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TURKEY'S KURDISH QUESTION:
NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. VAÏSSE: My name is Justin Vaïsse and I am the director of research for the Center on the U.S. and Europe which has put together this event, and I'd like to thank TUSIAD and our other private-sector contributors who have supported us during the last few years in our work on Turkey. In the past 12 months, Turkey and its foreign policy in particular have been a matter of controversy whether on Iran, on Israel, on the Armenia question and the nonratification of the Turkish-Armenian Protocol. Less discussed has been the issue of Kurdistan and the Kurdish question, in particular the Kurdish opening launched by the AKP government. In many ways, Turkey's lingering problem with its Turkish minority remains the country's Achilles' heel. The AKP faces multiple challenges on this front and this issue has the real potential to shape the election of next July. Even more broadly, the future of Turkish democracy and the success of its regional foreign policy may depend on how well Ankara handles the expectations of Turkey's Kurdish community and the expectations created by this opening in particular.

To discuss these questions, we have three excellent experts and I will very briefly introduce them in the order in which they will make their introductory comments. To my left, Dr. Gönül Tol will give us the view from Ankara I would say, the domestic policy consideration view. She is the director of the Center for Turkish Studies and scholar-in-residence at the Middle East Institute. She received her Ph.D. from Florida International University 2 years ago. She has worked for TUSIAD U.S. and at the Middle East Institute. The focus of her research is Islamist movements in Western Europe and the Middle East and radicalization processes, immigration, ethnic and religious identity formation and the institutionalization of political Islam.

Second in the order of speakers will be Henri Barkey. He is a visiting

scholar in the Carnegie Middle East Program and a professor at Lehigh University. He is well known to many of you as an expert on Turkey, the Middle East, U.S. foreign policy and energy. More importantly, he is one of the former experts on the Kurdish question. He travels frequently to the region, indeed he was there a month ago and is getting back in a few days as I understand, and he will give us the view let's say from the region and also a few domestic considerations.

Last to speak is our own Ömer Taşpınar, who is a professor in national security strategy at the U.S. National War College and the director of the Turkey Project that we have here at Brookings. We hope to get from him the view from abroad on how this Kurdish question interacts with relations with the EU in particular and the U.S. as well. Ömer was previously an assistant professor at Johns Hopkins University at CSIS from where he holds his Ph.D. and his research focuses on Turkey-EU and Turkey-American relations, European politics, transatlantic relations and Muslims in Europe.

I've kept these bios very short, but the three of them have had great publications and I thought we might jump into the issues because we have a lot on our plates and so I will first give the floor to you, Gönül.

MS. TOL: Thank you. Thanks for inviting me. I would like to provide a very brief overview of the Kurdish opening. In summer 2009 the PKK's captured leader Abdullah Ocalan made an announcement saying that he had a roadmap for the resolution of the Kurdish question, and in July 2009, the same year, the AKP, the government, announced that the party had their own plan, their own program, for the resolution of the Kurdish initiative. I think Ocalan's own statements started the momentum within the party and the Kurdish initiative was a kind of preemptive attempt. The Kurdish opening didn't have any concrete policy changes in it so it wasn't a concrete

roadmap, it was rather a very vague program intended to trigger public debate on the Kurdish question and start a reform process. It did have some specific proposals such as amnesty for PKK members, public instruction in Kurdish at the university level, the changing of "Turkified" local place names in the East, and most importantly, a new and democratic constitution. Of course, the long-term results of the Kurdish initiative are quite unclear but I think it did three things. First, the opening triggered an unprecedented debate on all aspects of the Kurdish question including the issue of secession. Secondly, it involved serious opposition both from the opposition parties from outside of the government constituency and within the AKP's own ranks. Third, in a few months both the nationalist opposition and the pro-Kurdish DTP called the opening bad. The nationalist opposition pronounced the opening as treason and the pro-Kurdish DTP pronounced it as just another attempt to marginalize Kurdish opposition.

Certainly the Kurdish opening is the boldest attempt in the history of the republic but it's not the first. There were some abortive opening attempts in the 1990s, in 1991, and in 2005 by the AKP itself. These attempts also initiated a debate on the Kurdish question also produced some institutional political changes such as the evolution of the death penalty and legalization of broadcasting in Kurdish. But these attempts did not open discussion to politically sensitive demands such as Kurdish self-rule due to opposition from state actors such as the military, media and opposition parties. Also these attempts had quite limited impact in terms of ending the conflict with the PKK, meeting the expectations of the Kurdish nationalists and even with respect to cultural autonomy.

In that sense, if we look at the Kurdish opening launched in 2009, I think it's much more comprehensive but it has failed. It didn't produce any concrete policy

changes. I think we have to look at the timing of the opening and the reasons for the opening in order to understand its failure. I think there are two groups of factors. First, structural political factors and perceptual factors and I would like to consider structural political first versus external factors and internal factors. Externally there have been some changes within the region that affected this whole Kurdish opening process. The first one is closer economic cooperation with Iraq's Kurds. Only a few years ago Turkey did not even recognize the Kurdish regional government because it believed that recognition would embolden its own Kurdish minority to demand similar status. But with deepening relations with the KRG there is some kind of economic interdependence between the two actors and this economic interdependence made KRG's support for possible separatism unlikely so that it eased the tensions and the fear among both the military establishment and the governing party.

Second, agreement with the U.S., with Iraq, with Iran and Syria, the major actors in the region against the PKK weakened and isolated the PKK in the region. Third, Turkey's EU accession process provides an external anchor, but it has affected the process to some extent because the EU encouraged peaceful resolution so in that sense it provided an external anchor. Domestically I think the first and the most important dynamic was the change in civil-military relations starting from 2007. Historically the military has looked at the Kurdish question through a security lens and that's why many governmental initiatives that wanted to address the issue from a social, economic and political perspective was objected to by the military establishment. But especially after the 2007 e-mail memorandum, the military lost ground and legitimacy and this changed civil-military relations and this provided increased autonomy of the civil authorities from military supervision. This I think increased the government's ability to institute liberal

reforms and cases like Erdogan also strengthened the AKP's hand. Another factor is the AKP is much stronger than any government since the 1980s just because of the fact that the AKP has ruled the country since 2002 in a single-party government so that the AKP could take political risks. I think another important factor is the AKP's loss of the Kurdish vote in local elections in 2009 so that there was domestic political competition over the Kurdish vote so that launching the Kurdish initiative would help the AKP in that sense. These are the external and domestic structural factors.

The opening still did not produce much so that we have to ask what went wrong and I think there are a couple of factors. I think the structural environment both externally and domestically was ripe for a solution, but I think at the perceptual level society was not ready for what the Kurdish opening triggered because the AKP wasn't quite prepared for that and triggered an opposition from different segments of Turkey society through Turkey's self-image as a monolithic nation and the opposition used this quite effectively and especially the CHP and the MHP and the AKP could not handle the process well. Also as to the Kurdish political movement's approach, the DTP which is now called BDP distanced themselves from the opening and at times they opposed it, they didn't offer any solutions, they did nothing to ease tensions that became quite obvious after the opening and insisted on organizing a public meeting for PKK members returning from Europe. All of these factors came together and it was a public relations failure on the part of the governing party and these factors came together and led to the failure of the opening. This doesn't mean that the Kurdish opening is dead in the long run but I think it faces important perceptual challenges and that's why success I think requires skillful public relations and democratic debate on the issue. Thank you.

MR. VAÏSSE: Thanks, Gönül. Henri?

MR. BARKEY: Thank you. Let me start with what I will that my conclusion will be in case I run out of time and then I will also try to explain why the Kurdish opening both from how the Kurds are looking at it and also some of the structural reasons and I may go over some of the points that Gönül made but I will not belabor them.

First let me say that I think that Pandora's Box has been opened. If you look at what the future portends I think there is going to have to be movement on the Kurdish question in Turkey one way or the other and if there isn't I think then the prospects for stability in Turkey will look very bleak. The main reason I'm saying this is because there's a major transformation that's going on within the Kurdish community in Turkey which I will elaborate on in a minute.

But the fact that Pandora's Box has been opened doesn't mean that everything from now on is going to go in a nice, smooth way, and clearly between now and the upcoming elections in June 2011 the Turkish government is not going to engage in any new opening or any new moves and everybody's expectation is essentially focused on what happens after the elections. So between now and the elections nothing will happen, but after the elections you will see that pressure is going to start mounting very, very quickly. That said, this process is a long-term process. It's not going to be something resolved over 1 year or 5 years. I would think it's a 10- to 20-year process if one would start immediately after the elections. It would be a very transformative process as well for Turkey and the Turkey that will come out of this will be a very different Turkey I would say.

Why do I think Pandora's Box has been opened? What are the reasons driving all of this? Clearly when you look at it from the perspective of the governing party,

this is a major problem and they need to resolve it. It is an anachronism given what the AKP certainly wants to project internationally and certainly in the region. You cannot be a government or a party that wants to talk about democracy and human rights elsewhere when you have a major problem at home and where you still have very serious potential for interethnic conflict. I don't need to belabor the history of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. It's been very difficult and now we're learning more and more about what happened over the years in the 80 years plus of the Turkish republic in terms of the treatment of the Kurds. The AKP needs it for its own foreign policy ambitions, it needs it for its own domestic stability because this is a party that really believes in stability and not just at home but also in the region. It has very important commercial and economic interests and that is a major driving force of its foreign policy. Imagine if the Kurdish problem were to explode in Turkey what it would do to investor confidence or commercial issues. Finally, the AKP needs to resolve the Kurdish question as a way of completely putting the military in the barracks and essentially locking the door so that the military doesn't find a way to get out because as you've heard from Gönül, the military has used the Kurdish question as a way of introducing itself into politics.

Another important change is the military itself. The military has realized that this is not a war it can win. After many, many years of fighting in the Southeast and it's not because the PKK has bases in Northern Iraq, it's because the PKK is quite solidly entrenched, but also because the issue is no longer the PKK. The issue as I will point out in my fourth point is really about politicization of Kurdish society. The military itself is now looking for alternative ways of approaching and in that sense the military's agreement for the AKP to open up relations with the Kurdistan regional government in Northern Iraq in that sense was important because they were looking also for ways of

approaching the Kurdish question through Northern Iraq through the Iraqi Kurds. But also in terms of the military, the military has suffered a great deal of loss of prestige about its conduct in the war. There have been a number of cases in which the military was caught having lied about incidents which has made the public for the first time question the military's conduct which was something that the public had never done. In the past there were all kinds of allegations and nobody believed them, no newspaper ever published them, but now the mood is different and people are questioning the military's campaign in the Southeast.

Northern Iraq to the great surprise of everybody else is not turning out to be the beacon that will make all Kurdish communities in the region go for independence. In fact, it has been actually a stabilizing force. Again, contrary to expectations, both Barzani and Talabani have played a very calming role especially in Turkey. It has been a place where the Turkish Kurds can turn to and ask for advice and at the same time be a conduit if you want to the Turkish government. In a way, Northern Iraq is emerging as a partner in the process and in some ways also a driver. It's also a calming influence in Turkish Kurds because for Turkish Kurds they know there is a place and the KRG is now recognized by everybody including Turkey which has a consulate in Irbil. So there is a sense in which you're not that traumatized anymore, there is a place called Kurdistan and the Kurdistan regional government so that it is a calming influence.

But I think also most importantly is what's happening within the Kurdish community in Turkey and there I would argue three very important developments. One is that the struggle is moving away from armed struggle, that the Kurds are no longer looking at armed struggle as a way to fight the state as a way to get what they want to get whether it is cultural rights, it is educational rights or it is liberalization of the centralized

Turkish system, whatever it is it is no longer the PKK that's going to do this so that there is move away from armed struggle toward politicization. The other is that they have given up on secession. The idea that they will carve a Kurdistan out of Turkey is now something that the Kurds realize is unrealistic, unrealizable and it is not just because of the way all these states in the world and in the region have been arrayed against them, but it is also the realization that today when you look at Turkey that the Kurds in Turkey live everywhere. They live not just in the Southeast but in Istanbul, and I have never figured out how many Kurds live in Istanbul. I have heard all kinds of efforts from 2- to 5 million, pick a number, 3-1/2 or 4, which makes essentially Istanbul the largest Kurdish city in the world, but it's not in just Istanbul. There are Kurds when you look in the southern coast at Adana and Mersin. It may be that in Mersin the Kurds may even be the majority for all we know.

Obviously we don't have statistics. The point is that the Kurds are everywhere. What does it mean to secede when maybe more than half of your population is no longer in the Southeast and the East? That realization has now sunk in so that it has also helped change the way they organize.

Thirdly is politicization and organization. What is very interesting at least to me, and this has to do with the question of armed struggle, is how the Kurds are starting to create political institutions in Turkey and these political institutions by the way are not necessarily anchored in the Southeast. They go beyond the Southeast and I'll give you a couple of examples in a minute. Ironically from the perspective of the state, even the AKP and the military, this is far more dangerous to them than the PKK. The PKK you can handle. Yes, it's unfortunate that you lose young men in the struggle, but the fact of the matter is it's a manageable cost. What is unknown now is what this

politicization is leading to and I will use one example for you.

Starting a few years ago there was a major political case against 1,800 people. It's called the KCK case where a huge number of people are now in jail including some 150+ mayors and municipal leaders from the Southeast. They've all been charged with essentially creating an alternative institution to the Turkish state mostly in the Southeast. It's a 7,500-page indictment which I have. I can't tell you that I've read the 7,500 pages. Most of it is transcripts of phone calls most of which are not very interesting, two people are talking, where are you? I'm at the party headquarters. What are you going to do? Well, we're going to go some place. We're getting organized. Call me when you get out. So that's in the indictment. You have these really ludicrous conversations but as far as the prosecutor is concerned, even those conversations are proof of some kind of malicious doings.

Like most Turkish political cases, this one is like Swiss cheese. It has holes the size that you can drive a Mack truck through. However, when you look at the KCK and what the indictment is saying, what comes through is that this is a serious attempt at creating a parallel institution for the Kurds. The indictment has the constitution of the KCK and I'm not sure I have it here. So when you read this you realize that this is not a territorially bound attempt. It is for all Kurds. And it is if you want an alternative political identity for the Kurds in Turkey and maybe even elsewhere, for Kurds in Germany but Kurds also in the rest of the Middle East, they're trying to come up with a structure where you are a citizen of Turkey, we're not talking about leaving Turkish citizenship, but you also have citizenship in this thing called the KCK. It is very detailed. It's quite populist and quite lefty. It talks about women's rights, ecology, et cetera. It's actually very progressive and it's fun to read.

That said, you realize why all these people have been arrested, and not because they've committed anything dangerous. There is not a single charge as far as I've read of when somebody has been accused of having put a bomb or having done something really nefarious. It's all about political organization. So then you have to ask yourself do you charge people for organizing politically? Is that a crime?

But let's leave that aside for a moment. In looking at it from the perspective of Ankara, I, too, would be alarmed by how far this is going, this huge case with 1,800, and they're all in jail in Turkey, so that all of these are being accused of creating this alternative organization.

What is this organization going to do? It not only has its own constitution but it has its own courts and its ways of deciding certain issues. I talked to some activists who told me that in fact there is even a shadow government composed of 11 people who make a lot of the decisions in the Southeast so that something is happening. The Turkish government may have put a roadblock in front of the KCK for the time being.

This weekend, for example, there is another organization which is an offshoot of the KCK which having its major meetings in Yabaka on Saturday and Sunday. It's called the Democratic Society Confederation. It's an alternative attempt at creating something similar to that.

What I'm trying to point out here is that there is an enormous amount of political activity and nobody is putting any distance necessarily between themselves and the PKK, maybe a little bit. Clearly this is done with the connivance of the PKK, but it is also done independent of the PKK because the people who are involved not everybody is a member of the PKK. Something in that sense is happening and this is very difficult to stop. It's very hard to stop in the sense that it is political activity. You meet a lot of these

people who are involved now and they've all spent time in jail and they know they're going to go to jail again, but they know it doesn't matter. Somebody else will come and pick up the pieces and continue the struggle. This is why I'm saying that Pandora's Box is open. There is no turning back, this kind of political activity, and the political activity by the way is not just in the Southeast. All the meetings are in the Southeast because that's where they can act more independently.

One of the things that has helped, and this is important to understand, is why is this happening now? It's happening in part because the world is changing as I said in Northern Iraq with the military, et cetera. But it is also because the Kurdish political party, the current one which is the fifth or seventh incarnation of the original one, controls municipalities. Even though the municipalities in Turkey don't usually have an independent source of money because everything comes from Ankara, nonetheless they still have a certain amount of political authority, they still have a certain amount of monies available and they have political control. So all of the municipalities in the Southeast are now controlled by the Kurds and that gives them the space to do this organization. Think of it from the government's perspective that if this continues like this and I can assure you it's going to continue and it's going to mushroom, what do you do? Do you now take away the municipalities from the political party? Do you close the political party? It's going to be reopened again. So it creates an enormous amount of dilemmas.

Again even though this political organization is not necessarily a linear development, there are many problems lurking also underneath. The most important is that you have a great deal of frustration and alienation among Kurdish youth. What you see in places like Istanbul and Mersin where during the 1990s as a result of the counterinsurgency program of the Turkish military and village destruction, you had a

huge population that was forced to leave the Southeast. They settled in those cities and they settled not in Taksim Square, I can assure you. They settled in the outlying boroughs in very difficult conditions where the bread earner, usually the fact, had to probably spend 3 hours in a bus just getting to a place where he may find a day's job, so under very, very difficult circumstances, and I remember visiting those places in the 1990s. But things have moved. Turkey has done well economically. Conditions are still very difficult but are somewhat better. But the children of these refugees who are now 17 to 18 years old are extremely violent, extremely frustrated. Constantly you have problems in these townships all over Turkey which creates a very explosive situation. The Kurdish political party, the Peace and Democracy Party leaders, have told me both in the Southeast and in Istanbul that they have absolutely no control over that youth.

There was one very violent incident in the Southeast where the party leaders tried to interject themselves and there were demonstrations of women, I think for prisoner's rights. The police came and suddenly out of nowhere these youth emerged. And these BDP leaders tried to put themselves in between the police and these youth and the youth just pelted them with stones and tried to get them out of the way so they can start a fight with the police. That's one aspect.

The other aspect is in part because you've had so much Kurdish movement into other parts of Turkey, there is the potential for interethnic violence, something that had been avoided until now in Turkey. Because of family ties it was never a Turk versus Kurd issue in the rest of Turkey and now it's becoming one. This past summer there were huge incidents in many places and very often it's agent provocateurs who may be starting this, but you can see very well how a local conflict can suddenly turn nationwide, so there is that pressure as well. There is an enormous amount of pressure.

I'll stop with this. Yes, Pandora's Box has been opened, it's going to be messy, but I don't think it can be closed.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Thank you for the good news, Henri.

MR. BARKEY: It is good news.

MR. TAŞPINAR: I'll try to bring some even perhaps more negative news to this.

The main point I'd like to make is that this question, the Kurdish question, greatly matters for Turkey's western orientation. In this city we have a tendency to focus sometimes too much in my opinion on the Islamization of Turkish foreign policy or Islamization of Turkish domestic policies and the fear of Turkey parting ways with the West, with the United States, the EU or relations with Israel, is often perceived as this is because Islamists are in power and they have an Islamist foreign policy. I think if we analyze Turkey differently and if we pay more attention to Turkey's nationalist frustrations, we would understand why the Kurdish question in fact is much more important to understand and analyze than potentially the question of Islam. And there are interesting ways the question of Islam overlaps with the question of the Kurdish issue anyway.

The main point I'd like to make is that if you really want to understand why Turkey is often referred to as the most anti-American country, why there is a huge drop in terms of support for the European Union, if you really want to understand why the question of Israel in Turkey is being debated with a Kurdish angle now, you really have to pay attention to this nationalist frustration in Turkey.

It's a very complex issue because, on the one hand, you have a military foreign policy as those of you who came here I think 10 days ago last week when Foreign

Minister Davutoğlu was here, you can see that there is a sense of confidence in Turkey as well, a sense of in fact a willingness to solve problems all over the world. Turkey wants to be the mediator between Iran and the United States. Turkey wants to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem and mediates between Syria and Israel. Turkey wants to find a solution to the Afghan-Pakistani problem. Turkey wants to find a solution to the clash of civilizations because it's a democratic Muslim secular pro-Western country. Yet when you think about this sense of grandeur, this sense of confidence, all the things that Turkey wants to do, the Kurdish question indeed remains as an anomaly. It is the Achilles' heel of Turkey.

In many ways, together with the Cyprus problem which remains unresolved and the Armenia question, the Kurdish question I would put these three as Turkey's own problems unrelated to the grand narrative discourse that you would hear from the current government in terms of willingness to solve all the problems. Those are Turkey's own problems and Turkey has sometimes, not because of its own mistakes but has been overall unable to find solutions to these issues. We have to pay attention to them because I think it is those issues and especially the Kurdish question that will determine the future of Kurdish-American relations and in many ways Turkey-EU relations and Turkish-Israeli relations, too, will have a very strong Kurdish dimension to this.

Many Turks, in fact I would argue most Turks, believe that there is a conspiracy in Washington and in Western capitals to create a Kurdish state. That's a constant. That's a given in Turkish political discourse. So if you really want to understand why from Bush to Obama anti-Americanism did not diminish in Turkey despite the fact that Obama came to Turkey and gave a speech in the Kurdish

Parliament, despite the fact that he did not utter the word "genocide" on the question of Armenia, there is still very strong anti-Americanism in Turkey and it's mainly because Turks still believe that there is a second American agenda to help the Kurds establish a state. That's something that you cannot take out from Turkish public discourse or Turkish psychology because it's engrained in the education system. It's engrained in the way we learn about the fall of the Ottoman Empire, that you cannot trust Western powers. Therefore, it's not just an American issue; it's also the West in general and, therefore, the EU.

These things matter. When Turkey objected to Rasmussen's NATO secretary-generalship when he was the candidate and the Danish prime minister for secretary-general, the brouhaha was mostly about the cartoons, but in fact I would argue the big concern in Turkey was the fact that the PKK had offices in Denmark, Kurdish TV broadcasting from Denmark, and those issues really color the way Turkey looks at Europe. Add to this the fact that Europe is increasingly turning inward because of its economic crisis, increasingly there is this backlash against Islam and Islamophobia in Europe, when you add to this the Kurdish worries that Turkey has, you also realize why there is this sense of frustration with Europe in Turkey, that it's partly related to the Kurdish problem. Totally agree with what Gönül and Henri described. The PKK is no longer the big concern in Turkey. In the eyes of Turkish political leaders be military, AKP or any kind of policymaker, the real question now is no longer the PKK, it's Kurdish nationalism and how you deal with the fact that the genie is out of the bottle and the Kurds have now raised expectations.

It's a very dangerous stage of affairs I would argue because you have a generation in Turkey of Kurds who have as their informative experience only the PKK and

the way and to them Abdullah Ocalan does not represent a terrorist but represents their own Atatürk, their own freedom fighter, their own leaders who put the Kurdish question on the map and there is a personality cult around him. There is a huge disconnect in the way Kurdish youth and Kurdish segments of Turkish society think about Abdullah Ocalan and the nationalist discourse that you have in Turkey so that you have polarized discourse. On the one hand, you have the rise of Turkish nationalism and a country that is becoming increasingly confident but also nationalistic partly because of the Kurdish problem. And on the other hand, opposed to that you have the Kurdish discourse which is essentially fueled by a sense of confidence as well because now Ankara has not only recognized Kurdish reality, something that was done in the early 1990s, but now we're talking about what kind of Turkey. Multiculturalism is on the agenda, cultural rights, but will it end with cultural rights? Do we have to address political rights, decentralization of Ankara, decision making and if you decentralize, then fiscal decentralization? Are we going to allow governors to spend more money in the region? What about the question of federation? Can we afford a federation? There are those who argue that a federation should be a solution.

Those are the issues that are being debated and we are at a point where we're beyond cultural rights now. Cultural rights are there. There is still a problem about recognizing the reality that the genie is out of the bottle with a Kurdish mayor in Diyarbakir speaks in Kurdish this can still become a problem, but that's also part of the polarization.

To give you another example, when the flotilla incident happened in May, the next day there was an attack in Mersin coming from the sea and for the first time the PKK attacked with a boat. And immediately Turkish media picked up the story and the

Turkish politicians actually catered to that story that now Israel is helping the PKK. Immediately there was a Kurdish angle to this problem with the Israelis. All it takes is an article in *The New Yorker* by Sy Hirsch to argue that Mossad is training the Peshmerge for the Kurdish belief to emerge that Mossad is there and wants an independent Kurdistan and the Kurds are there and they will establish this and it's an Israeli-American-Zionist agenda. Relations with the West often refer to this Kurdish question. We pay so much attention to the question of Islam and AKP's anti-Americanism, but we don't pay enough attention to this Kurdish dimension in terms of Turkey's relations with the United States.

I would conclude by saying that if you're an American policymaker and you look at this picture and you look at a Turkey that is still very anti-American and you're frustrated with Turkey because Turkey in addition being this society that still shows tremendous resentment against the United States, has challenged U.S. foreign policy on Iran, has these problems with Israel and in many ways has not delivered on the Armenia ratification, so there is understandable frustration among American policymakers. On the other hand, what is absent in this Turkish-American divergence or the Turkish-American problem is the Kurdish question now. The fact that the United States began cooperating with Turkey since 2007 at a level of actionable intelligence by allowing the Turkish military to hit PKK safe havens in Northern Iraq has created political space for the Turkish government and even for the Turkish military to rethink the problem to a certain degree so that if I'm an American policymaker I would say here is something that we did for Turkey. We provided that and in return we created a sense of confidence in Turkey on this question and Turks began to negotiate from a position of strength and not weakness with Irbil.

The good news in this otherwise gloomy panel that we have is that Turkey has now very good relations with Irbil. Why? Partly because Turkey now is able to have a position of strength and this is related to the tactical victories against the PKK. Yet these tactical victories against the PKK may not translate into a larger strategic victory in terms of solving the Kurdish problem as long as Ankara is unable to address the root causes of the problem which are essentially identity related political problems. Socioeconomic modernization will solve it to a certain degree, but it will be really again the willingness to address the identity mention of the problem that will solve the problem.

And if I'm an American policymaker, I would urge Turkey to really look at the identity dimension and I would try to help Turkey also to achieve further victories in terms of the demobilization of the PKK that would give further political space to Turkish politicians in order to take the extra step in terms of an amnesty for the PKK in terms of doing certain tangible things that would help.

One major reason why the Kurdish opening turned into a failure was the visual impact of PKK militants crossing the border in Habor and being greeted by Kurdish people treating them as heroes. The visual impact of PKK militants being embraced by the Kurdish people was something that the MPH, the CHP and the nationalist opposition exploited and that put an end to the Kurdish opening. If you want to understand why Turkey could not take steps further on the Armenia question, yes, you have to look at Azerbaijan. But also you have to understand that the prime minister was unable to pursue two tracks of openings, one Kurdish, one Armenian, while these images of the PKK being greeted as heroes was there. This is a context where Turkey's public opinion really matters. If there is anti-Americanism in Turkey, if there are major anti-European feelings, Turkey will be unable to really take major steps on these issues because the

government will be blamed for catering to an American agenda or for catering to a European agenda. So the West is part of this question and Turkey's western orientation greatly depends on whether Turkey will be able to find a solution to the Kurdish problem that addresses this identity dimension.

I have one last point I would like to make about the European Union. Turkish nationalists follow what's going on in Europe. The Turkish government follows what's going on in Europe in the domestic debate vis-à-vis Islam. There is a very strong backlash against multiculturalism in Europe. There is the rise of the xenophobic right in Europe. There is the rise of nationalist parties that are anti-immigration. And at the time when Europe itself is engaged in such a backlash against multiculturalism, it becomes very difficult for Turkish liberals to argue for multiculturalism in Turkey itself on the Kurdish front because Turkish nationalists are able to say at the time when the so-called great civilization of the West is turning so much against multiculturalism, Islam, Europeans are expecting us to implement a multicultural Turkey where Kurdish is accepted as one of the languages of the Turkish state. They're expecting us to include Kurdish education in schools whereas there is this whole integration- assimilation orientated model in Europe that is taking place at the expense of multiculturalism; this is a very dangerous situation. It also fuels, I think, an anti-European feeling in Europe's own problems with its minorities, Muslim minorities, may have down the line an impact on the way Turkey looks at the Kurdish problem itself.

I'll stop here and will be happy to answer questions.

MR. VAÏSSE: Thanks, Ömer. That was a fascinating overview from all these different angles and since it's almost 3:00 already I suggest that we take questions right away. We'll take them in batches of three and I ask you to please introduce

yourselves before you ask the question. There's a microphone at the end of the room that circulates so that the floor is yours.

SPEAKER: I would like you to comment about the latest news of the PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan seems to try to outreach the Gülen movement. How do you see that this kind of cooperation might affect the Kurdish issue? Secondly, could you also comment about the possible WikiLeaks documents if they allegations until now are true that the U.S. is supporting the PKK somehow. We saw these kinds of news stories. If they prove to be true, how do you think the Kurdish initiative will be affected?

MR. VAÏSSE: Why don't we start with these two questions?

MR. BARKEY: This supposed opening by Ocalan to the Gülen movement, the truth is we heard about the news yesterday and I'm not sure, I don't have many details, but let me put it this way. Given the fact that the Gülen movement is a significant force in Turkey today, given the fact that it has a lot of influence and given the fact that it is quite active in the Southeast, in a way I would say that it is a smart move on the part of Ocalan to reach out and to create as many linkages as possible. What he's trying to do I guess is to legitimize himself and the movement and to me logically speaking it's a smart move, but what will come out if I don't know. Looking at the reactions today, they were mixed. Some people have said this is wonderful, this is great, but some people were a little bit worried that maybe the Gülen movement will try to proselytize, but I think it's too early to tell.

MR. VAÏSSE: Maybe Gönül will speak on that or on the WikiLeaks question.

MS. TOL: Obviously what made this whole opening a failure was as Ömer and Henri mentioned this paranoia and the Turks' self-understanding and self-

image as a monolithic entity and the suspicion toward the West so that these WikiLeaks documents will just feed into that. I don't think it will have a huge impact on the Kurdish opening because those suspicions are still there. I was just looking at a Koch University poll yesterday. Anti-Americanism and anti-EU has reached its lowest point and so it's always been there so that I don't think it will make much difference.

MR. TAŞPINAR: If you're a secularist in Turkey who has problems with the AKP and if you are concerned about Islamization in Turkey, it is obviously a matter of concern that you think that the U.S. has an agenda to promote moderate Islam in Turkey so that that is one of the narratives that for a lack of a better term I would say the Kamalist intelligentsia and intellectuals are concerned about. This concern about the U.S. promoting moderate Islam in Turkey I think is the twin image of the concern that the U.S. also wants a Kurdish state in Turkey. So if you're a Kamalist, this scenario of a rapprochement between the leader of the PKK and the Gülen movement is a nightmare, these two enemies coming together.

But, on the other hand, in a conspiratorial way it also makes sense perfectly because the conspiracy theorists would say the Gülen movement is a made-in-the-USA movement, they're presenting the United States' image as a kind of moderate Islam Sufi party against the radicals so now they are also in the business of talking to the Kurds. You can see how the Turkish internationalists or secularists would portray this as America's plan. Now the Gülenists are in the Kurdish camp as well, they're talking, this is America's plan.

Obviously this is part of what I was talking about in terms of how this is very relevant for the image of the West in Turkey because the minute the WikiLeaks scenario came out in the Turkish press, the Turkish press said now it will reveal this

secret support that the United States gave to the PKK and it will be an embarrassment for U.S. foreign policy. The documents are revealed and there will be more documents, but from what I can see and from what I talked to with U.S. officials, there is no sense of panic, no sense of concern among American diplomats that such a connection will be revealed because it simply does not exist except in Turkish imaginations. But it fuels, again, this Turkish paranoia about America being behind the PKK and it fuels the American paranoia that the Gülen movement's presence here, Abdullah Ocalan's presence in the United States, fuels this paranoia about Islam, too, that there is an American project to Islamize Turkey.

Let me conclude by saying that if Turkey's two most important problems, that is Islam and secularism on the one hand, and Kurdish nationalism versus Turkish nationalism are debated always with references to what Washington is doing, we should not be surprised that anti-Americanism is not going down in Turkey. As long as Turkey is unable to solve its identity problems vis-à-vis Islam without resorting to conspiracy theories or vis-à-vis the Kurdish question without resorting to conspiracy theories, such questions about WikiLeaks revealing a link with the PKK or questions about the Gülen movement and the PKK talking to each other being a project to impose something on Turkey will continue.

MR. BARKEY: I want to say one thing about WikiLeaks. I don't know how that information was suddenly in the press because first of all we haven't seen any of the cables and I know having worked in the U.S. Government and having followed the U.S. Government very closely, I can tell you there is absolutely not a shred of evidence that the United States has ever helped the PKK. It would be completely suicidal for the United States Government to do something like that because it would undermine its own

foreign policy with respect to Turkey which is such a critical ally so that I mean on the contrary. I don't know how that interpretation came out, we haven't seen a single cable and I agree that there is not going to be any evidence.

MR. VAÏSSE: Will you identify yourself?

SPEAKER: I'm from the Turkish embassy and my name is John. And about the Kurdish movement itself, we talked about the government until now and as a single bloc the Kurds in Turkey. Can you also please explain the dynamics? You talked about the BDP, the terrorist organization, the youth, but recently the mayor of Diyarbakir made a statement a week later he stepped back from it because there was a huge reaction from a part of the Kurds in Turkey? Should we take it as a single bloc or are there other voices there in the Kurdish movement that we are not hearing?

MR. UPTGRAF: My name is Regan Uptgraf and I just returned from doing field research in Turkey and I have two questions, the first to direct to Dr. Barkey. Professor Barkey, you said that the Democratic Society Confederation was a different organization than the KJK but that no Kurdish civil society organization really made much a move to distance itself from the PKK. And I was wondering if you could expound on the Democratic Society Confederation and whether you thought there was some sort of an element of an independent Kurdish civil society in formation and whether there were groups and what the situation of Kurdish civil society is because they're obviously pressed between the Turkish government and the PKK in some cases.

My second question would be to Dr. Taşpınar. You mentioned that in terms of this whole Turkish Islamist movement and the pressure to come up with a solution on the PKK, how important is that to AKP in terms of having the AKP realize cultural rights? If cultural rights have pretty much been accomplished and the next step

is political rights, it still seems like there are important steps that the AKP could make in terms of granting cultural rights. For example, Turkey hasn't ratified the Council of Europe's framework for the convention for national minorities, nor has it ratified the OSC's charter on regional languages and those are both important steps to take in terms of minority and cultural rights that the government doesn't really seem to prioritize or even put into the discourse.

MR. VAÏSSE: Is there one other question? Let's answer these two or three.

MS. TOL: In answer to John's question, I think the Kurdish political movement is far from being monolithic and there we have seen different Kurdish actors in the public sphere and nongovernmental organizations and Kurdish civil society has become I think much stronger in the past few years. So there are different Kurdish actors in the arena now, but what brings them together is they are quite clear about their identity. Maybe Henri wouldn't agree with me, but this is something where they weren't as clear in the 1990s so they are quite clear about the boundaries of their identities and they're quite clear about their demands, their demands from Turkish society, their demands from the Turkish government and they are quite vocal about it. There are different actors and yet there is something very strong that unifies them and that is the Kurdish ethnic identity I think.

MR. BARKEY: I agree with Gönül. Sure, there are many voices. With time constraints, if you look at the AKP itself, there is a large number of fairly conservative Kurds who are members of the AKP, they are members of parliament and many of them may be there because there are certain personal benefits to being a member of the ruling party. Any society will be very, very diverse. No society can be

monolithic. But when it comes to the issue of identity, when you talk to AKP Kurds just like when you talk to Kurds who belonged to Gele's party in the 1990s or to Jumel's party in the 1990s and Erbakan's party, they all have essentially the same identity issues that they articulated and how they decide to deal with it politically is very, very different. But when they're in Diyarbakir, for example, and members of parliament from AKP who are talking to BDP folks, essentially they are speaking the same language except that when they express themselves on the national stage it might be different and actually most of the time they keep quiet. Where the pressure comes is within the AKP and to some extent AKP leadership also has to respond to the demands of AKP members of parliament who are of Kurdish origin.

They certainly do not share some of the things I talked about in terms of the KCK or DTK, the Democratic Society Confederation, so they're outside of that. But in terms of identity and in terms of putting pressure on the state, they're not that different and remember that they win elections in the Southeast with the barest of minority votes because of the way that the Turkish electoral system is, so they need some support domestically and they cannot alienate. That said, identity-wise they're different, but I agree with you that there are many, many voices.

To some extent it's related to the DTK. The DTK, again, this is the Democratic Society Confederation, is different than the previous attempts in that it is far wider as a political movement. It includes many NGOs that have nothing to do with the PKK, some of whom are hostile to the PKK, so it's an attempt at making the tent much bigger and more inclusive and in some ways it's also going to be much more difficult for them to come up to some kind of agreement or some kind of consensus, but it is certainly an attempt at including people who are anti-PKK.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Very briefly on this monolithic Kurdish community question, of course the Kurds are not a monolithic bloc and I think if you're sitting in Ankara from a purely national security perspective and when you look at the Kurdish community, you divide the Kurds into two groups, those who are unassimilated and those who are assimilated. Those who are assimilated arguably are upwardly mobile, relatively better educated middle-class and if Istanbul is indeed the largest Turkish city in the world and if it's say 20 percent of Istanbul is Kurdish, there is a reason why I think Kamalists in Turkey would argue that you don't have 20 percent of the vote in Istanbul not going to the Kurdish Nationalist Party because a big segment of these Kurds in Istanbul are assimilated. They have jobs, they're educated, therefore assimilation works if you have upward mobility. So there's a narrative of the Turkish government which says forget the identity dimension which may lead to thorny questions about multiculturalism, federation, separatism and let's focus on economic development. Let's focus on modernization. This is a very appealing narrative and it fuels this kind of perception that we can solve this without getting into the identity dimension.

This is one element of not having a monolithic bloc within the Kurdish community. Not only the Kurds are not monolithic at the societal level, the PKK is not a monolithic organization. You have PKK in Europe, you have PKK in Kandil, you have PKK in jail with Abdullah Ocalan and sometimes there are clashing messages. My own analysis is that Abdullah Ocalan still calls the shots but sometimes there are clashes between the European wing and the Kandil wing of the party.

Finally, on the question of the European treaties and the cultural dimension, I think there are two issues there. First of all, there is still trepidation and reluctance in the Turkish nationalist establishment to sign treaties on this question

because those would be perceived as the West imposing or Turkey abiding by a Western agenda so that if something needs to be done, we will do it and there's no need to sign anything. That's one attitude.

The second one has to do with the fact that there is reluctance to address the cultural dimension. The Kurds have moved on. They are no longer dwelling on just the cultural dimension of things. They would be very pleased with having full cultural rights, but what they're really interested in is what comes next after cultural rights and that's what also Ankara is interested in because what we know about nationalism is that it's an intractable process. It's very hard to contain corrupt nationalism. Once the virus is there, the nationalist virus, it's very hard to say you will stop short of certain measures. This is why I also sympathize with the Turkish nationalist security establishment, the Kamalists who say how do we stop this? What is the guarantee that the Kurds will be okay with just cultural rights or just multiculturalism or just federation? Why not the slippery road toward independence? That's a legitimate question and I think it's part of the reluctance to acknowledge even the cultural dimension of this. There are still hardliners who would say that we don't need cultural rights and tying them to questions coming before. If you deny the cultural dimension, you emphasize the socioeconomic dimension. There is no need to improve Kurdish language rights if we can solve this problem with socioeconomic modernization. They will become Turkish. This is the assimilation model. Turkishness works. Kurds will become Turkish. The only thing we have to do is to provide jobs to provide socioeconomic upward mobility.

MR. VAÏSSE: Precisely I'd like to follow-up on that because I was very interested in your two presentations and I'll ask perhaps Gönül first to answer this. Henri, you used a Greek metaphor of Pandora's Box, and then you used an Oriental metaphor

let's say, the genie out of the bottle.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Because I'm an Orientalist.

MR. VAÏSSE: You both suggested that somehow the situation was out of control so that this led me to think that perhaps with the Kurdish opening and all of that, the government had sort of played with fire and we know how reforms when they start being implemented sometimes fuel the opposition rather than quell it or calm it. So my question would be how much out of control is the situation and what do you see in the next 5 or 10 years that could potentially derail the normal unfolding or the normal roots of Turkish democracy? What are the risks out there in the next 5 to 10 years?

MS. TOL: I think on the part of the AKP was it was a big political risk and the AKP could be able to take that risk because again as I mentioned during my presentation it's been in power since 2002 and ruling in a single-party government so that that was the big advantage. Whenever I read Turkish newspapers and columns, people are quite scared that something horrible is going to happen to the Turkish state after this whole Kurdish opening, but I think that this is a very healthy discussion. Yes, society is quite polarized, but on the other hand we are now talking about Kurdish separatism or maybe a federal system and we have denied even their existence for such a long time so that I think the level of discussion that we're having right now on the Kurdish issue is quite healthy and the initial response wasn't the surprise -- polarization. But at the end I think we are going to find a new modus vivendi in Turkey at the societal level and at the institutional level, too.

There were some studies conducted among Kurds living in Turkey and the poll asked what they really wanted. Did they want to have their own state? Whenever I talked to Kurdish intellectuals I asked the same question. They say of course

it's our dream, but at the same we are quite aware that this is not realistic. There is Turkey on the one hand, there is Syria, Iraq and Iran and there is a landlocked Kurdish state and it has oil but yet it doesn't have the infrastructure so that this is not realistic. And I think Kurds know that and that's why I am quite hopeful that a new modus vivendi will be reached within Turkey.

MR. VAÏSSE: Henri or Ömer, will there will be a new modus Vivendi or is the situation out of control?

MR. BARKEY: First of all, we also have to emphasize that the Kurdish opening of the AKP failed because the AKP mismanaged it. It mismanaged it in the sense that it tried to consult people but it did not try to consult and bring into the process the people who are the most involved in this, i.e., the Kurds.

For example, when you look at the return of those famous PKK guys, at the time it was DTP and not BDP, the main Kurdish political party had not been informed. They found out essentially 2 or 3 days before the event so at no point did they bring in. They could have managed the process much better. Mistakes take place. I think there was a little bit of hubris on the part of the government that they can control everything and that they knew what they were doing, but the prime minister now has essentially put a huge target and that is he said after the elections in June the most important priority is to change the constitution and clearly the solution to the Kurdish problem has to come through the constitution and change in the constitution.

I would say that if the constitutional process is well managed, and by that I mean not just on the Kurdish issue but on a whole variety of things, the Turkish constitution is a straightjacket. The Turkish constitution essentially protects the state from the individual. It doesn't do anything for the individual. So all of the conceptions of

the Turkish constitution has to change. In the process, if the AKP manages this process well by including everybody and not just Kurds but the opposition and all kinds of NGOs and makes it a genuine constitution that is the product of the people of Turkey rather than a political party, I don't see why this problem cannot be solved.

MR. TAŞPINAR: I agree. Turkey squandered a big opportunity. In 2007, after the 2007 July elections, the AKP had a huge majority and instead of pushing for a genuinely democratic inclusive constitution, there were problems and all of a sudden they were trapped with to a certain degree to this headscarf business and in a matter of a year they were facing a constitutional case and their own survival was at stake. All indicators are that we are heading to yet another big victory for the AKP in the next elections and hopefully this time they will learn the lessons of 2007 and act accordingly.

I am afraid that there is a tendency here in linking it to Turkish foreign policy to talk to Irbil at the expense of Turkey's own Kurds to say we have excellent relations with Irbil, our relations on the Kurdish question are improving, we have improved our partnership with Northern Iraq yet the same prime minister and the same leadership is reluctant to talk to Turkey's own Kurdish nationalist party on the grounds that it doesn't distance itself from the PKK. And there is a vicious cycle in Turkey. All the debate in Turkey turns around why the BDP or the DTP before it does not condemn terrorism. It's like trying to ask Sinn Fein to condemn the IRA. This is the political wing of the movement so that it's very difficult for them to clearly condemn terrorism, but the situation is very tense.

I think despite all the good momentum and positive potential, if there is a bomb in Istanbul that kills a high number of people and it's linked somehow to a Kurdish group, there is the potential for violence in Istanbul, in Mersin or in Izmir. There is the

potential for violence because now you have Kurdish youth and Turkish youth so that something like that could easily unravel so that there is potential for both momentum, the kind of discussion of the constitution but also major polarization which would obviously put any kind of democratization issue on hold.

MS. TOL: I think the result of the KCK trial is going to have a huge impact on the future of the democratic opening as well. The AKP is giving mixed signals and I guess that reflects the domestic balance of power. On the one hand you're talking about giving more rights to Kurds and on the other you are arresting legitimate Kurdish policymakers and intellectuals so that I think that the result of the trial is going to be important.

SPEAKER: First of all, thank you for a fascinating panel. I for one have learned a tremendous amount. What I'd like to do is build on the last round of comments that were made and ask you to move from the analytical to the advisory. If you were advising a Turkish government or whatever composition after the June 11 elections about how they might most constructively reframe the challenge of addressing the Kurdish question both in terms of domestic political, a new civilian constitution, a more effective outreach and conclusion of the Turkish-Kurdish population, but also building on Ömer's comments about Irbil and the no problems with the neighbor regional policy, is there a possible constructive play off of that in a way that would for example bring the East and the Southeast back into the cross-roads, the regional economic trade and commercial development that everyone thinks is in the offing but hasn't quite gotten there yet?

MR. VAÏSSE: Could you introduce yourself?

MR. LEMON: Michael Lemon from the Near East South Asia Center.

MR. VAÏSSE: The last question here?

MS. LIZON: Thank you. It's Eileen Lizon from CNN Turkey. My question will be about Mr. Ocalan and the Gülen movement again. As his lawyers asserted, he said that if the PKK and the Gülen movement builds a mutual understanding of each other and stand in solidarity, many of Turkey's can be resolved. We now know that the issue has so many dimensions, but how do you see the chance of possible cooperation which will also exclude a big part of Turkish society and I mean people who are not Kurdish and how are not members of the Gülen movement in terms of finding a solution to this question?

MR. VAÏSSE: Thank you. I suggest we go in perhaps reverse order to answer the questions and offer concluding remarks. Ömer, would you like to start?

MR. TAŞPINAR: On Michael's questions from diagnosis to prescription what would we say, I guess not to repeat the mistakes of 2007 and be inclusive for a new constitution, to start early after the electoral victory if it happens, spend your political capital on this issue and prioritize this issue. There will be a limited time span. There will be pressure for the Armenia protocols as well, there will be pressure on the Kurdish opening so that it will have to be very wisely formulated in the sense that the constitutional debate I think can happen parallel to what needs to happen on the Armenian ratification front as well. But there will be a limited time span, I would say 6 to 8 months, for the government to pursue these openings in the kind of honeymoon period and try to reach out to CHP and try to reach out to MHP.

There is a new leadership with the CHP which is more promising than Bikal. It needs to be tested in what ways Karishteralda will be willing to really discuss openings on the constitutional question. So from the speech on the night of the election to the next steps, the name of the game will be inclusivity and willingness to engage

instead of saying we're the victors and arrogance.

On the question of socioeconomic development and how the zero problem would create economic momentum, already I think there is some economic momentum in the region. The reason why the AKP is the number-one or number-two party is because they have created jobs, because they have built roads, because they have built schools. So the question is how do you go beyond this? How do you also create in addition to this kind of socioeconomic agenda or the narrative of we are all Muslims, why can't we get along to emphasize Islam, you emphasize diversity and embrace the diversity of the region and speak about Turkishness not as an ethnic category but as a civic citizenship model and those are the issues I think. More than the economic question, it's how you build on the economic momentum which is there in the region especially because of trade with Northern Iraq.

Finally, on the question of Gülen and the PKK again, I think we should refrain from this seeing this as a kind of zero-sum gain. If Gülen and the PKK talk, that means that the secularists and the Turkish nationalists are out. I think instead of dwelling on this issue as a big breakthrough or something that could change the dynamics, we should see this as a kind of tactical move and not something that would really change the fundamentals of the problem. Both the Kurdish question and the Gülen community have a narrative of victimization. The Gülen movement's narrative of victimization is essentially about Islam and discrimination against pious Muslims in Turkey. The Kurds' narrative of discrimination is discrimination on an ethnic level. There is nothing more normal than people who feel discriminated against to create a sense of empathy. Instead of seeing this as the enemy is uniting, we should try to understand why and what kind of mistakes we're creating that are pushing this kind of situation. We should be I think

coolheaded and analytical instead of seeing the kind of sensationalism of this issue but maybe it's too much to ask from the media.

MR. VAÏSSE: Thanks. Henri, do you have a brief word?

MR. BARKEY: In terms of what to do and what advice, I'm not in the business of advising the Turkish government, but I would say that the constitution is the most important issue. Imagine a victory speech assuming he wins the victory, at the moment it looks that way but politics is a weird animal. But let's assume he won and if the first message that comes out of his mouth the night of the victory is about the constitution, it will frame the debate just like after his first victory in 2002 when he came out and said that the first objective was the European Union and that framed in 2005 essentially Turkish government behavior and mentality.

The constitution, as I said earlier, has to be an inclusive constitution. It cannot be a constitution that is created by one political party plus its supporters. It has to be a genuinely inclusive constitutional process that creates a liberal constitution and it should be a constitution that is not going to be changed every 5 or 10 years. The problem in Turkey is that they come up with constitutions which are inflexible, have a lot of problems, have unchanging elements, but at the same time people feel that it needs to be constantly changed. No. You need a constitution that for better or for worse is going to last for a long time.

But constitution writing is a long process and is not going to be something that will be done in 3 months after the election. It may take years to write and to come up with a genuine constitution. So what you need to do between now and then is that you also need to buy yourself some social peace. What the Kurds really want and that's not going to happen before the next elections, Turkey has this 10 percent threshold

for parliamentary representation and they would like to see that pushed down to 7 or 6 percent so that they can get more of their MPs into parliament. There would be enormous of goodwill on the Kurdish question since Michael you asked about the Kurdish question.

I don't think they're going to do that, so that if they're not going to do that, there are other things they can do. And I would say that a lot of people who are now in jail, who are in jail for political crimes, who have done nothing violent but are spending 20 to 30 years in jail and on very, very shoddy evidence -- and Abdullah Ocalan got two trials. Why? Because in first he was convicted and the European Court of Human Rights overturned the conviction because he was found guilty by a state security court which had a military judge. So he got convicted again. But there are a lot of people who never got a second chance and are still in prison. You could give them a second chance and release a lot of people. You have people who went to jail when they were 17 and 25 to 30 years later are still in jail.

And the misinterpretation of what happened in Habor when those guys came back wasn't a victory celebration. It was for the Kurds in the Southeast the beginning of the process where they thought their kids would be coming home. People don't understand I think about the Kurds in the Southeast. There are a lot of people who have their kids, their cousins or their relatives in jail or their relatives up in the mountains and there are more kids going up to the mountains every day and they want an end to that process. So if you can create the atmosphere by which people can come back and you release some of the people who are in jail for political crimes and also as Gülen said deal with the KGK or KCK trials, that will buy you an enormous amount of time to do the constitution and that's what I would advise.

MR. VAÏSSE: Gülen?

MS. TOL: I think the government definitely has to bring the BDP to the table. The closure of the DTP I think hindered the process immensely because it took moderate political actors such as Ahmed and Artuluk out of the picture. And the government has to realize that the PKK is not only a terrorist organization. It's become a political actor. I know it's quite challenging to do this but the PKK somehow has to be engaged.

And as to civil society organizations, the government I think has to work with civil society organizations. So framing the issue is going to be quite difficult considering the nationalists and how strong nationalism is in Turkey and especially the AKP has a very strong nationalist base itself so that it's going to be a very difficult task but I think as Henri and Ömer just mentioned, there is no going back and I think from now on the government has to take the necessary steps to build on that process.

MR. VAÏSSE: Thanks very much. Please join me in thanking very much the three panelists. I think that was a terrific discussion.

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