 4 or 5 years, for a long time.

MR. PARRIS: Cengiz, what is the likelihood of going cross-border?

MR. CANDAR: Nearly nil to nil.

MR. PARRIS: Nil to nil?

MR. CANDAR: Nearly.

MR. PARRIS: Nearly nil.

MR. CANDAR: Because first of all I have never believed that despite otherwise suggestions or interpretations of the excitement around the issue that the Turkish general staff was eager for an incursion into Iraq. The reference point is Chief of Staff or General Buyukanit's remarks, but if they are read very carefully and if you read between the lines one can easily come to the conclusion that a military incursion into Iraq is not on his mind, he is saying something else. And especially last week when the Prime Minister just discarded the option undertaking that initiative of a military incursion as the political decision maker on the issue, it is nil now.

But the problem, it is a dynamic that it becomes a auto dynamic that it feeds itself. I referred recently in my articles to the 1967 war between Israel and the Arab countries, when you read the archives both Israeli and Arab you come to the conclusion that neither side wanted it to happen, but it happened.

MS. AYDINTASBAS: Self-fulfilling prophesy.

MR. CANDAR: With all the devastating consequences that have an impact on today's international balances and the regional politics even of the 1967 war, so these domestic squabbles in Turkey around this issue of in order to finish the roots of terrorism once and for all in Northern Iraq, and this rhetoric, this discourse, this ping pong game between the government or between AK and the military generates a dynamic of its own that may lead to the inevitability of an incursion. But for the very short term, that means from today until the election day, it is nearly nil.

MR. PARRIS: Do you want to comment?

MR. TASPINAR: I just wanted to say something about what you said, Cengiz. You said that there may be explosions which may derail the process of the elections and that this may be more likely than a court case against AK Party. If there are explosions, the perception in the Turkish media will be that these explosions are PKK explosions and you would have 1 million people demonstrating in Taksim Square saying the military to Northern Iraq, we want justice, because the perception unfortunately in Turkey is that the PKK is a problem now in Northern Iraq, that there is the Qandil Mountain, they have a safe haven, therefore there is this direct linkage between the PKK and Northern Iraq. How do you square the two then? If there are explosions, how would the military resist the idea of crossing the border especially if they declare emergency law by doing so and then postpone elections?

MS. AYDINTASBAS: What if Erdogan calls that shot? That would make him hugely popular. What if on the 10th of July Erdogan says you know what --

MR. CANDAR: You are back to the Hudson Institute.

MR. PARRIS: There was a question remaining in terms of the candidate list I think.

MR. CANDAR: Yes, but just about intervention, this is not Ukraine or Georgia, this is Turkey and there are no spontaneous demonstrations in Turkey. You cannot have 1 million people just jumping into Taksim Square and asking for an intervention in Northern Iraq.

MR. PARRIS: Which isn't to say that you can't get them there.

MR. CANDAR: You can get them there, but there has to be a political organization, a mastermind and some mobilization behind it. So there is not that popular sentiment that you could mobilize for an intervention into Northern Iraq. This is number one. The second thing, for example, the big explosion we had in Ankara, PKK did not claim it. The officials of Turkey did not blame PKK for that and when there was a lot of talk going on whether Turkey should move into Northern Iraq, the only confrontation other than the mines, these remote-controlled mines like the American casualties in Iraq being suffered, it is more or less the same thing, the only confrontation between the armed PKK elements and the security forces were up in the Tinjil area nearly 300 kilometers from the frontier with Iraq, and they are not Kurmanch Kurds, they are Zazas and Alewites who are inhabiting that region. So it is a signal that you cannot --

anywhere in Turkey other than Northern Iraq and I am sure with the wisdom and the intelligence our general staff has, the message is received.

MR. PARRIS: I think we are going to have to leave it there. It is after 5 o'clock and people have to get home. Thank you all for coming out on a hot summer's night. Stay tuned for what looks to be a hot summer in Turkey, too.

* * * * *