

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

TURKEY IN EUROPE:
BREAKING THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

Washington, D.C.

Wednesday, September 23, 2009

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. TASPINAR: I think we will get started. Good afternoon to all of you. I am Omer Taspinar, the Director of the Turkey Project here at the Brookings Institution, and it's my great pleasure to welcome all of you this afternoon to the Brookings Institution.

It's a great honor for Brookings to host this event with Former Finnish President, 2008 Nobel Prize Laureate, and most important for us in the Turkey Project, a strong supporter of Turkey's membership to the Europe Union, the Honorable Martti Ahtisaari. Strobe Talbott, another good friend of Turkey who will soon come to the podium and introduce Martti Ahtisaari, has been a strong support from the get-go of the Turkey Program here at the Brookings Institution and we have been trying to bring up to date the Washington audience about what's going on in Turkey, and especially the E.U. dimension of Turkey's foreign policy has been a strong focus for us.

Mr. Ahtisaari will speak about the recent report of the Independent Commission on Turkey, a commission that he chairs and that brings together nine prominent Europeans. We regret today that Albert Rohan from Austria who is the ICT Rapporteur could not join us due to a health issue, and we wish him a speedy recovery. I encourage each of you to read this report, "Turkey in Europe: Breaking the Vicious Circle." It

is highly objective, highly analytical and visionary. Most importantly, it is very timely. It comes at a time when we urgently need in both Turkey and in the European Union voices of wisdom such as the voice of Mr. Ahtisaari and the voice of the Independent Commission. Unfortunately, there is a perception in Turkey that Europe is a monolithic bloc and that everyone in the European Union is opposed to Turkey's membership, so what we need to hear I think in Turkey and especially in Turkish media that there are indeed voices and strong supporters of Turkey's membership in the European Union and that the picture is not as negative as it looks when you read the Turkish press and when you look at the opinion polls in Turkey. Hopefully this report will carry the conversation and try to make a case for a new momentum as it did in 2004 with the first report of the Independent Commission in terms of speeding up Turkey's membership to the European Union.

After his opening remarks, Mr. Ahtisaari will take a few questions from the audience and I will moderate the discussion. So without further ado now, Strobe, if you would like to say a couple words.

MR. TALBOTT: Good afternoon to all of you. I'm so pleased that so many of you would come out particularly on a beautiful day when there are plenty of temptations outside. And I hope all of you

get a chance to sample the Brookings cookies which are in the back of the room which we like to think are just about the best in town.

I attach particular importance as obviously you do because you're here to this particular event. It couldn't be more timely, it couldn't be on a more important subject, and we couldn't have a better person to speak to us. Not only is Martti Ahtisaari a great statesman of our time, but he is deeply knowledgeable about and extraordinarily active and constructive on the issue that we're going to be talking about.

Just to add a little bit of historical context, many of you are familiar with it, it was 5 years ago back in 2004 that the Independent Commission on Turkey Chaired by President Ahtisaari its first report. That report had real impact. It persuaded quite a few people in Europe and a number of governments in Europe to open official membership talks with Turkey. Those talks of course began in 2005. Here we are 4 years later and as I think we all recognize and Omer made clear in his comments, the road toward Turkish accession has gotten rougher and it's gotten steeper going uphill. So the Commission's second report which he's going to talk to us about now could not have come at a better time and certainly isn't a moment too soon, because the process of accession has lost momentum. That's partly because of negative statements that have been prominent coming out of other parts of Europe, it's partly because the idea of a

privileged partnership for Turkey has been put forward not as a step toward accession but as a substitute for it, and I think that both of these phenomena have played a role in slowing down the process of reform in Turkey itself which in turn has given ammunition to opponents of Turkish accession elsewhere in Europe. So what we have here is a classic vicious cycle. You've got an interaction between reform fatigue in Turkey and enlargement fatigue within the E.U. There is a real irony here which we have to hope doesn't turn into tragedy, and that is all this is occurring more or less simultaneously within a period in which difficult between Turkey and Greece have actually seen some considerable improvement.

Omer made the point just a moment ago that it is a huge mistake, injustice and misperception for anyone to think that the E.U./Europe is monolithic and all on the same page with regard to opposition to Turkish accession. Not only is that not true in Europe as a whole, it's not true in Greece. In fact, there are very strong voices in Greece that see accession of Turkey to the European Union as part of a process that will be in the mutual interest of both those countries not least because the accession process will be conducive to resolving nettlesome issues such as Cyprus, the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the question of air space. So here's hoping that the second report of the Independent Commission will like the first have a salutary and who knows maybe even

a transforming effect by emerging European and Turkish leaders in an effort to break the vicious cycle.

Let me add just a word or two to what you've already heard from Omer about Brookings and our own work in the region. Omer was present at the creation and indeed one of the creators of our Turkey Project here at Brookings which, by the way, for reasons that are more than bureaucratic, I think have strategic and geopolitical significances lodged in the Center for the United States and Europe here at Brookings. That center, by the way, was founded by our friend and former colleague Phil Gordon who is now the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs in the Department of State, and also by Ambassador Mark Parris who joined Brookings in 2007 to help us with this project.

Complementary to the effort that we are going to continue to make with regard to Turkey, we here at Brookings realize that having a comprehensive initiative for Southeast Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean requires vigorous activities in and on Greece, and you will see some evidence of that commitment in the Falk Auditorium next door shortly when we will have as a distinguished visitor a native-born citizen of Turkey. I refer to his All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. He will speak to a Brookings audience on his personal mission which is that of climate change and how it relates to humanity's stewardship of the

planet, and we're going to continue to work here at Brookings on additional plans for the future. This is very much a venture that I'm looking forward to participating in myself. My next foreign trip which is in about 2 weeks is going to take me first to Greece where I will be joined by Martin Indyk, the new Director and Vice President of our Foreign Policy Program, as well as Bill Antholis, the Managing Director of Brookings, and that trip will end in Istanbul.

Staying if I could in a personal vein, let me just say that it is the highest honor imaginable to be able to turn the podium over to Martti Ahtisaari. You all know that he's of course the former President of Finland, he is a paragon of peacemaking and peacekeeping, and in that capacity, I had the chance to work with him, learn from him, I should say work for him as well as work with him, in the 1990s in the task of bringing an end to the conflict in Kosovo. He is also the dearest and most supportive of personal friends. It was just a little less than a year ago in Oslo that I went to that city with my wife to applaud as he received the Nobel Prize which as far as I'm concerned he deserves several times over, and I hope he gets it again. Martti, over to you.

MR. AHTISAARI: Do you want your papers back?

MR. TALBOTT: No, no.

MR. AHTISAARI: Don't believe a word what Strobe was saying. I don't know where people get that sort of modesty, but for me it was extremely important that you both were in Oslo when I received the Nobel Peace Prize because I had wanted to have friends there with whom I had actually worked in different enterprises, and there's no question that the activity in which you and I worked together in 1999 dealing with Kosovo with former Prime Minister Chermudin, and Strobe Talbott, you were the one who was the person who actually made it possible for us to find a solution that was acceptable even to Mr. Milosevic in the end. I was able to support you and that is an important role because sometimes you need an outsider who can say things from one's experience, and it's easier for somebody coming from a small country like I do to do that, particularly the neighbor from neighboring Russia it's even easier.

Let's get to the topic of today. I was wondering why am I in general in the United States. I happened to be in New York attending President Clinton's Global Initiative meetings. I was there yesterday and intend to go again. But I thought it would be a good idea to come and see an old friend and use the opportunity to tell a little bit about our work.

Our work is not directly the work of the United States for once I think because we know and I have learned it over the years that the U.S. government's position when it comes to Turkey and even Turkey's

E.U. membership is very clear. I wish it would be clear in all the E.U. capitals in the same fashion.

Strobe Talbott stated that we started this exercise in 2004. We have been supported in our work I think it's fair to mention by the Open Society, the Soros Institute, and by the British Council. They have been supporting our work, but they have not interfered in any work in our work, so we are a totally independent body. I only have a chairman to try to have a common view among very independent colleagues in the Independent Commission.

Why I got involved was for a very simple reason, that I was still the president in my country when we had the E.U. presidency at the end of 1999, and then we managed to get Turkey the candidate status accepted by the council. It was a unanimous decision, and when I was looking around over the years, I started feeling that it was high time for the E.U. to make a decision and start negotiating with Turkey on membership, that's why this group was put together, and everyone I asked to join was prepared to join me and it has been a pleasure to work with this very impressive group. As Strobe Talbott mentioned, our first report came out roughly 5 years ago in September 2004, and soon thereafter the E.U. Commission came with their report. I think we were rather unanimous in

our views. Then the following year in 2005 the negotiations were opened with Turkey.

We have been following the developments both in Turkey and the E.U. over these years. We have visited Turkey, but we started feeling more and more that it was now 5 years and it was time to take stock of what was going on in this relationship. Turkey had been very forthcoming in the first 5 years from 2000 to 2005. When the negotiations were opened, unfortunately some of the leaders in European Union countries were putting in doubt the fundamental eligibility for membership and expressing views that Turkey should never become a member even if it fulfills the conditions. This of course was a contradiction to the unanimous decision of the heads of state and governments taken only a short while before. Other governments tried to reinterpret the negotiation framework also unanimously supported by the European Council, suggesting that objective negotiations could be alternative options besides contradiction to the decision. This is again a total contradiction of the decision of the E.U. Council, because the decision was very clear. The shared objective of negotiations is accession. The following sentence, "These negotiations are an open-ended process the outcome of which cannot be guaranteed beforehand, only states the obvious fact that like in all negotiations, there is no guarantee that the objective can be reached.

But in no means can it mean that the negotiations are (inaudible) toward alternative options. Moreover, by their very nature these negotiations can only have accession as the objective. No candidate country would go through the painful process of adopting the whole legal body of the E.U. if full membership was not the (inaudible)" Turkey already now has a special relationship with the E.U. based on the association treat already from 1963 and Customs Union since 1996. The concept of privileged partnership doesn't seem to offer value and it's rightly seen by Turkey as a gimmick to keep it out of E.U. political decision making.

In addition to these negative attitudes of some E.U. countries, the negotiation process has met with serious obstacles. More than half of the 35 negotiating chapters were blocked, some in connection with the Cyprus problem, some by France because closely related to accession, some delayed in the screening process. Ironically, I would say that blocked chapters include most propitious areas of Turkey-E.U. cooperation, namely, energy, external relations, security and defense. Treatment of Turkey hardly confirmed the decision of the Helsinki Council in 1999 which says that Turkey should become a member of the union on the basis of the same criteria as previous candidates.

Of course, all of this has had negative consequences in Turkey as well. The support for E.U. membership in the year 2000 was

over 70 percent. It has dropped now to 42 percent last year. Reform slowed down dramatically and the pressure on the government weakened. Lack of reforms in turn feed arguments to skeptics in the European Union, thus creating a vicious circle. Our conclusions in our group were that we have to maintain the perspective for E.U. membership through candidate status plus the decision of 2004 to open negotiations because that's the only way we can maintain the reform process further. The hard factor of life is that the majority of E.U. governments still continue to support Turkey's accession.

Then if I look at the report and comment on some of the chapters there that if one looks at the developments in Turkey, the reform process was hindered by internal disruptions in Turkey. The AKP, the ruling party, was under attack by the opposition. The argument was that they were endangering the secular system. There were threats of a military coup, rejection of the Constitutional Court, closure of the AKP Party, plus banned from political life for 71 AKP politicians including the President and Prime Minister which was rejected by the Constitutional Court. Controversial elections for the president, the Ergenekon conspiracy was apparently aimed at the overthrow of the government involving high-ranking military plus the security establishment, increased

clashed with the Kurdish PKK, and most of these disruptions have now ended or at least have abated.

Our conclusion was that the present government must continue the energetic transformation efforts of 2000-2005, in particular, broad-based processes to lead to a new modern constitution, replacing the 1982 constitution which was under military rule, plus reforms aiming at greater transparency in administration, fighting corruption, freedom of expression, rights of religious minorities or communities, new party laws which include the financing of political parties, Article 301 of the penal codes which allowed indictments of dissidents and intellectuals, this has already been amended, but it's still open for abuse. And of course, the acceleration of the adoption of Aqvi Communitaire.

There have been encouraging signs in Turkey. The National Program for Legislative Action adopted in December 2008, appointed for the first time a full-time E.U. negotiator in January of this year, a TV channel in the Kurdish language which runs for 24 hours started in January of this year, and there is talk about Kurdish institutions in universities. This happened after our report was finished, but that will be recognized. Meeting with Prime Minister Erdogan with the leader of the Kurdish Parliamentary Party, DTP, talks with the Alevis, and a law allowing civil courts to deal nonmilitary crimes committed by members of

the military. And Prime Minister Erdogan followed by President Gul visited also Brussels. All of these are indications to commitment to reforms in the E.U. process. There are not going to be any elections in Turkey for the next 2 years, and this should be energetically used by Turkey to push forward with the reforms.

The third chapter in our report deals with Cyprus because I think if there ever was a time when reform and a solution should be found, this is now because there are going to be elections in the north in April of next year and no one knows what the outcome of those elections is going to be. So I hope that the present leaders on both sides, Christofias and Talat, use this opportunity to look for solutions, and I think this is a clarion call for E.U. member states and both Turkey and Greece to support finding solutions to the issues that need to be solved. While we are going around in different E.U. capitals, they are arguing that the E.U. could be much more active in supporting these negotiations. Of course, Turkey has to do certain things in this process as well. Turkey must open ports to Cypriot vessels and according to the additional protocol to the Ankara Agreement, plus the Custom Union, and the E.U. in the same way honor the commitment to end the isolation of the north, in other words, the direct trade issue has to be dealt with which would facilitate also allowing tourist flights to Ercan Airport.

Then there is the Kurdish question which I referred to you already. I think there we have seen a major change in Turkey, and I think that I'm looking forward to visiting Turkey later on this year with my colleagues and we can see how the different reforms are actually implemented in full. The important thing is that there are also major IBRD/World Bank programs against poverty in the process of implementation in the Kurdish areas, so this is important. There is also an important development, increasing cooperation with Turkey with the Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq.

Chapter 4 deals with the neighborhood and regional policies. I think if I look at Turkey over these years, Turkey has played a very important role. It was very instrumental when the cease-fire was achieved between Israel and Palestine, the Turkish government helped the Egyptian government in the negotiations in talking to Hamas, and when the E.U. had branded Hamas a terrorist organization, Turkey could play a constructive role. And it's playing a constructive role in the whole region. I could give you a long list which we also mention in our report of the things that Turkey has been able to do. Turkey has also participated in the peace missions in the Balkans and in Afghanistan, and there is a long list of positive things that Turkey has been able to do.

From the E.U.'s point of view, one has to recognize that Turkey has been an important asset also to Central Asia for European business. And in the energy area, pipelines from Azerbaijan and Russia, Iran and Iraq, in the direction of Europe, and now Nabucco hopefully will be materialized, and the positive role in this sense for the European Union is really important.

Chapter 5 deals with Armenia. Before we finalized our report, there were positive developments already taking place in Turkish and Armenian relations, and after that with Swiss help there have been further developments, and I hope that this will lead to the normalization of the relations between these two countries. It has also opened the much more opened debate in Turkey about the past and different commissions of historians and intellectuals, that their participation in this debate has been extremely important. And of course, President Gul started this with the famous football diplomacy in September of last year when he visited Yerevan when the countries were meeting on the football field. This is all positive.

I think one of the problems that one faces, and this is not only in this connection but elsewhere as well, is that resolutions by foreign parliaments are actually rather counterproductive for efforts to find solutions because they very often lead to a national backlash and lack of

credibility. I would in general hope that they would be less active in branding. I have been looking lately in my organization about Burma and Myanmar and I have been looking at another of number places. Sri Lanka is a good example. I felt very sad when there was nothing and my friends turned to me and said, Can't you do anything? I said there is very little I can do after the Tamil Tigers had been branded as terrorists. It was very difficult to get anyone to try to find a peaceful solution in this conflict. We should be perhaps more careful in making these decisions or branding movements even if they would somehow be involved in activities which are totally incomprehensible. But if we don't have any context and no dialogue, it's very difficult to make any progress of change their minds in their attitudes.

I already referred to the non-Muslim communities which I think it's important to mention that their numbers are small. It's only 0.2 percent or 150,000 people, the Armenians, Greek Orthodox, Catholics and Jews, freedom of worship can be guaranteed, the problems are mainly of a legal nature and you will hear I am sure when the next speaker comes here that there is no legal personality and ownership of property is an issue, and also hospitals and schools. What I heard a long time ago before I started in this commission, restriction on education and training of priests of these different nominations. So this is a small community but it's

an important principle and I hope that Turkey can move on this issue. And I don't see why the government couldn't now after elections more energetically on these issues.

We are going through the financial crisis or coming out of the financial crisis at the moment, but Turkey's economy has been very dynamic. It has been growing 7 percent annually, the GDP growth has been 7 percent, and in 2008, inflation was down to 10.4 percent from 84 percent in 1998. So I don't think that Kemal Dervis is here, but I think he deserves credit for the overall financial outlook for Turkey from when he was Minister of Economic Issues. The budget deficit is 2.2 percent, public debt is only 39.5 percent, which corresponds favorably to the Maastricht Criteria. Foreign trade has quadrupled between 2002 and 2008, and foreign direct investment exploded 10 times since beginning of the decade, from an average of \$2 billion, to \$20 billion, and the banking sector survived much better than in many other countries because they had to adapt already in the crisis of 2000 and 2001, plus the important IMF program that they had gone through. They have still high unemployment at 10.6 percent, and regional imbalances and still a large agricultural sector. But on the positive side, they have been an important market, with a young and dynamic workforce, and we have already said the energy area (inaudible) open to Central Asia.

But if I would write to conclude, what I'm asking when we go around in Europe, we have been in Brussels on September 7, we went then to Stockholm, Sweden is now the Presidency of the E.U., the next day we were in Paris, and the place where we visited was Vienna. We asked for two things, treat Turkey like any other applicant country, stop blocking the negotiations so that they can proceed normally, and normal habit is that if in one chapter you can't immediately make progress, you put it aside, but then you take a new one so that you are not stopping the negotiations for that. Of course, in every negotiations they are more complicated chapters that require more time. The second thing which are asking is don't talk about alternatives, talk about the only call which we have promised to Turkey if it fulfills the criteria. And we all recognize also that before Turkey comes to the conclusion that it wants to join the E.U. after their successful negotiation process, then national parliaments and the European Parliament have to accept the outcome of these negotiations.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is all what I wanted to say to you. If I'm asked in Washington or New York what the Americans should do, sometimes the best advice I can give is don't say a thing because we know what your good position is and very often some of us in Europe react that when there is a statement made by the leadership in this

country you easily hear why are they talking about Turkey's membership in the European Union because they are not members. It sounds a little bit like some people would think that you are trying to sell the neighbor's house. But I have always welcomed that because as I said in the beginning, the positive thing is that if there were a transatlantic project, I could always count on U.S. support for these negotiations, and we need that sort of positive support, quietly perhaps talking to some of our friends in Europe and trying to also encourage them in those negotiations that we can move with the process as we should because I hate to be a member of the European Union if we lose our credibility of treating Turkey in a different fashion than we should. Thank you.

MR. TASPINAR: Thank you, President Ahtisaari for this comprehensive summary and overview of the report and your remarks.

Before opening it to the Q and A session, I would like to ask you a question about playing somewhat the devil's advocate since we probably do not have in the audience many opponents of Turkish membership to the European Union. What is the logic in your opinion of the French and Germans positions when they talk about the privileged partnership? Is it just because there's public opinion and skepticism? Are they pandering in a populist way to domestic audiences because Turkey's membership is not popular due to immigration questions and the size of

Turkey? Or is there something substantial behind this proposal on the grounds that this is the best way to propose something realistic to Turkey, that Turkey itself has qualms and reservations about fully sharing sovereignty with the European Union because of Turkey's peculiar position, geographic situation, the strong opposition sometimes that we hear from the Turkish military that they do not want to share sovereignty the way the other E.U. countries may share it? So in that sense, how can we answer this question of privileged partnership from the lenses of Paris and Berlin?

MR. AHTISAARI: The first thing I would like to remind everybody is that don't draw the conclusion that the countries are united, that everyone shares the same view. That's the first mistake we tend to make, because I always tell about the 1999 negotiations in Helsinki. Who was the firmest supporter of Turkey's candidate? It was President Chirac. He even gave the plane to my colleagues to fly to Ankara in an attempt to finalize the negotiations so that we could get the decision in there. So that's very important. My Spanish colleague in this commission, Marcelino Oreja, reminds the audiences when we go around because he was Foreign Minister when Spain was negotiating membership, he didn't mention the name of the person, but he said that the French Agricultural Minister one year after said that the same French Agricultural Minister

became then Prime Minister and President of, but he never said any names. But one year after Spain's negotiations started, he talked to 2,000 farmers in his country and said that under no circumstances could he see a situation developing where Spain could join the common agricultural policies with the rest of the European Union. In 9 years, Spain was a member of the European Union and part of it. So I think we should be careful that these are not the final words. Sometimes I say that I'm only referring to myself, that presidents come and go. We are living in democratic societies and we are not there forever. I was only 6 years in that position. For some it can be perhaps 10 years or 12 years, but it will take years for Turkey to finalize these negotiations and I don't think that the people who are now in charge are going to be around. So let's be not so conclusive of what is said, because situations to change and I think it reflects very much the mistakes I think we all have made in our immigration policies. If I look at Europe today in many countries, my country has very few foreign citizens which I am not terribly proud of. We should have much more and we need much more. But we have not dealt with immigration very skillfully and we have created problems with the immigrants which are of our own making, and therefore that of course has had an effect on the enlargement fatigue in the E.U. which has nothing to do with Turkey. I think we perhaps went a bit fast in the Balkans and that

has had clearly an effect that people are a bit tired at the moment. When I see for instance the countries who lately joined the E.U. and didn't recognize Kosovo, I wasn't terribly happy about that, and I have always been the advocate in my country and in Europe of getting all the countries from the Balkans and Turkey to join the E.U. So there are many reasons, I don't think there is only one, and I would say that we should not draw too far-reaching conclusions about the debate at the moment, but we have to fight it with these sorts of rational arguments that we are putting forward and try to keep people fat so that we avoid unnecessary emotional debate.

MR. TASPINAR: In a way it reminds me of the Turkish saying that the journey is more important than the final destination maybe. Let's open it to questions.

MR. ISULAM: My name is Kan Isulam. I'm with the American-Kurdish Information Network here in Washington. Just one sentence from your report, "Some Kurds talk of autonomy and a few of independents from the Kurdish majority areas of the Southeast, but this would be impractical and counterproductive for a variety of reasons." Do you really think a few Kurds caused the deaths of 5,000 Turkish soldiers and 35,000 Kurds, the 40,000 people who have been killed in this conflict? When you go to Turkey do you ever visit the Kurdish regions? Have you ever talked to a Kurd and asked him what the Kurds want?

MR. AHTISAARI: Yes, I have been even asked to use my good offices at some stages, but unfortunately that didn't materialize. But I think that's a realistic assessment that my colleagues and I have made in our report and that seems to be the trend. If the present regime in Turkey behaves the way we have seen it now lately behaving, I hope that the solution can be found on that.

But my experience always is that whichever conflict I have been involved with that one should also include the immigrant communities in discussions because they are very often holier than thou because they are far away from the reality that their countrymen face and sometimes it's difficult if one does not get their involvement in the discussions to find lasting solutions. But there are no standard answers I have to confess. There are no standard answers. Every peace negotiation that I have been involved with has been sui generis in that sense, that you can't draw and far-reaching conclusions out of those. But I think there is no doubt in my mind that when we have been pushing the Turkish government to move on how they have treated and provided identity for Kurds in Turkey, there has been finally movement on that front.

MS. BABBITT: My name is Hattie Babbitt and I was interested in your discussion. You may it very clear that the committee felt that the trend lines with regard to economic growth, with regard to

Armenia, with regard to the Kurdish set of issues were in the correct directions, whatever the details were, that the trend lines were in the correct directions. You did not speak much about Chapter 5 which is the concern about the Islamization of Turkey, and I wonder if you could expand on that.

MR. AHTISAARI: Chapter?

MS. BABBITT: Five.

MR. TASPINAR: Islamization in Turkey.

MS. BABBITT: The growing Islamization.

MR. AHTISAARI: I know that there's a lively debate on Turkey on the whole issue and it's sometimes useful for other purposes than it sometimes appears. When I looked at my involvement now in this phase in Turkey, I don't see that as a major threat, and that's why those who are concerned about that, I think they should be the firmest supports of negotiations with Turkey for E.U. membership because all the legislative are referred to the constitutional reform, and it's not only the laws but how they are interpreted and how they are used is important. So I would argue that in Europe these sorts of concerns should not lead to the negative reason against Turkey's membership, but on the contrary, we should be pushing so that they will carry out the necessary reforms, in

fact, it's been also we see the differentiation, but I don't see any real worry in this.

MR. MERLINI: Cesare Merlini, of the Council for the United States in Italy. I would like to underline what President Ahtisaari just said before, that the Europeans have different views on the issue and that these views are subject to change. I come from a country which has consistently favored Turkey's membership, but there are divisions inside the country and the issue is controversial, and there are divisions inside the current governing coalition in the country. So certainly there is no risk, Omer, that the European Union is a monolith on this, and quite frankly, I have to say that there are very few issues on which the European Union is monolithic. I wish there were one. But my question is related to the description that President Ahtisaari made of the reforms currently going on in Turkey and slowing down, to ask President Ahtisaari if he has the sense that the Turkish people are committed and convinced about the reforms, because outside one perceives that the reforms and the rule of law, human rights, et cetera, they were pursued in order to become eligible for membership the E.U. This is disturbing for the Europeans because they should pursue that as a value in itself, that even if tomorrow the prospect of joining the European Union disappeared suddenly, that it is not there, the Turks would still want to have a democratic, secular and efficient state.

Also why is it disturbing to Europeans? People especially in this country, in the United States, have to be reminded that membership in the European Union is irreversible, so if you qualify for membership, the European Union has to be assured that the qualifications would remain stable, and since we have in the past problems that emerged after accession, this makes Europeans somewhat cautious about that. You have to understand that. I would like to have your views on this issue.

MR. AHTISAARI: Sometimes I'm becoming rather humble when I have to tell people how they should behave because when I looked at the founding fathers of the E.U., sometimes their behavior at the moment leaves something to be desired in all of our societies. You touched a very important point because if one looks at the latest enlargement process, there unfortunately have been noises made that some of the newcomers to the E.U. have been saying that we have to behave exactly what you said, we have to behave to the moment when people become members, after that we can do whatever we like, and then the rest of us are looking that the rule of law doesn't function, corruption hasn't diminished at all, and criminality is rampant.

But I think we have to make much clear to new member states as well, and the old ones for that matter, that membership in the E.U. is not an end in itself, it's the beginning of a process. It's like a peace

agreement. Then the real work starts. The peace agreement doesn't change the society, it creates in the best of circumstances a framework. Therefore, I think much more needs to be done and we have to use the E.U. funding also to continue to support the necessary changes. I think we easily understand that if people have been living in a communist dictatorship you don't become simply a democrat by declaring that now I am a democrat. It's a long, long process and it may take generations to come to a sort of ideal state and none of us are ready. We in my country are always bragging that we have gender equality in my society. It's utter nonsense. We are far from that, and I'm the first one to admit that. We have a long way to come to a point where those of us who really regard equality in society as important not only in gender but otherwise, that we have to do much more than we have done in order to earn that sort of reputation.

I think one way that I welcome, when I saw somewhere that the Norwegians have produced a very critical report about their own society, was the Human Rights Commission or whatever it is. I welcomed that because I think hopefully other governments, we who say that we are democratic and everything is right, take a similar honest look at our societies, because I very often say that in Europe today we don't have external threats of wars, but we have a lot of problems internally in our

societies. In some countries, it's the total lack of rule of law and enormous corruption. There are a lot of problems that we need to look inside our societies. How do we get the young people to govern their lives instead of destroying their lives? I sometimes argue in my own society that we have created a welfare state but have we actually created at the same time a society that is not feeling well. So there is a lot of honesty in our own analyzing that we need to do.

But there is no simple answer because the countries have to become members of the European Union and when they actually do the formal competence they have gone through all the necessary requirements. Then we can't stop that process, but we have to make it clear to everyone that this process has to continue, otherwise we will have a lot of inequalities among the states and complications that make the cooperation much more difficult than it is today.

MR. LUFMAN: My name is Mika Lufman. I'm a German living presently in Washington, but I'm more often in Germany and especially in Berlin which is a city with a very strong Turkish minority which will grow. I totally could not agree more with President Ahtisaari when he is saying there are no uniform views on this issue, it's even within the parties highly disputed. Let me ask from an angle of someone who knows a little bit the argument of those who are rather pro-European, and

of those who are pro-European, they have the impression that Europe is a rather slow actor when it comes to the international arena, and when you hear preparations for Pittsburgh and others and especially in this country when you read the papers, you are constantly reminded that Europe is a rather cumbersome, big object, slow and not very dynamic.

The question is, what will be a Europe with Turkey as a membership? Because you get the impression that in this process of enlargement, Europe certainly not has become faster, Europe has become in many ways slower. That is not putting in question the question of enlargement, it had its own logic, so the logic of enlarging is a different logic of Europe's role in the world. But I would like to understand how would Europe's performance internationally, if you like, change with Turkey as a member, and in a certain way I ask myself when I look at the G-20 at the moment and seeing that Turkey is a member, and when I see at the same time looking again at the papers in this country here where they constantly try to tell me as a European you had far too many Europeans at the G-20, and if Turkey would be asked you have two choices, you can either stay in the G-20 and be one of these important 20, or you can become a member of the European Union, but then you shouldn't be part of the G-20. What would be the Turkish answer to that? Thank you very much.

MR. AHTISAARI: Thank you. I think it was very important what you actually said. More than a year ago I along with some friends of mine established the European Council on Foreign Relations and I ask you kindly to visit our Website ECFR. We have three co-chairs there, Joschka Fischer is one and Mabel van Oranje, the lady who runs the Elders Group which is a group from London, she represents the younger generation because we were in danger of having senior citizens only in the leadership so I had to intervene and say that we need, first of all, a woman and a younger one, and she has been running out meetings ever since, so I knew what I have been doing because we have been working together for many years.

What was the reason why we established this? Because we wanted to push the European Union to start being an actor in global affairs. But how can we become an actor if we can't be even trusted that we start negotiations with a big Muslim country who is all over in all the other organizations except the E.U., in NATO as well and helping in the Balkans, in Afghanistan? It's everywhere. If we tell them that we don't want to treat you like all the others, where is our credibility? Who would like to listen to a group that behaves like that? So therefore agreements are agreements and they have to be honored, so that's why we feel very strongly and are very critical if people are trying to divert that.

Unfortunately, these recent enlargements have not helped in the E.U. because it has brought a certain tiredness among member states, and the older ones particularly. But we have to live with that and we have to help the newcomers to adapt and change their ways and societies as well and attitudes and try to help them to lower the criminality and get more reliable rule of law. Even today I have Turkey in my mind, and I'm a frequent visitor to Turkey and I think it compares favorably with the latest newcomers to the E.U. with all due respect, I think Turkey will bring a very vibrant society because it's a young society as well. When I was looking at my country in the late 1990s how much E.U. 15 would require new labor, new immigration because of the aging population. Then we were only 15. We required 1.4 million annually over the next 50 years, 70 million new people had to come so that we could fill those posts that absolutely had to be filled. I think the figure now is 100 million. They used to come and understand the immigration policy in the E.U. nowhere. Somebody who tried to develop these ideas was George Papandreou when he was in the office last and I was working with him in order to help him to have a rational debate on immigration issues. But very often when I reminded leaders, some of whom are still around, they said for God's sake, don't say a word before our elections on these issues, so that doesn't help us tremendously, too many Europeans, yes. In general if you

look at the structures in the U.N. or in the World Bank, they are old fashioned. I don't think they reflect how the world is today, and those structures have to change. I don't think that's a catastrophic thing as such. I think it's already welcomed that we have the G-20 or sometimes the 22 or 24 in different combinations, but that's already a broadening and I don't know why we should be afraid. There are of course those who say how can Turkey ever be the president country or Europe? I said why not? What's wrong with that? I don't see. Where is the self-confidence? At least I don't feel at all uncomfortable having Kemal Dervis there to run the E.U. meeting or President Gul or whoever. I would feel extremely comfortable with these competent people. But I start lecturing too much, so cut me off, Strobe.

MR. CUSTAS: My name is Thomas Custas from Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich, Germany, as well. I'm asking this question as a young European.

MR. AHTISAARI: Good.

MR. CUSTAS: I'm very glad that I have someone who is so experienced as you in front of me. We inherited this project, the European Union, without getting an explicit answer for what are we aiming at. I have Turkish friends and we both have this same problem. We see a new project, a European Union, we should be both part of it. We think we

agree on that, but we all have the same issue of where are we going after that. Turkey is part of the European Union, where are we aiming at? What is our goal? So I would be very grateful if you could share your vision of the European Union for me. Thank you.

MR. AHTISAARI: To be absolutely honest to you, I don't know what will be there at the end of this process, but I know what I want. I want the Balkan countries in and I want Turkey in. There may be others coming in years to come, but I sincerely hope that we will succeed, that the Irish will now in their wisdom vote in favor of the Lisbon Treaty and we get it done so that we can also -- administrative and decision-making capabilities in the E.U. that are of this day. Otherwise all this process will become difficult. But I don't think there's any disagreement on getting this group in and that will take already 10 to 15 years in my mind before that can happen. In the meanwhile I think perhaps we should continue with the discussion that takes place already, where does it end? Will Russia be one day democratic, less corrupt and more predictable? Could that be an E.U. member state? I think these are issues that it will take time, and I don't know whether the Russians have any desire to join. I hope they would, because then at least that would be an indication that they would like to share the same values, but that would be a long, long, long way

ahead of us, but everyone I think would like to see a democratic, predictable Russia in Europe.

So I can't give you a list of countries where we close the door and say that this is it. It's not possible. At least I'm not in a position to give you that answer. But I want the E.U. to be a full partner in transatlantic relations with the United States. I have lived 13 years in this country when I was with the U.N. and I'm very fond of transatlantic cooperation because that's the only way that we can influence the developments in this world for better for all of us, not only for us in the U.S. and Europe, but the rest of the world as well. And I think that again I see a very prominent time for this sort of cooperation. We have to be capable also in Europe on the other side of the Atlantic to be a full partner in this.

MR. SCHULT: My name is David Schult. I just finished working with the Special Adviser for Transatlantic Relations at the European Parliament and I had a question about this monolithic force of Europe. Just from my experience, I'm a young person but I've had experience with it, it's more like a Hydra where you have multiple heads and they're even nipping at themselves. You have Parliament, the European Council, national parliaments. I was just curious, all of them have some in some way, some type of picking at Turkey, and I was

curious if the Turkish government has the resources and the sustainability to hit all of these, to accept these challenges and to quell them even 10 to 15 years, as long as it takes until Turkey is a European Union member.

MR. AHTISAARI: Of course, my argument to Turkish friends would always be that whether you join the E.U. or not, I think this is a worthwhile exercise to go through the necessary reform processes, and I think the majority of the Turks feel that way as well. And we will see in due course, but so much has happened during this period that we have been looking at Turkey, so I am optimistic. So economic cooperation and political cooperation continues and I think that has a positive effect as well. It requires that you have leaders in the country that are prepared to push these reforms forward, but I would not be wasting my time if I didn't believe that the Turks are capable of doing it. There are other things I could gainfully do.

MR. TASPINAR: I think we have time for two more questions.

MR. NAPIT: Thank you very much. My name is Hipe Napit and I'm from Public TV for Armenia. Mr. Ahtisaari, you mentioned that genocide recognition is counterproductive, but don't you think also that the recognition of the Armenian genocide by numerous parliaments in the world became also kind of a motivation or reason that forced Turkey to

handle the Armenian case and stirred up interest in Turkey and Turkish society toward the Armenian genocide because millions in Turkey were not actually not aware of the Armenian genocide? Also just a short example, Prime Minister Erdogan made his offer to form an historical commission which would deal with the Armenian question in 2005 after recognition of the Armenian genocide by several parliaments in Europe especially. So is there also any kind of linkage that the recognition actually are not counterproductive just moved Turkey to handle the Armenian case more sincerely? Thank you very much.

MR. AHTISAARI: I don't think Turkey with all due respect is any different than the rest of us, because in all honesty, I always say that if I look at Europe today, the only country that has looked hard at its history and what went wrong is Germany and nobody else. None of us have really taken a hard look at what went wrong in our societies those that have to do that. So I always tip my hat for Germany. The second thing, I give for Germany and the leaders that I have worked with over my long life that they have been very good in running their foreign security via the structures of the E.U. more than many other countries. You have been always sure that you could count on Germany supporting those. That was not happening.

So that as a background to what you were saying, as I said earlier, sometimes we stymie the development if there are these sorts of resolutions. I understand why it is done, because people and the immigrant communities as I said are holier than thou and that see their role very often as supporting and maintaining a very strict line. But I'm not so sure whether these are the reasons why these issues are finally being discussed. Sometimes these offers are made for historical commissions for instance and they are not picked up. We have seen that as well that it has not necessarily happened. And let's not forget that there have been intellectuals, 20,000 or 30,000 ---

MR. TASPINAR: Thirty-five thousand.

MR. AHTISAARI: Thirty-five thousand intellectuals finally because they came later, some of them, who apologized for what happened. I think we should pick up these sorts of things and run with them. I think these meetings with historians are important. That's the beginning of the process. But I think we all have to look in the mirror and say do we all have clean cards on these issues because I don't think we do. There are issues that still need to be discussed in my own society again. So I welcome what is now happening because I think it will have a very positive effect on the Caucasus if we can have Turkey and Armenia able to live positively side by side.

MR. TASPINAR: In the long run would you support membership for Armenia? In the long run would you support like Armenia and Georgia as members to the European Union?

MR. AHTISAARI: I don't know even whether they have asked for it. Let's see whether they come with a proposal. Then we have to take a position on that.

MR. TASPINAR: Last question at the very end.

SPEAKER: I'm Turkish from Johns Hopkins University. I'm a Turkish graduate student. I have a question about this time schedule. For example, considering all these big questions, Armenia, Cyprus, the Kurdish issue, when you try to predict something about Turkish accession, how can you at least realistically put a time schedule? Because then the question would be the only thing for example among my friends when we were studying in Turkey that we could think of is like an exogenous shock to the whole international system which would actually force the European Union into accepting Turkey like a second cold war or something like that. So when there are these long-term predictions on the way, so what can you talk about like 10 years, 15 years, later Turkey --

MR. AHTISAARI: I didn't say in the Turkish case, I said there are many of these processes including the Balkans. That was not referring to Turkey. It's an importation question to raise. For instance, if

you would only deal with two chapters half-yearly, every presidency deals with two chapters, four in a year, you can count yourself how many years it will take to cover the 35 chapters, and sometimes you can't handle all of them at the same time. We have never said how long it will take Turkey to go through this process. That will depend on negotiations. But what we have said is let's not have artificial obstacles on Turkey in these negotiations because that's not an honorable thing to do, and I don't want to be in a Europe that doesn't behave honorably and I hope none of us Europeans do that. So no timeframes because you can't put any artificial timeframes there. I hope as soon as possible. Whoever is trying to become a member, they have to go through the same middle, and I'm not promising any favors to anybody because that's the whole thing as well, that you have to deal with everybody in the same fashion. I hope it doesn't take forever.

MR. TASPINAR: In the long run we're all dead as Keynes used to say.

MR. AHTISAARI: And I have to tell you that I said very carelessly in one of the receptions in Istanbul years ago that I want to be the Chairman of this Independent Commission of Turkey as long as Turkey becomes a member state. I'm 72 now and a Russian palm reader in Rome, I haven't dared actually to see palm readers very often, but I was

there on U.N. business with the Italian authorities and the earlier time when I went to see a palm reader was in my country when I was 15 and I took my girlfriend there to see an old lady in city where I lived in Finland, and this famous lady in Oulu in Northern Finland where I went to university then later looked at my hand and said, "Nothing will come out of this romance." So after that I had to wait for nearly 60 years to go to a palm reader near the Piazza Navarro and it happened to be a Russian lady. I saw that she was reading a Russian newspaper. She looked at my hand when I sat with great difficulty on (inaudible) chair on a sloping terrain, she said, "You have problems with your knees." I said, I used to have. Not anymore. The second thing, the lady said, "You are not a very easy person in a personal relationship." I said, if you would ask my wife, possibly she would agree. But then gave the better news, "Next year will be an excellent year for you." I happened to get the Nobel Peace Prize, so I give the lady credit. But then the best thing, "You will live up to 90." So every time I go to Rome I try to find this lady so I would have a second reading. Perhaps she would give me five more years. But I still stick to 90 and I am happy with that and hopefully before that Turkey will be a member of the European Union. Thank you very much.

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