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MOVING FORWARD: INTERPRETING TURKEY'S JULY 22 ELECTION

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Moderator:

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Presentation:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. PARRIS: Well, good morning. As probably all of you know, I'm Mark Parris, and I'm the Director of the Turkey 2007 Project at the Brookings Institution.

I'm delighted to see that so many of you have found your way to our new stealth location, and I'd like to thank SEIU for making this space available while our own facilities over at Brookings are undergoing what the Russians would call "remont."

As many of you know, Turkey 2007 is a one year program we at Brookings are doing in partnership with TUSIAD, the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association.

Is Abdullah here today? I guess not. He is the Washington Office representative of TUSIAD.

When we were putting Turkey 2007 together, Abdullah and I and Phil Gordon and some others, we anticipated that this year would be an unusually action packed year in Turkey's internal politics. What we hadn't anticipated was that so much of the action would be packed into the first half of the year. I had originally anticipated having this session in November.

What happened, of course, was a result of Turkey's efforts to select a new president this spring having gone off the rails and of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's decision to move forward general elections that had been in

fact scheduled or expected in November.

Those elections have now taken place. They took place 10 days ago, and it was clear from the very first return that the result would be a major victory for Prime Minister Erdogan's Justice and Development or AK party.

As the dust has settled, nuances in terms of winners and losers have emerged and are emerging as we speak. And in terms of where Turkey is headed in the weeks ahead, we're beginning to get a better sense. Most importantly of course, and this is where many of you came in, Turkey still has to pick a president. And with each passing day, it seems to me it becomes a bit harder to predict exactly where the process will come out and indeed how it will work.

And the stakes, lest anyone should forget, remain high in the wake of the Turkish Military's April 27 expression of what, at that point, seemed to be fairly rigid views on the subject of who should be Turkey's next president.

I like to think that Turkey 2007's added value among a variety of very fine Turkish programs and think tanks here in Washington is our ability on a timely basis to bring here to Washington some of Turkey's best analytical talent to help audiences here understand what's going on there. And that is certainly the case this morning, when we're fortunate to have with us Dr. Soli Ozel of the Political Science faculty of Bilgi University in Istanbul.

Soli, as an advisor to TUSIAD and someone with lots of friends at Brookings, has been a co-conspirator in launching Turkey 2007, and he

participated in our initial panel back in February.

I'm not alone in considering him one of the top two or three analysts of Turkey's internal politics and foreign policy. I think maybe the best analysis I ever heard of Turkey's 2002 elections was from Soli shortly thereafter.

So, it's a pleasure to welcome him back to Brookings. Now, in recognition of his singular merit as an analyst, I'm going to dispense with my usual role of active moderator and just let him talk for 20 minutes, half an hour. And then, he and I will be glad to take some questions.

So, will you please join me in welcoming to this podium, Dr. Soli Ozel?

(Applause)

MR. OZEL: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen and thank you. And thank you, Mark for having promoted me to a doctor --

MR. PARRIS: Oh.

MR. OZEL: -- which I am not, so I should not start with false advertising on my part. I am actually glad to be here for a whole variety of reasons. I needed to do my semiannual pilgrimage to Filene's basement. It was about time.

But what's probably much more important, I thought that I would really want to share with a group of people such as you what I think has happened in the country to start -- to try to give meaning to what we've seen because some of the commentary that I have seen about the election process and the results of the elections, I must say left me with deep worries because it appeared to me, or at

least that was my reading of them, that partisan shots appeared to be more important than analytical diligence in an effort to try to understand exactly where the country was going.

And the reason why I think this is important or in my judgment more important than in other cases is that what will happen in Turkey, how the Turkish experiment will unfold is not going to be important just for Turkey itself, but it will have repercussions. In that sense, I think there is an interest on the part of not just the West but in general, the world, in seeing through the Turkish experiment and actually let it succeed. And in this case, of course, success would mean Turkey becoming basically a normal country.

One of our refrains in Turkey always is that we would like -- we don't -- I mean, it's never a dull moment, you know? Like, I was sitting happily on the 27th of April at night having a wonderful dinner with a friend of mine whom I haven't seen in a long, long time. And we had good food, even better wine. The setup was okay -- I mean, was wonderful. And then suddenly, I got an SMS message. It's just I mean, to give you indigestion.

And much more importantly, only 10 hours earlier I met with a group of financiers who were visiting Turkey to figure out, you know, what will happen and all of that. And I was so -- I told them so confidently that there would never be another military coup in Turkey again.

So, welcome then to the country of manic depressives. A month ago I was

still -- I don't bite my fingernails, but I mean I was eating my fingers, the skin, wondering whether or not we would really see the 22nd of July and whether on the 23rd of July we'd basically have a normal Monday.

So, concerns were there and I don't think I was alone in having those concerns. And then, lo and behold, we held the elections on the 22nd. I had my - - what is now becoming the traditional election party, which I invite my peers at the department to, and by about 10:00, we knew what the results were. Some of my friends were upset. Some of my friends weren't. And then we just got on.

And I think ultimately, this was not a bad result. And I'll try to explain to you why and then we can get to the more hot issues that you may all want to know more about and that is: Will Gul run? I don't know. It appears that he will. Can Erdogan stop him? He can, but I don't know if he will. And three, will the military intervene and stop them? I doubt it, but I don't know.

So, there you have your answers if you're -- but hopefully, hopefully by the time I'm done -- and the chairman is very optimistic. He's given me the floor and left me basically to my own devices. And it's -- I'm a bit like my mother. I look like her too. When she starts, she never stops. I've learned to stop but not necessarily at the appointed time.

Anyway, so my first -- and I hope that at the end of the analysis you will also have a better sense in terms of how these questions can actually be answered and whether or not one answer or the other may mean good or bad things for

Turkey, for Turkish foreign policy, for Turkish American relations and what have you.

The first message that I'd like to give is really that the old Turkey that some of you may have known about, may have liked or disliked, whatever, that Turkey is probably no more. And this can be good, this can be bad; I don't know. It just is. And I think we all -- we all ought to prepare ourselves to understand and analyze Turkey in its new terms rather than embellishing a past that was not all that great to begin with or hope that this -- the course of history can be reversed, and try to understand what brought us the results that we have and see what can be done and what the meaning of it all actually is.

Back in 2002, I was asked by the National Endowment for Democracy to write a piece on the Turkish elections of 2002 before they happened. So, I started writing it and I finished it. While my son and my wife were having a nice vacation, I was sitting in a hotel room and trying to finish the piece. And I did finish the piece. I was way past the deadline. And I was going to -- I had to give it a title. And I thought okay: Turkish Elections, The Great Earthquake of 2002, something original, and -- but by the time I finished the piece and I really had to write the title, I really realized that the earthquake already happened, that what I was telling in my article was the earthquake and if anything, AKP's victory was the tsunami that would follow a major earthquake.

And one of the suggestions I made or the hypotheses or one of my theses

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was that the AKP had the potential to be the agent of a new realignment in Turkish politics. And for me then, the 2007 election was also a test of my own judgment on what the 2002 elections really meant. And this may be partially my own jealousy for my own work, but I think we've seen that there is a realignment in Turkey's -- in Turkish politics.

In fact, you can see a realignment is consolidated. And I'll give you some figures to -- to hopefully support what I'm saying. Now, many observers have suggested that the AKP victory ought to be analyzed or understood in terms of this party's past alone.

This party comes from -- has a pedigree of Islamic -- it comes from the Islamist tradition in the country that has been around for over 30 years now. It claims to be a different kind of bird than the predecessors, but many of the guys who are now running the AKP, who are important people in AKP have served under other Islamist parties.

So, the one judgment or one approach to Turkey's elections were -- well, this is really a fight between -- this is a choice between an Islamist Turkey and a secular Turkey. I could not disagree more. I think what happened -- and we now have some post electoral analyses. We know where these guys have received their votes, what the breakdown is of their votes and what have you.

First of all, it is quite obvious that the electorate, which now is also a more accentuated middle class electorate, did not want economic crisis. It did not want

economic instability. For better or worse, it was happy with the economic performance of the ruling party.

Secondly, not only was obviously the population in general happy with the performance of the ruling party, even those who have not yet been served well by the economic policies of the ruling party kept up hope that under these guys the economy would continue to hum along, and the GNP per capita that went up from about \$3,000 to over \$5,000 with the help of the currency as well would go towards \$8,000 to \$10,000 per capita as the Prime Minister suggested. And by that time, all the boats would be lifted, so hopefully would theirs.

One of the very strange things, if you will, was -- or things that especially the CHP guys didn't understand, but then they understand in my view nothing -- was, you know, they'd go to the hazelnut districts in the Black Sea region. And the hazelnut issue was a really, really hot issue; that is, hazelnut growers were very angry, angry, not just dissatisfied, but angry with the party saying they have not been receiving their true price for their products.

And whoever went in there was told that they were angry, unhappy, and what have you. And guess what? They voted for AKP. Mr. Bahceli, the leader of -- or MHP deputy was reporting that he went to a village. And in this village people told him, you know the AKP guys, we won't let them in. If they try to come and campaign here, we won't let them in. They've been bad for us; they've been bad for agriculture, whatever. And guess what? AKP won the

majority of the vote in that particular village at which the MHP deputy himself was so happy.

So, first of all, it is obvious that however that was done, the population by and large was happy with the economic policies or the results of the economic policies, number one; number two, they had hoped that the economic performance would continue; and three, they were scared out of their wits that if CHP and MHP came to power, they would ruin it all. And again, experience guided them on that judgment.

Second, although analysis on this differs, I think of this in terms of the (inaudible) election, there was a political democratic aspect within that. The Turkish electorate did not want the military, which as an institution, it respects and honors, to tell it how to think, how to behave, and what to do. In that sense, the vote was against the military's intervention on the 27th of April in order to block the election of Mr. Gul, our current foreign minister.

Finally, this was a choice between a more open, a more worldly, integrated Turkey and a more introverted xenophobic Turkey. And for all its faults and there are plenty, the AKP, at the end of the day, did represent economically and politically a more open Turkey.

So, in my formulation, the election results -- and again, one may be investing these with more meaning than they actually have -- is -- was a victory of hope over fear, of civilianization over military tutelage, and finally economical

and political openness versus introversion.

And I have to quote, although it's necessarily relevant, a depiction by The Financial Times of the CHP. The Financial Times called the CHP "A party ossified in a xenophobic sulk." I could not have said better myself. I was very jealous.

Now, so these are big macro statements, but what did these guys do? I mean, maybe we didn't see how they were actually using religion in order to get their support and all the older appointments and patronages and whatever. I mean, you just look at the -- you just look at the record.

Before I do that, let me read to you the breakdown of AKP's support in these elections. It received 45 percent of male vote and 51 percent of female vote. It received 45 percent of the vote by those under 28, 49 percent of the vote on the age bracket between 28 and 44, and they received 49 percent of the vote over 44 age bracket. Of those whose education was secondary school and below, they got 55 percent of the vote. From high school -- below high school -- from high school, they received 37 percent of the vote and 24 percent of the vote of those who had higher education.

In smaller families with one or two people, they received forty-nine percent of the vote. With three to five people, they received 45 percent of the vote. Six to eight people, they received fifty-two percent of the vote. And in families where there were more than 9 people, they received 64 percent of the

vote.

They received -- in terms of income distribution brackets, they received 55 percent of their support from the lowest income bracket, lowest quintile, 54 percent from the second lowest quintile, 43 percent from the third quintile, only 35 percent from the fourth, and only 23 percent from the fifth, that is the top quintile of the electorate in terms of income distribution.

So, this is a country -- this is a party which received its main support, its mass support from those who were poor, by and large. Now, this is actually in and of itself something to really wonder. How did they do it? I mean, after all, this is a party whose success was a function of its unfettered devotion to the IMF Policy's Economic Stabilization Program that Kemal Dervis put together. And IMF policies may be very good for financial stabilization. They don't -- they do not necessarily mean good news for people who are at the lower income brackets.

So, how is it that a party which implemented policies that would benefit the highest income earning quintile in the country (inaudible) brackets? And the answer is, of course, that macro economically they've done exactly what they were told. And they are market fundamentalists before they are fundamentalists of any other kind.

They have also used the party organization, the municipalities, many of which they have been controlling since 1994, and generating resources to cater to those, the poorest, the most unfortunate in terms of income in the country.

Moreover -- and that is something that you don't find in the coverage of the elections or the party in Western press, in Turkish press either. They have made the Turkish healthcare system much more accessible than it has ever been. Second, they distributed food every other month in poorest districts. This is buying votes, you may say, but I'm trying to explain why these guys could still receive the support of the poor.

They have given free books to all families who had children in school. In a poor family's budget, school books are an important item. And they've done -- they've done such things. So, therefore, what we've seen is a party that has been appealing to the poor by its service orientation, a party that was appealing to the rich because it actually created an economic climate that served their interests, even if their lifestyles were not necessarily compatible. They received support from their own real class constituency, which is the rising provincial entrepreneurial classes of Anatolia who have come of age in the eighties and the nineties. And having cut -- and they have cut their teeth economically by integrating with the global economy.

And finally, and that is also -- and in my judgment an underreported part of their -- of their support is they have received willy-nilly perhaps, *faut de mieux* perhaps, the support of those secular segments of the population who just did not want to be living their lives constantly under military tutelage and a semi-authoritarian order. This is a big a coalition of forces as we can see. And in that

sense, the Prime Minister was correct in invoking 1954, which was the only other time in Turkish history when a ruling party received more votes than it did in its first term.

Now, 1954 is interesting because on the one hand, it was the first realignment in Turkish politics after single party rule. 1950, the DP comes to power; '54, it consolidates. 2002, the AKP comes to power; in 2007, it consolidates. But 1954, which was the peak of DP's support, was also the beginning of their decline as they moved away from more liberal economic policies because of mismanagement of the economy and certainly moved towards much more authoritarian policies, vis-à-vis the opposition. And that may very well be the kind of trap that exists for the AKP if it does not know how to handle this overwhelming support that they received and the overwhelming power that they thus control.

Now, I have to say a few words about CHP and MHP. As I said, for anybody in their right mind and those who have actually voted their pocketbook - - and as I suggested earlier, these elections show that the Turks, just like any other group of people, happen to vote their pocketbook. For any such person, a CHP or MHP coalition government was the mother of all nightmares.

And ultimately, what we've seen is, in my view, the end of CHP as it is currently constituted. The CHP can go on receiving support from a constituency whose profile is a woman with higher education, who is probably a professional

or a housewife or homemaker and who is over the age of 44. That is not a very representative profile for the Turkish electorate in general. So, the CHP either will renew itself or it will just dwindle in the air.

The real opposition that came out this time around inside the parliament is really the MHP. And I would argue and I would suggest to you that in the next parliament, the real opposition, main opposition party is not going to be the CHP, although it has the numbers. It's going to be the MHP, and you could feel how the Prime Minister dreaded that eventuality when you listen to his campaign speeches and why he picked up on the MHP all the time.

This next parliament is going to be also an extraordinarily interesting one and in that sense, perhaps the most critical parliament composition we have had in a long, long time in that not only are Turkish Nationalists in parliament, so are Kurdish Nationalists, who by the way, were one of the most disappointed groups of all. Why? In their projections, they were expecting anywhere between 30 to 40 deputies. They ended up getting 22. And guess what? The AKP managed to get 42 percent of the vote in a district such as Diyarbakir, which has overwhelmingly supported Kurdish Nationalists time and again.

In fact, the real test of AKP becoming a national party and therefore, being the agent of a realignment in my view is the color of the voting patterns. That is, they received almost the same percentage of votes everywhere in the country. They were weakest in the Thrace and in the Aegean region, but everywhere else,

everywhere else, they received a percentage of the vote that is basically around the number that they got at the end.

So, what do we do now or where do we go now? Now, it is -- and now we're getting to actual daily politics -- I have no doubts that it wasn't just the military who thought that the presidency was just too precious a prize to be "given away" to the AKP. The AKP were equally cognizant of the fact that this was really the prize for them to have. The symbolism of the presidency is beyond dispute for the political order of the Turkish Republic. Therefore, when the military intervened, it intervened to basically draw a line. That may be legitimate, illegitimate; you may like it, you may not like it. This is not a moral judgment on it. I'm trying to make analytical point.

Now, I think the Prime Minister has accepted it. This is -- I mean, it's really wonderful. The Prime Minister and the chief of staff had a tête-à-tête at the Dolmabahce palace about two and a half months ago that lasted for about two hours and fifteen minutes. Not a peep, nobody leaked anything, which is -- I mean, all of you know politics. This is quite a remarkable happening, if you will.

And again, those of us who try to, you know, read the tea leaves, we just watched what was going on in the country after the meeting and suddenly, after the meeting, the tension in the country gradually began to get down and lots of things went right. The military and the government appears to be on the same

page when it came to PKK terrorism, what Turkey's options were, how we should response to -- in Northern Iraq and what have you.

So, the smart money then after the elections was on okay, Erdogan's deal has worked, so Erdogan certainly would not run. And he is going to present an acceptable candidate to be elected president, and we won't have to worry about this thing. We have a really loaded agenda. We're going to go ahead.

If only life were so simple. Because in all of this, there was a wounded pride, and that was the pride of the Foreign Minister, who believed since he was not going to be Prime Minister, which was really what he wanted to be, that he should at least be the president of the republic. And suddenly, he was told that he couldn't be and he obviously understood that Erdogan has no intention of representing him as his candidate.

So, Mr. Gul came up last week, in fact, last week on Wednesday, I think it was, and gave this wonderful speech, whose Turkish was not very good, but spoke for about 25 to 30 minutes. And without declaring that he was the candidate, he basically said that he was the candidate. But he left himself the option of opting out just in case, you know, a repeat of 27th of April would occur. Anyway, we'll talk about this in the question and answer I'm sure.

Now, what are the AKP's options domestically? What is the AKP's agenda internationally? And then I'll stop. If I'm correct that this election in

terms of the meaning we can attribute to it was won, whereby Turkey had to choose between openness and introversion and that AKP actually won because it presented a much more open future, much more integrated future for Turkey, then their best option is of course, to pick up the pieces of the EU project, which is very difficult to do because the EU members, some of their members are saying no, no, no, we don't want you. And you're supposed to be pushing against a door where the host doesn't really want you to be a guest or a member of the family. It's even worse.

But, it's truly -- they'll have to pick up the pieces and really resurrect, if you will or reignite the reform process. They will have to do a lot in the economy in order to adjust -- to have the micro adjustments in place.

Now, I will also argue that this is not just their best option; it's their only option. If they don't heed the call of the electorate and move on this particular agenda and widen up the democratic space in the country, push for the rule of law, and do whatever they need to do in terms of adjustments in the economy, they're going to fail. And they're going to fail in my view rather miserably as well.

So, this is really what is expected of them, and I think they should do it. A parenthesis, the 27th of April military intervention was one of many in our political history. And then we had our crisis when we got it over with. But, it would be wrong to think that this was just a passing crisis just because the AKP,

you know, were not -- or AKP leaderships' wives did not look the way we expect them to look. It was more profound than that. The 27th of April crisis and (inaudible) that the election was a crisis of the 1982 constitution that is just too small a jacket for the Turkish body politic.

That constitution was written by the military and for the military with two major assumptions. The first major assumption was that the president would always be someone with a military background or who would be someone close to the military. And the second assumption was the Cold War would never end. And lo and behold, the Cold War ended. And it's the -- an appropriate response to the end of the Cold War on the part of the Turkish body politic -- that is generating in my view this cumulative crisis.

So, the first order of business in domestic politics of the country is indeed to change the constitution and therefore, to give the country a constitutional order that fits its current realities much better than the 1982 constitution. So, we have then in this particular setup the seeds of transformation or the continuation of transformation in the country or the seeds of paralysis. And we will see which one we'll obtain.

On foreign policy, as you know we've read many comments before that the AKP was pursuing an Islamist foreign policy, that it was turning Turkey into a Middle Eastern country. I strongly, very strongly disagree with this. I mean, back in 1993 I think it was, NATO came up with a list of 16 troubled regions in

its area of concern, okay. Thirteen of those happened to be near Turkey. And if the world is in deep trouble as it is, the deepest trouble is in the Middle East. And for the foreseeable future, the Middle East is going to continue to generate a lot of problems.

So, what do you expect from the rulers of Turkey if not them also being engaged in what goes on in the Middle East? You can say yes, the AKP people feel much more comfortable about dealing with their counterparts in Middle Eastern countries. That is basically at this point an asset. It's not that they haven't made mistakes. In my view, the invitation to Hamas was a mistake which some of them do recognize and some don't. But by and large, Turkey's engagement with the Middle East is more a function of the circumstances and the climate and world affairs than it is a choice on the part of the AKP favoring an Islamization of Turkish foreign policy.

For me, the single most important item on Turkey's foreign policy agenda, which I think also is part of Turkey's domestic agenda is to rebuild relations with the United States. That is in my view to the interests of the United States as well as it is to the interests of Turkey.

Yesterday's piece in the Washington Post by Robert Novak in which he basically leaked the news that the Turkish Military was going to have a joint operation with the American military or basically the American military would have an operation against the PKK leadership may turn out to be a rather

unfortunate thing. Because if it stops the possibility of the operation, I think the damage is going to be substantial, because we need to restart Turkish American relations on the right path.

And the way to get to the right path in my view was really for the United States to do something tangible, deliver a couple of PKK leaders or show to the Turkish public that something was actually going on, that our ally was supporting us. That would dissipate the ill feelings about the United States inside in the country. And the government would have a much freer hand to actually reengage itself.

Finally -- of course, there is Iraq. And the future of Iraq is a definite concern. And that's why getting the US Turkey relations on track is so important.

Finally, there remains the EU. Again, the prospects for EU membership today don't look too good when you have Nicolas Sarkozy, who is on the edge of making racist remarks about Turkey and when the Dutch are trying to block a guy who is Turkish who got elected to the parliament from actually taking his seat in parliament because he just happens to be Turkish and got elected because of preferential votes. He was 17th on the list of candidates, but his constituents basically wrote his name down up, so he got in as the fourth elected parliamentarian.

Or in Germany or else -- or Austria in particular, you have a lot of

hostility towards not just Turkish membership but towards Turks. In my view, this is something that the EU can ill afford to continue. But obviously, it makes the task of the Turks who actually want Turkey to be on the EU path because this is our anchor, this is our facilitator, this is our support mechanism to continue our domestic reform program certainly in political terms.

And I think as I said earlier and that's my last call. This government has no better option. And maybe it has no real option other than pursuing the EU process despite the EU. And if we can find ourselves having elected our president without much trouble, if we find ourselves really back on track with a good cabinet formed by the Prime Minister, I think the chances of Turkey actually moving forward are going to be increased.

A lot runs on the AKP's ability to first digest its power and two, to manage the power as well as the country. And that, I think is the real test for what they're going to be doing. Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. PARRIS: Soli, you give us a lot to think about and undoubtedly provoked a lot of questions in the audience. I'd like to start the ball rolling by putting a couple to you.

The first has to do with your comments towards the end on foreign policy under AKP and the notion of Islamization of the foreign policy agenda. I tended to agree with your analysis, but there's also the fact that the first move out of the

box since the elections is the announcement that Turkey will establish free trade agreements with 17 or 18 Muslim nations. I don't know if you saw this this morning.

But it appears to be A, inconsistent with their undertakings with the EU under the customs union, and B, kind of a blatant tilt towards the Muslim world. So, that's the first question.

The second question has to do with perceptions here of Turkish internal dynamics. If you roll the clock back to spring of this year, what we were seeing here in Washington on television in the media was masses of people in the streets of Ankara and Istanbul.

The issues were secularism, the headscarf, the threat to secularism. People were talking here analytically about the equivalent of the cedar and the rose and the orange revolutions and that what we were seeing was an expression of a similar phenomenon in Turkey.

I'd like your assessment as to how the picture then could have been so wrong and what did those pictures at the time represent, accurately understood?

MR. OZEL: Now, I didn't see the news, but I'm not really surprised. And again, you can read this as privileging relations with Muslims countries. But there's another way of looking at it.

The European Union keeps on signing free trade agreements or special agreements with all of the southern Mediterranean countries, all of which happen

to be Muslim. Turkey has a customs union with the European Union. And Turkey does not sit on board around the table where people decide who decides who they're going to sign free trade agreements with.

Not only that, when Turkey says why don't -- I mean, I will accept your will, but let me just sign a free trade treaty with these guys as well just like you do and then we'll put it in, the EU says no, no, no. We'll sign our agreement and you'll go into it with them. So, what happens? The EU signs a free trade agreement with Algeria and tells Turkey, you're going to sign one with them as well. Turkey tries to go to Algeria to do just that only to learn from the Algerians after a while that the French have told them not actually carryout negotiations with them.

So, I can't -- I don't really know the background to this, but I think there is an aspect of this which actually speaks to this particular kind of obstructionism on the part of the European Union. Okay.

And secondly, I'm sure this may very well be raising the red flag just like the Iran Turkey oil or gas deal if you will, preliminary agreement. That is, we are here. Don't ignore us or don't tramp on our interests either.

So, I would need to know more, but I would not be surprised if some of what I just suggested were also part of that particular (inaudible) 2007, I know you like flowers and colors here, but the circumstances were different. I don't by any means wish to belittle not just the meaning but the importance of the rallies.

But at the end of the day, three million people marched. And that's what? Out of 42 million voters, it's really pittance. I mean, it's what maybe two percent of the electorate?

Its meaning though goes way beyond the two percent. And what we've seen I think is the following. The presidency was a critical matter. And I think the -- I mean, beyond the psychological warfare of the retired generals and what have you, the electorate or at least certain segments of the electorate wanted to give the message that this was the line that they would draw if they could stop it for AKP. Of course, many acts they have tolerated in terms of the secular versus non-secular divide. But the presidency because of its symbolic importance, because of the potency of the symbolism and what have you, was really a don't-touch area.

But what happened? It was -- again, in my judgment, the AKP totally mismanaged the presidential election. I think they have barged in too forcefully and they were not delicate and they should not have tried it and all that. But what happened? We couldn't stop them by the right means, so we stopped them by foul means. And that also generated its own reaction.

And it appeared, of course, that after Buyukanit and Erdogan met the issue of the presidency was over. And once the issue of presidency was over, the tension in the country declined substantially. The proof of that was when the country was aghast at the number of soldiers who were being killed by the PKK

through IEDs and what have you and you had either the news of the deaths or the funerals on the front pages of all major papers, the first piece of news on daily broadcasts running for about 20 minutes, everybody crying and all that.

During that period of time when all sensitivities were so hyped up, the same organization that organized the first rally in Ankara called for a Turkey-wide rally against terrorism. Fifteen hundred people showed up in all of Turkey, one hundred of them in Istanbul where only a month and a half earlier about a million people showed up.

So, that in my view tells you exactly what -- so, in that sense, I think Erdogan reads the realities of the public much better than Gul. If Gul runs, that sensitivity is there. It's raw. And they're going to really start with a rather bad move. But that doesn't mean -- I mean, the thing is you are at an impasse. I'm not going to accept any illegal means of stopping Mr. Gul's presidency personally.

MR. PARRIS: Well and there's a rather dramatic difference in the quality of the mandate that they bring to the discussion; isn't there?

MR. OZEL: Yeah, yeah. I mean, if the effort was not to allow the AKP to elect their president, the electorate said well, we're giving these guys 47.7 percent -- 46.6 percent of the vote and they can actually do as they please. So, we'll see how this will all unfold.

MR. PARRIS: Okay. I'm happy to take questions from the floor. Would

you please identify yourself (inaudible).

This gentleman here?

MALE SPEAKER: I am Francesco Cottafavi. I am an Italian diplomat and Senior Advisor to the Department of European Integration in Italy.

So, first of all, I am very interested in what he said. Let's say that for us the present government is a dream come true. We hope that it's going to stay, it's going to be efficient, and it's going to be productive. And particularly, it's going to be an example, a leading example to the other countries in the Middle East because if we have more governments like this government coming up in the next few years, we are going to stabilize through those means many countries that are now not as stable they should. I will not continue on that because I think it's obvious now.

The European Union point, I think we have to keep in mind something very precise. There is a -- America doesn't understand that too well. I mean there is a union and there are the states that are part of the union. The negotiations between Turkey and the Union are managed by the commission. There is a commissioner who is Ahed Baroso and there is -- let's say to understand this simply is like a Prime Minister of Europe.

The commission has been mandated -- the union has been mandated to negotiate with Turkey I think two years ago. There is no more decision to be taken by the states. So, there are two different tracks. So, the union is capable, is

mandated, will negotiate until they reach an agreement to the admission of Turkey, regardless of what Mr. Sarkozy says or anyone else.

On the other hand, obviously, this is important to keep in mind so the negotiations will continue if this government wants to negotiate as looks like. On the other hand, we are very much in favor of Mr. Sarkozy coming out on the issue. We are very much in favor also of the pope speaking in sometimes difficult ways about Turkey.

Why? Because if you look at (inaudible) subconscious let's say of Europeans, our history was really for hundreds of years a struggle between Christian, let's say countries and Islamic -- Turkey, the ultimate empire. And if you just travel into Costa Rica, you see all the villages built up little hills -- yeah, I make it, yeah, shorter, but we have a history that is that way and I think is very clear to everyone in his own mind that it's difficult to admit Turkey after practical negotiations without reviewing, readjusting our view of Turkey in modern terms.

We should look at Turkey, the future of Turkey, not looking with the eye of the past. And so, it is very useful that you're going to debate that, but in my view, it will not effect negotiations because it's mature to split to things.

MR. OZEL: I mean, I wish I could be as either sanguine or optimistic as you are because Mr. Sarkozy does make a difference, especially when he stops as a state stops -- a chat -- the start of a negotiation of a chapter which would actually be about Turkey's financial integration with Europe suggesting that this

would mean turkey is going to be a member and they don't really want that.

Now, the European members -- I mean, I understand. The commission has been very good. On the 27th of April or on the 28th of April, they've taken the right position. Both Mr. Baroso and Mr. Rehn I think are much more respected than many other European leaders in Turkey, and they have acted in good faith, and I think this is really widely recognized.

On the other hand, it is very difficult in my view for the Turkish public to stomach the obstructionism of member states, which actually have an impact on the negotiating process. I mean, cyprus is an important matter over which the Turks and the EU have a disagreement. One can legitimately claim that the Turks have not kept their promise as the Turks also claim that the Europeans haven't kept their promise.

But to suspend eight chapters, some of which have nothing to do with the customs union is basically an act of ill faith. And you can be very political and cool about this and say hey, what these guys want is to make us throw in the towel and we will not, which is for the moment I think the line that obtains in Turkey grudgingly.

How long that will last, I really don't know, but that is where we stand. But I would disagree with you that the states' positions have no effect on the negotiations because they do.

SONER CAGAPTAY: Soli, good to see you again always. Mine

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is actually a comment followed by a question. And the comment is regarding your assessment of support for AKP across the country, that this is, you know, representative support across Turkey's geographic and cultural zones.

I would slightly disagree with that. It seems to me that while AKP has established a broad coalition through the appeal of its policies of economic and monetary dispensation and the appeal of its economic and social policies. I think if you'll look at the provinces, the picture you see is that in about 40 of Turkey's 81 provinces, support for AKP exceeds 50 percent, usually average 60 percent. But in about 30 provinces -- I'm sorry, about 20-25 provinces, support is about 30 percent or 35 percent, so.

My assessment of this and I want to know what you think about it is that we actually see two Turkeys in terms of geographic support for the AKP, one in which the party is a majority, 60 percent plus, one in which it's a minority, around 30 percent.

The question I have, the second part, based on that is the very useful analogy you've provided us using the '50 and '54 election and what happened in Turkey afterwards. If the AKP is to avoid the political traps of that period, and I think they might as well, the policies of the party regarding this solidified constituency that is not getting smaller, that's also not getting bigger. In other words, a CHP constituency, which is basically fixed around 22 percent, you describe this as, you know -- I know this is a journalistic way of looking at it

as educated women over the age of 44, whether or not one sympathizes with their cause. What is it that they're afraid of? That's question number one.

Number two, how can the AKP alleviate their fears? Because this constituency is 20 percent of Turkey, 15 million people. It's not getting smaller, and it's going to stay there.

MR. OZEL: Well, demographically, it actually is getting smaller because it is a lot older. But I don't accept your premise. I mean, you told -- you're telling me that in half of Turkey's provinces, a party gets over 50 percent of the voting and everywhere else, it's anywhere between 30 and 40 percent. That seems to me the definition of a national party. I mean, this is a party which receives more votes than the Kurdish Nationalist party in Kurdish provinces, certainly competes with it valiantly in all the provinces where the Kurds have actually received overwhelming support from their constituents.

And it is everywhere. In my hometown of Izmir, which is the bastion of westernization in the country, the AKP received 33 percent of the vote. I mean, this is a national party. The thing is national parties fare equally well in all the provinces. There are only what -- six or seven provinces that these guys lost. Three of them are in Thrace. I think two or three of them are in Central Anatolia and two or three out in the Kurdish regions in the southeast. They won in every single other province.

I don't see how you can say that this represents a divided country. What

division? First of all, the MHP and AKP basically speak to the same constituency, so the CHP and MHP cannot be put on the same bag either. One service that the CHP has actually rendered to MHP was to legitimate an ultranationalist discourse which then gave MHP enough playing fields so that they could actually go beyond the 10 percent and then receive about 15 percent of the vote.

As for the genuine concern of especially women about what an AKP rule would mean for them in their future in terms of their lifestyles, it is a genuine fear. And the Prime Minister tried to address this in his victory speech saying we hear the 54 percent who have not voted for us. Now, there are plenty of people in AKP who are Islamists who would like to see all women covered and certainly would like to see women out of public life undoubtedly. But are they the majority of the party? I don't know.

There are plenty -- and if AKP had not mobilized women, it would never have received as many votes as it does today anywhere in the country. So, we have this issue of lifestyle which is a burning issue, which we cannot really even begin to tackle unless CHP and AKP start speaking the same language of civilian rule in the country.

If liberal institutionalization had been accomplished in Turkey by the secular parties back in the 1990s, we would not be having this discussion, because our individual rights would have been safeguarded. So, you're telling me

that the secular parties were very happy having a very strong state which basically trampled individual rights all over the -- not have any respect for the rule of law, and suddenly when the party that they did not want acquired power, this has become anathema. We are trying to -- we have the duty of cleaning up the mess that the secular parties left. I don't like the idea of, quite frankly -- aesthetically I don't like women who cover their heads. I also think that it is a symbol of subservience to male dominance. That's my view, okay? But I don't think this should be a reason to deny these guys the right to be elected to whatever position that they aspire to. The rest is going to be a functional -- whether or not we can manage in Turkey to establish the rule of law where individual rights are protected. There will be, as Professor Shadif Martin very wisely said -- and that really generated quite an agenda in the country as well -- there will be pressure from your peers in small provinces, in small towns, and what have you. The pressure, especially on women for more conservative or more religious (inaudible), is going to be intense. Undoubtedly, there are -- for such people, there is an immense risk of their life style being in jeopardy, but globally -- globally -- especially if we're going to take the TESEV report that suggested there was a decline in the number of -- in the percentage of women who were covering their head in the so-called Islamic fashion from 1999 to 2006, you can basically say that as Turkey becomes more prosperous, this issue is going to be less of a burning issue. But until then you do take risks and you just are vigilant -- you

should be vigilant about the rule of law and people's rights being protected. But this division of Turkey between 47 percent and 53 percent, not only do I not see it, I find it analytically basically meaningless quite frankly.

MR. CUTHELL: I am Dave Cuthell with the Institute of Turkish Studies, and Soli (inaudible), I'd like to follow up on that last question.

One of the things that happened in the last election was that the composition of the AKP candidates moved much more to center, and do you see this movement towards the center as continuing on? And, secondly, do you think that given the presidential debates and negotiations that go around at that time will force both the two opposition parties -- the MHP and CHP -- into themselves becoming more mainstream? Do you see a movement towards the center in the next five years?

MR. OZEL: The thing is almost all parties have selected candidates who appear to be much more to the center than their leadership would lead us to think in terms of their discourse.

Now, the question about whether or not AKP's apparent move to the center is genuine or is it just window dressing is an interesting one, and, quite frankly -- and I don't mean to escape the question -- but it is -- it can only be seen in a dialectical perspective, meaning Rusten Cakara, who knows these guys much better than I ever will, who's been with them for the last 20 -- who's been studying them -- who's been studying them for the last 23 years -- suggested that by the

selection of those candidates, Erdogan was actually alienating the parliamentary group from the base, that there was unease in the base about this. Then let's say that 20 percent of AKP support is the base and these guys' life styles, world views, and whatever are not necessarily to our liking or whatever. But when you put someone -- and I also asked Suat Kiniklioglu, a friend of mine, who obviously has nothing to do with AKP's pedigree, as a candidate how he interacted with the party organization, he said from day one they owned up to him and they supported him wholeheartedly. And that may be just his district, I don't know; but I think there is interaction between these guys -- these new guys -- and the party and the party faithful, and sooner or later either the party is going to crack because it can no longer reconcile these diametrically opposed groups or we're going to come up with new syntheses. In different parts of the country, the party's reaction will be different.

In my hometown of Izmir again, during the municipal elections of 2004, the AKP had fielded a candidate whose daughters had their navels out with what do you call them -- yeah, okay. Now, try that if you will in a city like Yozgat. You know what I mean? So, it's, like, is the Vermont Republican the same type of politician as a Texan or an Alabama Republican? I mean -- so, the countries offer a wide variety of typologies, if you will, and the definition of a national party would also suggest that the party would look different in different parts of the country as well. So, in that sense, it becomes an amalgam of the

country rather than just a single identity party. The AKP is yet a party which is to shape up its identity, by the way, and this may mean that in the future, especially if they cannot manage the affairs of the country -- well, it may split -- but the more important thing for me is, and this -- we had a discussion on this with friends last night -- the general picture that -- in Turkey today there is a middle-class constituency. One estimate is that now between 25 to 30 percent of Turks who vote are nonengaged. That is, they can vote for whichever party that is appealing to their interest. Now, that is a sign of the maturity of the Turkish electorate, by the way, so the real realignment goes beyond parties. Now we have this middle class that is going to be growing, and this middle class is going to be increasingly voting by its wallet, okay? And patronage is going to be much less important, because there is nothing to -- the resources are no longer there, so instead of voting as communities, you will be starting -- you'll start voting as individuals. In that sense, AKP, CHP, or MHP -- no party that doesn't address itself to these new realities will not be able to get any support from the country, and the thing -- the fact of the matter is CHP received an overwhelming part of its support from the top income distribution bracket of the country. That is the real leftist in this sense. I mean, quote/unquote, obviously I'm being cynical. (inaudible) the most -- the richest neighborhoods in the country are in Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara, respectively. It just can't work that way. It just can't work that way. You've got to offer this public something other than fear, and that's -- if

there was really a division, truly I think you've come after that to the triumph of hope over fear. The hope may have been misplaced, but certainly fear doesn't work. And, in that sense, the real divide is between 35 percent who want to close the country and 65 percent who don't.

MS. CARLEY: I'm Patricia Carley with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. I wanted to ask you about what you said about the importance of Turkey continuing the reform process as part of its EU membership bid, and it seems to me that both symbolically and practically, one of the most important reforms Turkey has to undertake is to repeal Article 301. You probably know that when Gül was in Washington a couple of months ago he said publicly that he supported the repeal of 301. So, I'm wondering what you think the chances are of this happening, because I think for European (inaudible) and also given the recent increase in (inaudible) for the MHP, what are the chances of this happening?

MR. OZEL: I mean, did you also follow up your question to Gül (inaudible) if you were there as to why he hasn't done anything about it for the last year? Look, I'd like to make this fine tuning. I happen to think, although I have no ideological affinity with the AKP either in terms of their general economic outlook or their religious background, that the AKP stands as an agent of democratic transformation in Turkey, which breaks down the oligarchic order. That doesn't in and of itself that it is a democratic party. I mean, after all, and this

is something that I say with great shame and unfortunately it is true -- that's why I conceal it or I don't divulge it at the beginning -- all our candidates who are now sitting members of the Turkish parliament are appointed. They're not elected. We as voters -- actually, I voted for an independent so I don't count -- they all voted for lists that were prepared by a single individual no matter which the party is. Today's AKP is Mr. Erdogan's party. He sat down with seven of his colleagues and determined what the names were going to be, what ranking they were going to have. So, our parliamentarians are not our representatives. They are appointees of the leadership. So, in that sense, I mean, there is a lot more that needs to be done. That's why changing the 1982 constitutional order, changing the political party's law, changing the elections law are part and parcel of Turkey's democratization. Without those, nothing can be achieved.

So, coming to 301, the AKP has been abysmal -- absolutely abysmal over the last year and a half to two years in terms of opening up the democratic space. The selling point for that was we are under fire; there is rising nationalism in the country; there is -- we can only do a limited amount of things; we've got to consolidate our power and then we'll do it. This is an IOU. Whether they'll pay it up remains to be seen. But let me give you something, a much more important test, by the way, whether or not they're going to be a genuine party of democratization in the country. Not 301 -- 301, they'll do something about it.

Unless the Hrant Dink trial results in a genuine, believable conviction and exposes all those dark forces who have been participating (inaudible) that cannot be achieved with chances for Turkey to truly become a country where rule of law reigns, therefore, that can be a liberal democratic country I don't (inaudible) want to see it.

MR. PARRIS: This gentleman's been trying to ask a question here. Can you identify yourself please.

MR. (INAUDIBLE): (inaudible) fate of this democratic transformation (inaudible).

MR. OZEL: I mean, obviously the AKP had that responsibility before as well, and I think in my view they wasted it, and there's this debate in Turkey that says no matter what they did the military would have done what it did -- psychological warfare, this, that, and the other. Be that as it may, I think they mismanaged the process. Now they have a second chance, and it's a much more difficult question to answer. They do have the responsibility to civilianize the politic. I think even the MHP in its own fashion may actually support them, by the way (inaudible) the parliament to actually form the quorum. But the real discussion now -- the real question now is do you say we got 47 percent of the vote, so we should be able to do whatever we want to do and therefore Gül gets elected. Or do you say this is one step too early, maybe we should just go for a more acceptable figure. But more acceptable to whom? More acceptable to the

54 percent let's say. And then we can change things as we see fit. I really don't know what the best course to take there is, because should we make our political judgments based on what the possible reaction of the military is going to be? I'm not really quite sure, but that is a fact of life that stands there. So, it is really a burden on Erdogan to decide. It's not an enviable position to be in, because there will also be, I'm sure, pressure from the base saying look, the election was about whether or not this guy could be elected president and the electorate said that he could. So, you'd (inaudible) your own electorate. I don't know how -- which way they're going to go. I don't know which way Gul will ultimately end up going. So, responsibility then is do we then say which one is the more responsible course -- because people spoke, we're going to have our man in the presidency; or is the responsible course let's not muddy the water right at the very beginning. We have really a very hard agenda to tackle, therefore let's take this in stride and let's not provoke a reaction from the other parties. I don't know. We'll see.

MS. (INAUDIBLE): Thank you (inaudible).

Soli, first of all, thanks very much for a very comprehensive and persuasive analysis. My question is about the word in the Southeast, and I was wondering if you could tell us about the impact, if any, of the (inaudible) in Iraq and the emerging state, if you will, in the region on the word AKP received from the Kurdish voters in the Southeast and, if AKP will be able to consolidate that support in the region, if it wants to remain as a viable alternative to PKK in the

region, what should the new AKP policy be vis-à-vis, well, the Kurdish problem but also Northern Iraq? Thanks.

MR. OZEL: Thank you.

First of all, I would remind the audience that in August of 2005, the Turkish prime minister went to Diyarbakir to give a speech about the "Kurdish problem." Only 700 people went to the square to greet him. That was disgraceful, and it was obviously a message -- very strong message -- not just from the PKK but also from his own party that, for whatever reason, they were not going to give him the support that he needed. From then on, the prime minister forgot the word "Kurdish." That disappeared from his lexicon; that disappeared from his dictionary. It's now back in full force. And I think, again, reflections that I've read suggest that the Kurds have supported the AKP for at least three possible reasons. One, the bond of common religion still plays an important part, which is why the Islamist parties always receive a good chunk of the votes in the Southeast to begin with. Secondly, it was quite obvious for the electorate there in the southeast that of all the parties that were running, the AKP will be the most, how shall I say, amenable one to having a friendlier relation with the Kurds of Northern Iraq and certainly with the willingness to address the Kurdish issue as the prime minister indicated in 2005. Finally, I would not be surprised if Mr. Barzani played a part in securing some support for the AKP in the Southeast. And these last two items actually also give the answer to your

question. That is, no party that came to power with such a respectable support by the Kurds would easily decide to order a military operation, because you would lose your constituency; and, second, in order to actually move on the Kurdish issue you've got to do two things: One, of course, continue on the EU track and do whatever reforms are necessary; and, secondly, of course, what you need to do is to actually normalize your relations with the Kurdish leadership in Iraq and in Northern Iraq, that is, Talibani-Barzani. And in order for that happen -- that is why the Novak piece was so damaging, because in order to do that you'd have something tangible that is being done on the part of either the United States or the Iraqi Kurds so that the prime minister could turn around to the population and say, hey, we've got something. These guys are now weak. We can now, as a strong party, move forward. I mean, after all, there is anywhere between 3 to 5 billion dollars worth of trade between Turkey and Northern Iraq. Northern Iraq is becoming fast Turkey's extension in economic terms. There is about a billion dollars worth of investments and about 200 to 300 Turkish firms that are operating -- that are operating in Iraqi Kurdistan. So, under those circumstances, Turkey ought to be the more comfortable partner. But that would necessitate a tangible move on the part of the United States, and if that doesn't happen it will be much more difficult for the prime minister for the AKP government to actually put the process in place. And that's why -- I mean, again, Gül's candidacy and presidency by unnecessarily generating, rightfully or wrongly-- a crisis

atmosphere with the military can actually block that as well. In that sense, also it doesn't really look like a good move.

MR. PARRIS: (inaudible) want to ask a question (inaudible) and over here.

MR. (INAUDIBLE): FOLLOWED BY SEVERAL INAUDIBLE QUESTIONS.

MR. OZEL: Let's start with the easiest question by Hambay . It's easy because it's -- the answer purely speculative. If Gül were to be elected president, I wouldn't expect a crisis immediately, but the country would be crisis prone because of that. I'd be surprised, as I was on the 27th of April when I certainly made the wrong call -- I'd be very surprised if there was a direct military intervention, which is what was threatened on the memorandum of 27th of April, if Gül were to be elected. But, as I said, it would then -- it would be a bleeding sore wound, and it would make the country crisis prone more than -- unless Mrs. Gül radically decides that in the public space she will not be covering her head again.

Second, I'm really very sorry that you felt disappointed that I called CHP that way. I am very disappointed that CHP is that type of country -- is that type of party. Now, as for -- in your very example, the CHP never really articulated an economic program on which it would be critical of the influence of money from whichever sources. Instead, it was part and parcel of the stupid

arguments as land being sold to the Syrians and the Israelis. You know, the country was being torn apart, and they even flirted with the issue of the missionaries. And so that party cannot be considered by my book -- and I grew up in a CHP family, by the way -- it cannot be -- it cannot be considered, in my book, a social democratic party.

As to your question, would the (inaudible) -- I mean, we have seen how the security forces, the Gendarmerie, the intelligence of the internal security -- they have all -- they were all knowledgeable about what was going to happen for about a year and a half, and they tried to cover everything up afterwards by denying even the prime minister all the raw footage from the security camera that was around where (inaudible) actually was murdered. Friends of mine have been in the court and witnessed how the court proceedings were going. Obviously, somebody is trying to protect whoever is responsible for those things, and precisely unless we get to the bottom of it, remember that since 1976, not a single murder in Turkey has actually been uncovered and has come to a conclusion.

On the energy issue, for those of you who don't know -- and I'm sure it was just pure coincidence -- five days prior to the elections, the Turkish energy ministry announced that Turkey and Iran had signed a preliminary agreement to move both Iranian and Turkman -- gas from (inaudible) into Turkey through pipelines and onto Europe, and obviously this was not something that the United States administration really wanted to hear. They strongly protested and

all that. In my view, this was basically a way of Turkey -- again, just like perhaps in the free trade agreements -- raising the flag and saying hey, I am here and if you don't want to be dependent on Russia both for the routes and the sources, you can't do without me, so, hey, are you hearing me? -- don't tramp on me. And that was basically -- that, in my view, otherwise I don't think Turkey is going to be jumping ship and ally itself with Russia and Iran as, by the way, some of our retired military officers today actually want, and that brings me to the officer's question.

It's going to be very difficult for the officer corps in general to actually take to actually take a step down in terms of the amount of political power and privilege that they have been -- that they have enjoyed since before the Republic was founded, and part of it is reaction to this, part of it is that indoctrination that certain things are not acceptable in the country, but 47 percent of the vote is really a very, very loud message that maybe the country has transformed in such a way that trying to actually run the affairs of the country as if we were still in the 1920s and the '30s -- even in the 1980s, by the way -- is not such a smart idea. So, with -- and, by the way -- I think tomorrow the higher military counsel meets and that's when the military first meets the prime minister, and we'll see how that meeting is going to go, what they're going to talk about, and who's going to be sent to retirement, because this is the counsel that decides who's going to be promoted and who's going to be sent to retirement, and the

choices, especially in the low echelons, will give us a very strong message, in my view, in terms of where the military is actually evolving as an institution.

And for those of you who wonder but didn't have the courage or the right to ask the question so that my boss will not be angry with me, the process of electing the president will start with the process of electing the speaker of the parliament, which should start on the fourth of August on Saturday. Within about ten days, the speaker ought to be elected -- the parliament has its own administrative bodies in place -- and then we kick off the presidential election process, which, for all intents and purposes, ought to be over by about the end of August, and I think since we are in uncharted waters, we will also have simultaneously the process of forming the new government, and we'll see how that goes. My expectation is -- and I may be wrong -- that the prime minister may choose to actually play for time and see the presidential election through first before it actually sends its cabinet for approval, because, as you know, the prime minister and the current president do not love one another deeply, and the prime minister would probably rather have a president to whom he can submit a cabinet without the president telling him who not to have in the cabinet. But that is just speculation. It may not happen that way. Thank you.

MR. PARRIS: As anticipated, that was a tour de force. Thank you for being with us again, and we look forward to seeing you on this podium again at some point in the future.

Let's give him another applause.

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