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**PARTICIPANTS:**

**Moderator:**

MARK R. PARRIS  
Visiting Fellow, Foreign Policy  
The Brookings Institution

**Introduction:**

ARZUHAN DOGAN YALCINDAG  
Chair, Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD)

**Panelists:**

ÖMER TAŞPINAR  
Nonresident Fellow, Foreign Policy  
The Brookings Institution

SOLI OZEL  
Bilgi University, Istanbul

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

MR. PARRIS: I'd like to welcome you all to Brookings Institution on this beautiful spring day. I think this is a nice way to start the first week of after Barack Obama's rather remarkable visit to Turkey last week.

As many of you here know, I think, in early 2007, Brookings rolled out a new program, which we call Turkey: 2007. And as the name suggests, it was supposed to be a one-year program.

Now we made a slight miscalculation in giving it that name. We probably subliminally expected that Turkey would stop being an interesting place after 2007. And obviously, we were wrong in that expectation.

Turkey is as interesting as ever.

So our new program, which we run through 2008 and are now beginning in 2009, we're calling just that; that is, the Turkey Program, which is directed by Ömer Taşpınar, with myself as the counselor.

Now our work on Turkey the last few years has had a number of sponsors. We've received support from the Smith-Richardson Foundation, from a number of Turkish private firms, but our institutional partner throughout this period has been TUSIAD, the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association.

TUSIAD was present at the creation of our Turkey, 2007 Program in discussions that I had as far back as 2006 with TUSIAD's

Washington Representative, Abdullah Akyuz, and with Soli Ozel, who then as now advises TUSIAD on foreign policy matters.

TUSIAD's been an active player since then in determining the subject matter and the timing of the events we've held, including a very successful conference in Istanbul last summer prior to our presidential elections. And it want to make the point the Brookings scholars at that conference called the outcome exactly right.

At the head of TUSIAD literally since our work here got off ground has been our special guest this afternoon, Arzuhan Dogan Yalcindag. Arzuhan Dogan took TUSIAD's chair in January of 2007, and has presided over TUSIAD during what I think I can safely say has been a challenging period.

I'm personally grateful to her and to Strobe Talbott, with whom we've just had a good conversation upstairs, for their abiding interest and support for Turkey, 2007 and the current Turkey Program.

And I'm pleased to say that we've agreed to keep what we believe to be a good thing going through 2009 by renewing the Brookings-TUSIAD partnership for another year.

We have a good and a timely program this afternoon, during the course of which we will be rolling out a very good, very well written, very comprehensive report by TUSIAD and revisiting the re-rollout of a very good, very forward-looking book by my colleague Ömer Taşpınar and my former colleague Phil Gordon.

But first, and we'll have copies of both of those available here afterwards.

But first, I'd like to invite to the lectern for a few words TUSIAD's distinguished chair and our full partner in this endeavor Arzuhan Dogan Yalcindag. Would you please join me?

MS. YALCINDAG: Distinguished guests, friends of TUSIAD, I'm very happy to be back here at Brookings, and particularly on this occasion.

We have just published our report, "Rebuilding a Partnership: Turkish-American Relations in a New Era, a Turkish Perspective." We hope that it will contribute to the debate on how our two countries must steer their relations in a very complicated world.

I'm glad to report to you that the new administration has already carried out on its own many of our recommendations.

The debate in Turkey is just beginning after the successful visit of President Obama last week.

Have no doubt that the President mesmerized the country. Already polls indicate a popularity level of 52 to 55 percent. The speech he gave in the national assembly, his town hall meeting with 99 students were watched by large audiences.

The talk show kept on discussing the meaning of the visit and the messages the President chose to give. And the debate was lively.

I will return to this topic, but allow me to first report on developments since I was here last year.

In the course of the last 11 months, Turkish democracy passed one test after another and demonstrated its maturity.

The Constitutional Court decided against closing the ruling RKB, although a majority of justices agreed with the indictment prepared by Chief Prosecutor.

We were heartened by this politically savvy legal decision since we want no interference in the natural course of Turkey's politics.

The Argona Concaid continued in full force and widened its reach. Some 18 individuals, including retired generals, were taken into custody. They are charged with plotting to overthrow the government and for generating instability, create the conditions to do so.

We support the civilization of Turkey's politics and the clean up of security forces. Yet, I must share with you an important concern.

Procedurally, the case was pursued carelessly, and fundamental rights related to due process, to privacy, and to presumption of innocence may have been violated.

Our President, Abdullah Gul, went to Erivan to watch a soccer game between the national teams of Armenia and Turkey. The diplomatic opening between the two neighbors continued, and we hope that a breakthrough will take place sometime soon.

Turkey took an active stance during Israel's assault on Gaza and relations with Israel were strained arguably, reaching their nadir in the beautiful resort of Davos in Switzerland.

We are glad that no great harm was done to these relations at the official level. Turkey's relations with Iraq grew closer.

Both Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Gul visited Baghdad. Turkish authorities started to engage Iraqi Kurds and the President met with the Prime Minister of Kurdish regional government.

We expect that their assistance in fighting the scourge of (inaudible) will intensify.

The terror that the organization inflicted on all Turkish students must finally and for good.

In the meantime, the Turkish government initiated a TV channel in Kurdish. TRT 6 reportedly became a big hit in northern Iraq as well.

I'm sad to report that not much has happened on the EU dossier. Neither side is enthusiastic about revitalizing the process. They content themselves with keeping it barely alive.

The government seriously misjudged the severity of the economic crisis. Its gluttons to face up to realities and expectancy of local elections led it to postpone any serious effort to come up with an economic program.

Meanwhile, industrial production has fallen dramatically, and unemployment is at historical high levels.

Now we expect the government to sign a three-year agreement with the IMF. We hope that this agreement will also demand an independent tax authority, like the IRS.

In recent months, the abuse by the government of its power on matters of taxation reached an alarming level.

Finally, in domestic politics, we have plenty of evidence for the authoritarian temptation on the part of the government. The election campaign was brutal whereby the freedom of press frequently called to question, and was conducted as a national rather than local one.

There was growing concern that if the RKP remained unchallenged and increased its support, this authoritarian trend will accelerate. As usual, the Turkish electorate succeeded in rebalancing the politics of Turkey.

We hope that all parties heed the call of the electorate and start working on a new type of politics for the future.

President Obama's arrived in the wake of the elections. His messages were important. His commitment to Turkish democracy, his praise for Turkey's secularism, and his support for Turkey's EU (inaudible) were greatly appreciated; as was his message of peace to the wider Muslim world.

The United States made its intentions clear about how it wishes to engage with Turkey and cooperate in a number of issues.

We believe that Turkey has a great interest in working with the United States. Our report identifies the reasons of this and sets up a path to follow as well.

Let us hope that with the President's visit and the warm reception of his messages in Turkey we can look forward to the best era yet in Turkish-American relations.

Thank you very much for listening.

(Applause)

MR. PARRIS: I'd like now to invite our panel to come up and join me here. I think I'll introduce them from a sitting position. Does that work?

We are still in the first 100 days of the Barack Obama administration, and it would be appropriate for us to be sitting here having a discussion about the future of U.S.-Turkish relations under any circumstances given the timing and the where we are in our national history.

The fact that Barack Obama has made this truly extraordinary visit last week to Turkey I think adds increased timeliness and importance to that discussion.

And in a situation like this, the mark of a good policy organization is the ability to produce on a moment's notice a well drafted, comprehensive, well thought through analysis of where we've come and what we have to do in the future.

TUSIAD has done that. They just happen to have such a report in hand. It's beautifully written. I highly commend it to you. It would be an excellent primer for anybody trying to figure out what the next steps ought to be in this relationship in the months ahead.



Soli Ozel was the primary drafter with help from a number of his colleagues in TUSIAD of that study. It's been in train for some months, and he's going to review with us its major findings in a few minutes.

Soli, I think most of you know, is -- teaches at Bilgi University. He has received much of his education here in the United States, at Bennington University and at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

As I said earlier, he is foreign policy advisor to the TUSIAD Board, and we're delighted to have you back with us, Soli.

The second best thing to do perhaps in a situation like this is to dust off a forward looking previously timely piece that is still relevant to the discussion of today, and Ömer has done that.

The book that he and Phil Gordon wrote last year, *Winning Turkey*, a follow up to his provocative article, "Who Lost Turkey?" or their provocative article, "Who Lost Turkey?" has become kind of a pointer reference in this country for the discussion of what went wrong under the last administration and what it's going to take to put it right during this administration.

He will be reviewing some of his Phil's findings as well. We're delighted to have that opportunity with you, Ömer. Ömer is a -- I guess a highly resident non-resident fellow here at Brookings. He also is an adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins, and he also is a graduate of Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

So you've got a heavy Johns Hopkins complexion up here this afternoon.

I think that I will start with Soli perhaps.

MR. OZEL: How much time?

MR. PARRIS: Why don't you take 10-15 minutes?

MR. OZEL: Okay. Can I get over there?

MR. PARRIS: You may.

MR. OZEL: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I have already spoken about this report twice before, so it's like a déjà vu all over again.

And I'll try to give you where this idea came from, the points about the report where the ideas have -- where the idea of writing it came from and what our main message is actually are.

Before I start, it's remarkable how much actually there is continuity in Turkish-American relations despite the rather badly remembered six years during the Bush administration.

And the continuity also underlines the fact that sometimes the messenger is as important as the message. What I have in mind is the following: The President gave an extraordinary speech in the Turkish parliament. And he was not interrupted too often, and his points have gotten across. It was beautifully drafted.

And, of course, there were moments in that speech that reminded one of the speeches that President Clinton almost 10 years

gave again in the Turkish parliament, in which he spoke about how important Turkey was to the course of the 21st century.

And then I remembered listening to President Bush in 2004 with the Bosphorus Bridge and the Ortaköy Mosque in the background who said -- and I swear to you; I'm not exaggerating almost in identical words the same things as President Clinton five years earlier.

Whereas, everybody praised what President Clinton had said in 1999 and everybody fell in love with President Obama when he spoke in the Turkish parliament last week whatever Bush said was totally - - was dismissed. And I think the messenger in that particular case was more important than the message, which actually remained the same.

And in that sense, obviously in Turkish-American relations, as in America's relations with the rest of the world, the messenger is going to be one of the most important components of foreign policymaking for the 21st century.

We undertook this report with the following assumptions of thoughts: That in the post-Bush era, the United States would have to launch a different type -- both perhaps in style and in substance -- a foreign-policy and that Turkey would probably figure as an important collaborator of United States once the new foreign-policy course has taken shape.

Therefore, we thought it would be important to present a Turkish view on how Turkish-American relations ought to be shaped and how relations ought to be conducted.

Most often, the analysis of Turkish-American relations and the course -- and suggestions for the course to follow, from the United States, from this city, where there are plenty of think tanks with a lot of resources who know -- with -- by people who know Turkey very well.

And it's very rare that the Turks themselves address the audience here in Washington, the policymaking audience in Washington and the commentators in Washington with their own perspective of how these relations ought to be shaped and how the relationship ought to be conducted.

So that was the first idea we had.

Secondly, we also thought that in the post-Bush era, a problem that was there sometimes more -- in a more accentuated form and sometimes less so since the end of the Cold War or what exactly was the framework within which Turkey and the United States would continue to collaborate.

And there were instances -- and the most important of those was, of course, Iraq and not just in 2003 but even earlier, in 1990 during the Gulf War, that the interests of the global power, the United States, and the interests of the local power just did not match.

And there was tension and for most of the 1990s, the tension was subterranean, but it was nonetheless real, and it all came to surface in a very dramatic fashion on the 1st of March 2003, when the Turkish parliament refused to accept the government's decree to allow the

deployment of American troops to cross the border against Iraq -- I mean, from the north of Iraq.

Thirdly, we were -- we obviously believed in the importance of the U.S. link, and, therefore, whatever has to be done in order to reinforce this for us was important, and, in that sense, the report would serve that purpose as well.

So the main points of the report are as follows. And I'll just read them telegraphically, since there is not much time, and if there are any questions about them, I'll try to answer those as well.

And the formulation that we had about this global versus local powers interest and how they might clash was -- the recommendation was do not treat Turkey as an afterthought. That is, it seemed to us that in the Western alliance and the big brothers came together. They make up -- they made up their minds, and they decided on a certain policy course. And if Turkey had a role to play, then Turkey was delivered the message as to what it could or should do.

And that was, of course, one of the reasons why there was so much reaction to some policies of the Atlantic Alliance, and particularly the United States. Therefore, our recommendation was if you're going to be making policies that involve Turkey or that necessitate Turkey's engagement, then work through these policies with Turkey rather than telling Turkey about them once the decisions were made.

Our second point -- was -- is that the strategic choice on where Turkey actually situated itself was already made both by the

Turkish military, which does have a lot of say on security matters, and also by the Turkish government. And that choice was, of course, that Turkey should remain an Atlantic ally.

And that, of course, corresponded to again subterraneously driven but nonetheless real fight or struggle within the Turkish military between those who are pro-Atlanticists and those who wanted for Turkey an alternative path that come under the rubric of Eurasianists, although they may not all share exactly the same points of view.

Thirdly, we also thought that it was important not to reduce Turkey's Westernness to Turkey's strategic choices. During the Cold War, Turkey was part of the Western alliance or the Atlantic alliance, which was supposed to be defending the free world against the communist totalitarian world.

But lo and behold, though, Turkey had three coups, several coup attempts, and in every single coup that the United States fully supported the coup makers, and Turkey went through an authoritarian period.

Therefore, it didn't really matter all that much whether or not Turkey was progressing towards a more -- a deepened democracy and a *bombe pour l'orion* democracy was sufficient for the Turks.

And our argument here is that Turkey's Westernness should not be reduced to its strategic choices; that Turkey's Westernness, as President Obama has reiterated in his speech and in all his talks during his visit in Turkey -- that Turkey's Westernness ought to be also understood

in terms of its democracy, in terms of its secularism, in terms of its commitment to market mechanisms, and the values that are collective values of the Western world.

Fourth, we also tried to make the point, and in our judgment either unnoticed or not carefully analyzed, of the underpinnings of Turkish foreign policy, particularly after the late 1990s.

A cursory look at Turkish foreign policy conduct in the late 1990s and afterwards suggests that what President Özal in the early 1990s had in mind, which was to privilege economic relations or the economic logic in figuring out Turkish foreign-policy choices has really become one of the most important priorities of Turkish foreign-policy making; and that Turkey's security was now being seen at least, in part, as a function of Turkey's economic development, which then necessitated that Turkey seek stability in the regions around not for just (inaudible) security reasons but in order for its economy to be expanded and to be a magnet, if you will, for all the regions that surround it.

Fifth, we try to look at the question of Islam's role in Turkey's foreign policy. This is a much debated matter, and weather are not particularly the current ruling party was guided more by its own ideological inclination and Islamic solidarity rather than structural forces and structural determinants of Turkish foreign policy.

And our argument is that although the government had used Islam, the common religion, in order to have a different type of relation with the surrounding regions -- countries, particularly in the Middle East,

still, Turkey's engagement in the Middle East, especially after the American incursion into Iraq and the instability that that incursion had created was inevitable, no matter who was in power in Turkey in our judgment would have done the same thing and engaged with the Middle East. Perhaps the style, the tone, and the intensity of the engagement would have been different.

And secondly, we also tried to show that Turkey's interest towards the Middle East predated the ascent of the AKP to power.

Sixth, again, to repeat an earlier point perhaps that we put the emphasis on the maturing and the deepening of Turkish democracy, which we see as essential to keep Turkish stability -- Turkish political stability intact.

Finally, the critical part, the relations with the European Union, play in Turkey's domestic and foreign policy orientations and the need for the United States to be actively engaged in promoting those relations, and, again, President Obama did so, of course, during his visit. He did so in Strasbourg. He did so in Prague. He did so in Ankara, much to the consternation of -- or especially President Sarkozy of France, but also the German Chancellor as well.

And I am personally of the opinion that in -- perhaps more subtly, perhaps not necessarily more subtly the United States ought to continue putting pressure both on the European Union and Turkey to not let these relations go down the drain.



The issues of common interest for the two countries are, as we identified them, are on energy -- energy security, stability in the Caucasus, stability and peace in the Middle East, and, of course, economic opportunities.

And although structurally both of them seem to have as a goal similar projects, perspectives are very different and that might actually generate some problems.

Structurally, therefore, we see the stars as being aligned in Turkish-American relations, but we now have the important matter of managing these relations, because there are always reasons for the -- for misunderstandings to actually take the relations of track.

And in order to avoid that, we need to have always open and frank dialogue, keep on investing in these elections, and keep the lines of communication between the two sides open, and particularly be very expressive about what the disagreements are, because unless you do that, you may not be able to find the proper course of action together.

There are at least two issues that we identify as possible flare-ups, and one, of course, is the famous Armenian genocide resolution in the U.S. Congress or the choice by the President to use the genocide -- the word, the "G" word so-called, in his 24th of April message. We expect, of course, that after his visit, he may not. He may choose not to use that word.

But that, of course, is a very precarious situation, particularly when it is obvious that despite our (inaudible) objections, Turkey and

Armenia have come a long way to actually make a -- go through a historical breakthrough in their own bilateral relations. And further down the line, Iran may yet be a major problem between Turkey and the United States.

I am and so is my colleague (inaudible) with whom I did ultimately finish writing this report are far more sanguine about cooperation in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and on other energy-related and Caucuses-related matters.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. PARRIS: Thank you, Soli. That was pithy and captured the essence of a very good report. You're up next. Tell us how to win Turkey.

MR. TAŞPINAR: I'll just --

MR. PARRIS: You want to speak from here?

MR. TAŞPINAR: Yes.

MR. PARRIS: Yeah. Fine.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Good afternoon, everyone. Can you hear me. Okay.

As Mark mentioned, this book was written last year, so events have overtaken it in many ways. So, it's no longer that relevant to some of the issues we're facing today.

The good news is that it predicted -- the book managed to predict some of the developments in Turkish-American relations. It

identified essentially the Kurdish question as the most important problem, the presence of the PKK, Northern Iraq as the crux of the matter that fuels resentment towards the United States in Turkey.

And the good news is that on that front over the last two years, there has been progress.

It predicted also that the United States should continue its support for Turkey's EU membership, for liberal and democratic reforms. In many ways, this is a constant, as Soli mentioned -- the American narrative about the need for democratization in Turkey is a constant one.

There are always different approaches to exactly what democracy means, but overall, I think, again, on that front we have not seen a major change.

Another point of the book was to argue that there should be historic reconciliation process between Armenia and Turkey. And again, the good news is that such a process is taking place. Hopefully, soon, we will learn more about it. Hopefully, soon, we will get a chance to understand what exactly it entails. But what we know is that for now about 18 months, there has been diplomatic talks, I understand secretive diplomatic talks, in Switzerland between Yerevan and Ankara. And on that front, too, there is good news.

What has not changed, as we predicted in the book again, is Turkey's identity problems. One of the major premises of our book was that there's a tendency in Washington to portray the debate of "who lost

Turkey" along the lines of "is Turkey becoming more Islamic," and there is a focus, understandably so, on the question of secularism versus Islam.

But what the book tried to underscore was that the real question in Turkey right now is essentially a rise of nationalism, a rise of Turkish nationalism and resentment against the European Union, resentment against the United States, focused essentially on the Kurdish question with the United States and on a process of frustration, humiliation, alienation in European Union, coming essentially from the disappointment over the question of Cyprus with the EU.

On that front, there's no good news. Turkey's frustration with the EU is continuing. The EU's frustration with Turkey is also on the rise.

So the Turkey-EU chapter of what's going on today leads us to pessimism. Again, as I said, Cyprus is the major problem there, but it's not the only problem.

There is also a sense that reforms, liberal democratic reforms, have stalled in Turkey. And that's essentially a product of Turkey's polarization, but also the inability, the incapacity or incompetence of the governing party to translate its huge electoral victory in July 2007 into a new, more liberal, more democratic constitution.

Turkey basically squandered, wasted, the last two years through a polarization of its identity politics over Islam and secularism.

The governing party, after winning 47 percent of the votes, came to the brink of being banned by the Constitutional Court, mainly

because of the headscarf issue, which continues to polarize Turkey. This question of lifestyle, conservatism, Islam, secularism continues to deeply polarize the country.

So the bad news overall is that that polarization, that identity polarization on the question of secularism, Islam, democracy continues to be there.

There's also bad news on the Kurdish front. Despite improved relations between Ankara and Arbil, there is Kurdish nationalism also on the rise, as we have seen in the last local elections.

The Democratic Society Party, which is often rightly pursued as the political wing of the PKK, has won the majority of the votes in the Southeast. The analogy for Westerners when you think about the DTP is probably like Sinn-Fein and IRA. If IRA is PKK, basically DTP is Sinn-Fein.

So this is a political wing winning elections. It tells you something about the mood of the Kurdish segments of Turkish society, especially in the East.

So there is polarization on the Kurdish front. There is also polarization on the Turkish front, because Turkish nationalism is also on the rise.

MHP did well. CHP did well. And AK Party often is portrayed as a moderately Islamic party, but I like to think of AK Party as a very nationalist party as well.

In many ways, it is ideological continuity with the kind of Turkish-Islamic synthesis. This is not a very Islamist party. It's more of a nationalist, religious, populist party, and, in that sense, it represents also Turkish nationalism.

And the Prime Minister's narrative on the Kurdish question has not been very helpful, despite progress with the opening of TRT 6, which broadcasts in Kurdish, which is a huge important development. This was not enough to convince Kurdish voters in Turkey that there's enough progress on the ground in terms of democratization.

So overall, the identity problem is there. The EU, as I mentioned, is problematic, and there is an upswing in relations with the United States, thanks to a new administration who is now willing to look at the Middle East differently.

The fact that the Obama administration is willing to talk to Iran, talk to Syria, engage the Middle East much more seriously in a peace process, despite negative developments in the Middle East, is good news for Turkish-American relations, because part of the problems with the Bush administration era and Turkey was that Turkey was willing to talk to Iran and Syria, and there was this perception of Turkey's willingness to talk to Iran, Syria, and Hamas as the Islamization of Turkish foreign policy. I think that's no longer there.

There is a healthier approach to Turkey coming from Washington, and that's also good news.

However, something that may really change these positive dynamics on the Turkish-American front is the Armenian genocide question. And unlike some of my Turkish friends, I'm not totally convinced that President Obama will not use the term genocide on the 24th of April. He may still do that. A lot depends on whether Turkey can open in a timely fashion its border with Armenia.

And that opening of the border has been indexed now we know to improvements in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and to Azerbaijan

So Turkey's Armenia policy appears to be now indexed to Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh, which I believe is not very good in the sense that we're not likely to see progress on that ground in the next couple of weeks.

So we may be in for some turbulence on the Armenian question. Even if we manage to weather the storm on the 24th of April, who knows what will happen with Congress. Congress may decide to take this issue.

So we're not totally out of the woods with the United States as well.

So I will end on a pessimistic note saying that if things are going bad with the European Union, the last thing Turkey needs now is things to go south with the United States. That would basically take us to the last decade of the 1990s in my opinion in Turkey's relations with the EU, when the Luxembourg Treaty sidelined Turkey totally. For those of

you who will remember, Turkey was basically ousted from the enlargement process in 1997 by the Luxembourg Treaty.

And during that time what kept Turkey really on a more or less pro-Western track was the good relations with the United States.

Mark would know. He was the ambassador. America's lobbying for Turkey really helped in the European Union. I'm not sure it is helping now, despite the improvement in transatlantic relations. I'm not positive, 100 percent sure, that when the United States speaks up in favor of Turkey, the Europeans are listening.

There are major problems and the last thing we need is a deterioration in Turkish-American relations on this Armenia front. If we have that, then Turkey would be having bad relations with both of its transatlantic allies.

And then that would only translate into more nationalism in Turkey, more polarization on the Turkish-Kurdish front, more polarization probably on the Islam-secularism front.

So I'm sorry to end on a pessimistic note, but I'll do so.

MR. PARRIS: Okay. At least you ended on time. There's a virtue in that.

Let me ask our panelists a couple of questions. I thought they were both very good presentations and give us a lot to chew on. And I want to invite a lot of audience participation here in a moment.



Maybe the first one to Soli. You made the point that, to a large extent, the messenger is the message, or at least responsible for the change in the receptivity of Turkish audiences to hear the message.

There was a new element in the speech in terms of terminology. And I don't know what it means. The terminology is model partnership.

It obviously replaces the term we used in the late '90s, early years of this century strategic partnership, the content of which was fairly clear.

When he used these words, these two words, model partnership, the follow-on clause had to do with religion -- Christian and Muslim. How's this read in Turkey? I mean, what -- when you look at that phrase in that context, is it just a new wrapping for the same old agenda that you largely ran through in your presentation or is this something qualitatively different; and, if so, what?

MR. OZEL: I'll confess to being guilty to have an aversion to all these labeling.

MR. PARRIS: Mm-hmm.

MR. OZEL: I never liked the strategic partnership label. I disliked the obsession with it even more.

So, yes, the President came up with something called model partnership. And a lot has been said about it.

My -- again, whether we really need to have a name for the relation, I don't know. But for me, what this meant was the following,

because if the clause afterwards was a religious thing, the one before that as well was. And what the President said in his national assembly speech was look, we are a Christian nation, but our foreign policy stems from our democratic principles.

So I suppose what this ought to mean in the context of everything that he said is that the fact that Turkey is Muslim and the United States is Christian does not really preclude cooperation between the two as two democratic countries. That is how I would read it, and, as such, I would welcome it.

I don't think this is -- I don't think this was meant to say okay, a Christian country and a Muslim country whatever these are supposed to mean can actually work together, because we know that the United States works with Saudi Arabia, but obviously not along the same principles as those with Turkey that the President not only has identified, but also stressed the importance of.

MR. PARRIS: Would you agree that taking it a step further, it suggests that at least Barack Obama doesn't accept the premise that one sometimes hears in this town, frankly, in certain circles that Turkey's foreign policy has been moving in an Islamist direction over the past six years and that that can and ought to be problematic for a country like the United States? I mean, this suggests that that's not an issue as far as he's concerned.

MR. OZEL: He -- my own reading of everything he said is that he didn't seem to have made much of this at all. In fact, if he made

anything of this religious dimension, it was his dismissal of the moderate Islam label on Turkey. And I suppose it really brings back our relations to a secular level, which I think is very welcomed.

MR. PARRIS: You, sir, I would like to ask a question about your. You're right. I was there. I was actually there at the time of the Luxembourg Summit, and I remembered the dismay and the sort of deep - - announcement of the decision to deconstruct the political relationship with Europe as a result of that decision, as a matter of Turkish state policy.

Yet, two years later, it turned around. And, you know, it seems to me, looking back, that there were a number of elements in that turnaround. One was, as you say, we were urging the Europeans at every possibility to take another look at this.

But perhaps more importantly were two other things that America was doing and Turkey was doing. First is that Turkey was actually carrying out reforms. It was moving towards meeting the Copenhagen Criteria, which I think I see your point that there are things that Turkey can do to -- in its own power to change the dynamic here.

And the second that we were doing we were making Turkey a priority as the United States. We have something called a five-part agenda where we laid out very clearly discrete, concrete areas of cooperation that lent value to American perceptions of Turkey. And I remember the reactions from some of my European Union colleagues at the time, you know, what are you doing? You're kind of muscling into our turf.

And I almost sensed that there was as part of the Helsinki decision a desire not to be left behind by a U.S.-Turkish relationship that was expanding fast and was moving into areas that were profitable both in sort of philosophical but also, quite rightly, monetary terms.

And I wonder if this visit, so early, can reignite that kind of a dynamic. I'd be interested in your comment on that analysis.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Yeah. You're right, Mark. I think it's up to Turkey. Turkey needs to do its homework. Turkey needs to really show strong signals that it is still committed to a European Union journey. And I think that would require a new constitution above all, but it will also require maybe a renewed U.S. approach and Turkish approach to Cyprus.

Cyprus is becoming a structural problem that is blocking many things.

But when you go back to 1997, to talk about Europe a little bit, it's true that the Clinton administration lobbied and was very popular with the Europeans, so trans-Atlantic relations are important, and the Obama administration is popular with Europeans.

And it may achieve a certain amount of its goals. But overall, what really changed from '97 to '99 in Europe was the German government.

MR. PARRIS: Yeah.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Helmut Kohl lost the elections. The Christian Democrats are just genetically opposed to Turkey's membership. It's as simple as that.

This idea of a privileged partnership keeps being revived. The new element here is that back then there was Chirac in power in France and Chirac was to a certain degree more willing to advance Turkey's agenda.

Now there is Sarkozy who is basically on the same wavelength with Merkel and talks about privileged partnership. It takes two to tango.

I mean, if the Franco-German engine is so categorically opposed that loss of enthusiasm in Turkey is bound to continue unfortunately. That requires leadership in Turkey which was have a new slogan and say something along the lines of for the EU, we will do all this despite the European Union. We have to do this --

MR. PARRIS: It has a ring to it.

MR. TAŞPINAR: -- yes. We have to do this despite the European Union. And instead of coming up with criteria, such as Ankara criteria, et cetera, we should just say look, it's not the Ankara criteria. It's got the Copenhagen criteria.

We'll continue our reforms despite the European Union. We'll look at the Cyprus question in a more flexible way.

Another thing that changed in Europe back then was the Greek government. The Greek government collected -- when Semetis came to power, things changed in Greece.

So in that sense, there was also a structural difference.

One thing that I would like to say is that back then Turkey -- Turkey's policy with Greece was problematic, but what really put Turkey -- when you think about it -- what really put Turkey in a position to begin accession negotiations with the European Union was not only the performance between 1999 and 2002, 2003, 2004 but also Turkey's willingness to adopt a more flexible approach towards Cyprus. That's to the credit of the so-called Islamic government of Turkey, the Justice and Development.

They had adopted -- they adopted a much more flexible policy banned the most secular, most pro-western governments of before.

And back then had they said that they would index Turkey's Cyprus policy to better relations with Greece, we would not be here today. We would not have -- Turkey would not have started accession negotiations.

Why am I emphasizing this? Because today we're making a mistake perhaps by indexing our Armenia policy towards Azerbaijan. It's the same narrative.

Had we indexed our Greece policy -- our Cyprus policy, sorry, to Greece, we would not have had basically a chance to begin accession negotiations with the European Union.

So, today, once again, there has to be some wisdom and vision to put things into perspective with the United States, because I come back to my point: If we loose the United States, if basically there is a genocide resolution in Congress or on the 24th of April there is genocide

word coming from the White House statement, I'm afraid we will basically be hitting a very low deepening American -- Turkish-American relations at the worst time possible.

So the wisdom that we showed with the EU we need to show it now with the United States.

MR. PARRIS: Do you want to comment on any of this, Soli?

MR. OZEL: I have two or three things to say. One, of course, if there is a road accident on the 24th, then this new equilibrium within Turkey, which may be actually a bit precarious, will be disrupted. And those who have taken the upper hand, the Atlanticists may no longer have as much to say to a rather suspicious public who will also have felt betrayed, especially after this visit and the sentiments that it generated.

MR. PARRIS: Mm-hmm.

MR. OZEL: Secondly, it is also part of our report that for the relevant future, it is not wrong to assume that Turkish-American relations are going to be the main track of Turkey's relations with the West, and our relations with the EU will have to necessitate the presence of the United States as well.

And to a certain extent, I interpret what President Obama has said consistently as his administration also seeing matters in that way.

That relates, then, to the third point. In 1999, you still had a European Union that appeared to know where it wanted to go. I think it would be -- we would be hard-pressed to say the same for the European Union today.

And I want to refer to just one sentence by Yoshka Fischer who was there at the creation, if you will, at that particular era. In an interview he's given to BBC's "Hard Talk" about five or six weeks ago, Yoshka Fischer said that Barack Obama was the last chance for the European Union.

Now this may be very well be an exaggeration, but coming from him, I really took it very seriously. Therefore, Turkish-EU relations are not going to get any better until and unless the EU gets it own act together and gets beyond the crisis.

And I think both for the sake of transatlantic relations and Turkey-EU relations what the United States will do and how Europe will respond to the United States are going to be very important, notwithstanding the fact that Omer identified that Turkey also ought to going towards the EU as if there was no European Union, and particularly no France.

MR. PARRIS: Okay. I honestly don't know when we have to leave this room. But I'm willing to entertain some questions in the meantime until someone throws us out.

So please raise your hand. And a microphone will come to you, as I call you. And identify yourself before asking the question. There in the back, the first.

MR. SINJER: I'm Izer Sinjer, former Turkish foreign officer.

In 1964, when the late President Johnson sent his infamous letter to the Turkish government then we had problems again on Cyprus,



the Turkish people were furious. It affected our relationship for a long time. But taking a long view, things have changed thereafter. We became again strategic partner.

Therefore, I think there is a great deal of pessimism by the panel members related to Turkish-American relationship. At the end, national interest will determine these policies -- relationship.

We should not focus too much on specific action -- "G" word or this letter or that letter. I don't know what we'll use.

MR. PARRIS: Okay. I take it that's a comment, not a question. If you gentlemen want to respond, you may.

MR. OZEL: But I do take exception. I don't think I was pessimistic about the relations. I just thought -- I just think that they ought to be well managed, and I think that goes for almost every relation.

MR. PARRIS: And I think everybody up here would probably agree with that proposition. Here in the.

MS. OZYURT: Thank you. Ahu Ozyurt from CNN Turkey and (inaudible).

Coming back from President Obama's trip to Turkey, I had the impression that Turkish Foreign Ministry and Turkish foreign policy seems to play the Armenian issue for a couple of months at least. Do you think we have that kind of a time in the White House or in the Congress? And does Washington expect something faster, quicker, earlier?

MR. PARRIS: I'll let you answer that first, and then you take a crack at it, and then I'll give you my opinion -- having been there.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Yeah. Well, I think they are two issues here. First there is the presidential letter, and then there's the congressional resolution. And they're both urgent. In that sense, the sooner, the better. The news from Turkey or the declaration of the opening of the border, et cetera.

Turkey needs a game changer in this town in terms of having given ammunition to those who don't want to use the term genocide, to those who argue that using the term genocide would basically poison the progress between Armenia and Turkey.

So, in that sense, I don't think time is on Turkey's side on this issue.

MR. PARRIS: Soli?

MR. OZEL: There is a debate, as you very well know, in Turkey whether or not the opening with Armenia ought to be announced before or after the 24th of April.

The safe money is on after the 24th of April, when it is known that the President does not use the "G" word, although he may have said every other thing that actually means it.

And then we'll proceed. I think that the -- despite Azeri interventions, the Turkish-Armenia issue is such a structurally important matter for Turkish foreign policy by now that it will proceed. And my expectation is -- again, I cannot judge as well as Omer since he is here, that on the 24th the President will choose perhaps to re-iterate, as he did

in the national assembly, that he has not changed his mind, but he wants to give peace a chance.

MR. PARRIS: I listened very carefully to what the President said in Turkey, both in a formal and an informal setting, and a couple of times he used the expression very soon, very fast.

Having been a White House staffer, I don't think I would want to volunteer for the job of going in on April 22nd and telling him how -- why nothing had happened.

That said, you know, there are lots of ways to, as they say in the financial world or used to slice and dice these kinds of issues. You staff border posts. You announce that border posts will be open on a date certain. You announce that the window will be open at the border posts on a date certain.

There's ways of staging this process to give, on the one hand, the Americans a sense that this is a real process, not a rhetorical process, and that concrete things are happening and, therefore, give the President something to hide behind, but don't give away the store and don't subject you at home to suggestions that you've sold out Turkey's, Azerbaijan's, anybody's interests.

We won't know until the 24th is the bottom line here. At the far side there.

MR. FATAH: Khaled Fatah from VOA.

My question is a Turkish democracy reached that standard (inaudible) to the Kurdish minority; as President Obama mentioned, that's

20 percent of the whole nation. To reach that standard to be a member of that -- to be accepted as a member of the EU or my other -- that as you mentioned for the TRT 6, as a Kurdish, this is the first step -- first steps to from the Turkish state toward to the solve the Kurdish problem in Turkey or is it that some others come in, anyway?

MR. PARRIS: Thank you. That was directed to you.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Yeah. I think the lesson from the local elections will be very important for AKP party. What direction will AKP Party go? Will they really get the message from the southeast of Turkey that the last two years was not really what they expected?

AKP Party's narrative on the Kurdish question, especially after the constitutional crisis, had shifted and became much more nationalistic, much more, I would say, reflective of Turkey's overall national security establishment's view of the Kurdish problem; that the problem is essentially an absence of economic and social development; that if we emphasize services and economic development, the identity problem, the identity dimension will be solved in itself.

That did not work. That backfired in the local elections. So now the big question mark to your question -- the big -- the answer to your question is whether AKP Party got this message; what they can do; what are the limits of what they can do; and whether they are willing to push the envelope a little bit on the question of cultural rights, on the question of basically democratization, and whether they have the support of the Turkish military to do that.

Those are the critical questions. I think it's safer for AKP Party to address all these questions in the framework of a pro-EU democratic liberal constitution that will emphasize human rights, citizenship rights, freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of the press, which will leave no doubt about Turkey's pro-democracy agenda. That's the safer bet.

Whether it will satisfy those who really want minority rights, cultural rights, federation talks, et cetera, the answer is no; probably not.

But if I were AKP Party, I would basically interpret the defeat that they suffered in the Diarbaker, in the southeast as the need for more democratic reforms.

MR. PARRIS: Here in front.

MS. POPULIOUS: Elaine Populious from the Caucualist Program at Harvard.

To pick up on these issues, I want to push you a little bit on the election results and what they mean for sort of the next three years, the selection for years. No matter where we stand now in terms of reform in Turkey, I think it would be hard to argue against the fact that up until about 2005 the speed of reform is quite fast and perhaps at a level unseen since the years of Özal and Atatürk.

There was real passion for reform, it seemed. AKP was sort of the darling of the world at that time. And certainly Erdogan appeared as a charismatic leader, very impassioned and very much believing in reform.

The election results sort of in a way suggest that charismatic leadership in Turkey has been routinized; that now the labors of governing and reforming have kind of come home to roost.

So with all of the economic problems ahead, with the events over the last year and a half, with the virtual almost shutting down the party, how much appetite will AKP and the Turkish public really have for serious reform?

I mean, will all the attention be focused on reviving the economy, fighting unemployment, spurring growth and what's going to be left for really instituting these reforms in light of all of the problems with the EU that seem to have this sort of chicken and egg cyclical back-and-forth. I mean, what can we really expect in the next three years?

MR. PARRIS: Let me ask Soli to take the first cut at that, and then you can comment on his comment?

MR. TAŞPINAR: Sure.

MR. PARRIS: From ground zero in Turkey.

MR. OZEL: Yeah. I mean, two weeks ago, exactly two weeks ago, we had a panel again on the elections. And the election results are intriguing. My own view is in aggregate they were superb results because they kind of balanced the power of the AKP in a situation whereby Turkish democracy does not have any checks and balances that are institutionalized, because we don't really have autonomous institutions.

But when you look at it at a more micro level than what -- the picture you have is of one national party; that is, the AKP, and then three regional parties.

And unless those regional parties, at least two of them, also can become national parties, it will be very difficult to actually put all the -- turbines of off the engine --

MR. PARRIS: All the gears.

MR. OZEL: -- okay. To put Turkish democracy in full gear. And the first step, of course, we will be waiting from the Prime Minister and which one is -- what will he do? I mean, he already made a gesture obviously when he decided and, in fact, the way he does these things is in a way not terribly democratic. He said, okay, let May 1st be a holiday.

Last year, you know, we cracked heads because of May 1st. Is this going to be the path he will choose or is it going to be a more hardened path I really don't know. And partially, the absence of reform after 2005 had many reasons. One of them was the way the EU "betrayed" the Prime Minister on Cyprus in particular; then Sarkozy and all that, but also because there was really no opposition in the country that put pressure on the ruling party for democratization.

For me, they could have taken the democratization road, even when they were challenged by the Constitutional Court after the really incredible win in July of 2007. They chose not to.

So, if today, as well if the opposition doesn't really push them from the left so to say and continues to be more nationalist than the AKP

actually is, it may still prove to be very difficult for the AKP to actually change course.

My -- I mean, relating to what Omer has said earlier about the Kurdish issue as well, will the Prime Minister finally decide that he can actually shake the hand of Ahmed Turk and not be contaminated.

I mean, the thing is if the Kurdish issue is our major issue and if we want to really solve it politically, then whether we like them or not -- and I think the DTP is not a good party; it is not a very imaginative party -- it is still the institution when one must start. And by negating them, you really don't get anywhere.

And obviously, the worse the Kurdish issue gets, the more reaction there is going to be from Turkish nationalism, and that will then, again, although the aggregate picture looks wonderful, on the micro level, we will have more and more tensions. And it's not going to bode well for the country. Omer?

MR. TAŞPINAR: I agree. I don't have much to add. The difficulty right now is that the climate that was present in 2002, 2003, 2004 in Turkey was basically a climate of enthusiasm for EU membership. And these reforms, these democratic reforms, that could have polarized the Turkish military, civilians, political parties was not really polarizing, because there was hope that we would start accession negotiations. There was a clear goal.



That goal is no longer there. The big question now is whether Turkey's domestic dynamics are conducive enough to democratization.

And there, this requires a national consensus, partly on identity issues, on the question of Islam, on headscarf issue, on cultural rights for the Kurds.

I mean, but those are issues that challenges the very fundamental principles of the Turkish Republic. The beauty of the European Union was that it was giving Turkey an opportunity to have a kind of post-Kemalist liberal democratic consensus without denying the achievements of Kemalism; that Kemalism is important. We need to be secular. We need to be a nation-state, but we need to become a liberal democracy -- a transition from being illiberal to a liberal democracy.

Right now, it requires for AKP Party to adopt a new narrative, a much more conciliatory narrative towards the Kurds, a much more embracing narrative towards the secularist paranoia in Turkey that is still there.

And I'm not sure if he has the vision, the willingness to do that.

My interpretation of what the local elections was that this is not a defeat for AKP Party. This is actually not bad as a result. Let's not forget this political party has been in power for seven years, and they have been running these municipalities for the last 15 years, if you think of the continuity in political Islam in Turkey.

After 15 years of being in power in Istanbul and Ankara, they're still winning these two huge cities of Turkey; and winning 40 percent, 39 percent after seven years in power, despite an economic crisis, despite an establishment that has tried to ban them, despite an electronic coup attempt, a coup manqué so they called it a couple weeks ago -- they're -- they're not -- they're doing better than surviving in this environment.

And the alternative is basically a political party such as the CHP or the MHP that do not have a pro-EU vision and that would only polarize Turkey even more.

So --

MR. OZEL: One can say, of course, that they -- it's not despite, but because of the coup manqué and everything else that they maintain their popularity. Again, this is a premature thought or not well thought out opinion perhaps, but I really think that we have indications that the old-fashioned identity problems around the Islamic issue and especially headscarf issue are going to be as critical as they used to be quite frankly, because one of the striking things about the elections was how finally with good political canvassing, the CHP was finally able to get into working-class districts and get some votes from those districts.

In my view, the econ -- two things. One the cultural politics have run their course almost everywhere, and I think they are no longer as potent a narrative as they used to be, number one.

And second, in a period of economic crisis, I think last issues finally begin to become more important than they were before. And I'm not sure that the AKP actually understood this. And watch why Saudet, which is the twin of the -- the smaller twin of AKP irritated them when especially their candidate for mayor of Istanbul said the ones who are driving the four-wheel drive -- I don't know -- zillion gallon --

MR. PARRIS: SUVs.

MR. OZEL: -- trucks -- SUVs -- can -- that these guys -- these women, whether or not they wear headscarves, cannot be identified as on the same plane as those who struggle to make a living and all that. And it really related them because it showed that primarily the AKP has been the engine for a new, more conservative middle-class, which has its own cultural paraphernalia and all that. But that does not obviate class issues, and the class issues are far more excited today than they were six and six and half years ago.

Therefore, I personally think the cultural narrative is not going to be as potent from now on.

MR. PARRIS: Is that what May Day was about?

MR. OZEL: Excuse me?

MR. PARRIS: Is that what May Day was about?

MR. OZEL: I don't know what May Day was about, but it may very well have been.

MR. PARRIS: It's a class (inaudible).

MR. OZEL: It's a class thing; yeah. It's a class thing.

MR. PARRIS: Let's see. Over here. This side.

MR. MARCHROSIAN: My name is Vaughn Marchrosian.

My question is I guess the case of the Armenian genocide is there? And by the recognition from the United States the Armenian genocide will create as we hear and we've heard over the years and even now that will create crisis between the two countries -- the United States and Turkey.

I would like to understand your view about the topic, and I would like to know what do you suggest or what does the Turkish government suggest for the Armenian communities or the Armenians to do? Do we just forget about the genocide or even the world and move on and make it a thing of the past? Or there's a diplomatic approach from the Turkish government to see where we're going to go and how we're going to solve this issue, because one of the first steps would be to actually call the events of 1915 a genocide. That is the least that can happen.

MR. PARRIS: Okay. You asked the question. Let him answer it. Okay?

MR. MARCHROSIAN: Okay.

MR. OZEL: Two and a half years ago, again in this room, I said that I am categorically, no matter which issue is, I am categorically against legislating history.

Therefore, I am against any government, any parliament, and the executive coming on one side or the other of the Armenian issue. And I feel comfortable enough having signed a petition for which I may yet

be sued and put in jail, God knows -- I don't think so -- that the emphasis on the name, on the title, whether it is genocide or not, first of all, is wrong.

And my understanding is if there is a deal between Armenia and Turkey, it will include the so-called Historians Commission.

Now this is not really a historians' either. It is a political matter, but not a politicians' matter.

So, let the two communities start healing the wounds of history. Now that may take a lot longer than many Armenians, particularly in the Diaspora, are willing to wait. I can understand that. The fact that I can understand that still doesn't lead me to support a legislative action on what the events of 1915 ought to be called -- I -- since especially because they are counterproductive.

MR. PARRIS: Omer?

MR. TAŞPINAR: No, the Armenian community should not move on. The Armenian community here, Diaspora, understandably has transformed this into a political issue. Turkey's slogan is leave history to the historians.

But for that to happen, first of all, there has to be freedom of speech in Turkey and historians who actually think that there was a genocide should not face any problems. There has to be freedom of basically assembly and discussion of these matters. That would convince the Armenian community here that there is actually a debate in Turkey.

And the good news is that there is a debate taking place now, increasingly so. And Armenia and the Armenian community here

should be supportive of Turkey's democratization, EU membership, in order to have this debate.

Turkey is slowly, painfully, coming to terms with what happened. I, too, signed that petition which refers to 1915 as the great catastrophe.

I mean, many Turks would be sympathetic to the view that something terrible, a tragedy, a massacre happened. The Turkish government is willing to engage with the Armenian government into a historical commission. That's a big step, too.

So, there is movement on the ground, and the bigger picture here is to help Armenia and Turkey to reconcile. If that would require the postponement of a political agenda here for a couple or three, four years, so be it.

The real issue is how can we have a historic reconciliation between Armenia and Turkey? And the Diaspora, I understand, is different; has a political agenda; and may have legitimate aspirations and a legitimate point.

But the bigger picture here is to improve the freedom of expression in Turkey so that Turkey discusses this issue without major turbulence. And believe me, if there is a genocide resolution here, it's not going to help democratization in Turkey. It's not going to help Armenia.

MR. PARRIS: There will be turbulence.

MR. TAŞPINAR: There will be turbulence. So, that's the bigger picture that I'm afraid we are heading towards if Turkey does not open the border.

MR. PARRIS: Here?

MR. ZOWAR: Hi. I'm a journalist from Azerbaijan. My name is Zowar.

You know, in 1993, when Suleiman Demirel has decided to shut down the border between Turkey and Armenia, there were two reasons, right?

The first reason is that occupation of Armenian forces of (inaudible) and United Nations Security Council adopted a special resolution condemning the action of Armenian separatists.

But two others were it -- something to do with Turkish government and Turkish policy. First is claims of Armenian site on a present territory of Turkey. And the second one is "G" issue.

So, my question what --

MR. PARRIS: What did he say?

MR. ZOWAR: -- has changed since 19 --

MR. PARRIS: "G" issue. Ah, "G."

MR. ZOWAR: -- "G," yeah. Sorry. Sorry for my pronunciation.

MR. PARRIS: You can say genocide.

MR. ZOWAR: What has changed since 1993 -- you know, three issues which I mentioned that today's government in Turkey wants to reopen the border?

MR. OZEL: Well, as far as I'm concerned, closing the borders in 1993 was wrong. You are absolutely right that the Republic of Armenia is currently occupying Azerbaijan proper as well as Nagorno-Karabakh. It has been condemned by the U.N. Security Council. And there is something called the Mintz Group that does nothing and the situation continues.

Whereas, in deference to the Azeris, the Turks didn't speak with the Armenians. The Armenians and the Azeris came together on numerous occasions in either try to find solutions or chatted away. I don't know, but they had contacts.

Now 16 years after the closure of the borders what good did it bring to Azerbaijan that Turkey did in the close the borders? Did it bring back the territory that is under occupation? No.

It is not unreasonable to suggest that if Turkey was engaged with Armenia, it could have more pull over Armenia so that it might actually start seeing the path of reason and then engage with the Azeris and then find a solution -- first of all, get out of Azerbaijan proper and try to find a formula for Nagorno-Karabakh.

So, as far as I'm concerned, there is no point in insisting on a failed policy. I mean, the more you insist on it, it will look like Turkey's policy on Cyprus that really didn't get us anywhere until 19 -- 2003.



MR. TAŞPINAR: I couldn't agree more. Soli is my professor. So.

MR. PARRIS: I'll take one last --

MR. OZEL: Right.

MR. PARRIS: -- one last question. All the way in the back?

MR. HAZAR: Hassan Hazar, Turkey Daily. Okay. Hassan Hazar, Turkey Daily.

How will the process of the Ergenekon issue and making a new more liberal and democratic new constitution affect Turkey's near future and domestic political dynamics?

MR. PARRIS: Yeah, let Soli take the first chop at that.

MR. OZEL: Well, I mean, my own understanding of Ergenekon, but, I mean, cleaning up all the impurities is a process of civilianization. It's a process of cleaning up Turkey's security forces. And it is also a process of eliminating the more anti-Atlanticist wing of the Turkish military. In my judgment, much of that investigation could not have taken place without tacit or active collaboration of the military.

And to the extent that civilianization is a necessary step for Turkey's further democratization, I think the Ergenekon case has been something good.

Now there is another wave this today, and I haven't gotten any details yet, but somehow I feel a bit uncomfortable with the kind of people that they've arrested in what had gone on.

And we -- there are procedural problems with it, but overall so far Ergenekon in terms of Turkish democracy has been something that is more positive than negative in my view.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Just very briefly, Ergenekon has a tendency to exacerbate its identity problem of Turkey, because it is perceived as a kind of Islamic revanche by the secularist establishment, had it, in a way, polarizes the country. However, the bottom line is that it is really important to pursue it for the bigger picture which is civilian control over the military; and to avoid any kind of future coup attempts in Turkey.

That's the big picture. The problem is that it's exacerbating many identity problems, and it now opened a chapter on the question of whether there is freedom of expression, whether there is really a problem in terms of the reform agenda, whether this is part of a kind of Islamization process of Turkey -- silencing the opposition, et cetera.

The way to avoid such issues, the way to avoid such exacerbation of identity problems or the democracy, freedom of expression, et cetera, is for AKP Party to show leadership and to say look, Ergenekon may take place, but our bigger agenda here is a new constitution. We need to have a liberal democratic constitution. And this constitution was drafted shortly after the electoral victory of July of 2007.

So, there has to be a draft constitution that is waiting there, but somehow has not been debated. And for that to happen, however, for that large consensus to emerge, the CHP and the MHP have to be also

included in the debate and maybe a redrafting of that constitution has to take place.

Otherwise, we will be talking about Ergenokon and polarization for the next couple of years, and we will be wasting a crucial two years in front of us.

Why is it crucial? Because we don't have any elections in Turkey for the next two years. AKP Party is a populist party. They always think about their popular image.

Now is the golden opportunity of two years without elections. So this is the time to adopt a visionary approach and to address the constitution issue instead of focusing so much on the Ergenokon.

MR. PARRIS: Last word?

MR. OZEL: I mean, Turkey is literally a dumping ground for the drafts of constitutions and drafts of Kurdish reports.

So, and --

MR. PARRIS: Maybe (inaudible).

MR. OZEL: -- many of them are pretty good. So, it only requires that there be a political will to pursue them.

But I want to add something which I find to be terribly important. You know how we have frozen conflicts everywhere that are now being on the defrost or whatever. The same thing is happening domestically in Turkey.

You know, those of you who don't follow Turkish affairs everyday, it is quite remarkable that we are now discovering wells in which

people were thrown into acid. We now have a new search for justice based on the testimony of many who have either suffered torture or who have been witness to it and whatever.

In a way, periods of military rule or the so-called emergency measures and whatever are now being questioned. Turkey, remember, never faced up to what its military rulers have done in any of the periods in which they took over.

And there's too many people have suffered. This cultural divide prevented from those who suffered under the military to actually come up and demand that there should be at least a reckoning with all those things. And this is happening. This is happening very slowly, but it is happening.

And this is the kind of course, at the first someone like myself with my perspective, we need to be encouraging.

And it is true that if you do move too fast, then you do generate a reaction and then suddenly nothing goes in the right direction.

But you've got to make those moves and that really necessitates that you have yourself a commitment to actually finish for once and for all with that type of governance in the country.

So we'll see where it will all go.

MR. PARRIS: Well, you two have given us a lot to think about in these weeks ahead as we count down and as we see where this model partnership goes. Thank you all for coming. Please join me in thanking our panelists for a great presentation.

(Applause.)

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