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UNREST IN TURKEY: ASSESSING THE CAUSES
AND IMPACT OF THE PROTESTS

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. WITTES: Okay. Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for joining us. I'm Tamara Wittes, Director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy here at the Brookings Institution. And delighted to welcome you on behalf of my center but mostly on behalf of my colleagues in the Center for the US and Europe for a discussion on developments in Turkey.

It has been a dramatic couple of weeks. And with Prime Minister Erdoğan, I believe, literally in the air winging his way back to Turkey as we speak, what's next is the question on everyone's lips. So, I hope that in the course of the next little while, we'll have a conversation beginning up here on the dais and then extending out into the audience that will give us an opportunity to get at the context for these events, their meaning and their implications for Turkey's future and the future of Turkey's relationship with the United States as well.

Let me start by introducing our incredible expert panel. Beginning on my far left we have Omer Taşpınar, Nonresident Senior Fellow here in the Center for the US and Europe. Henri Barkey, Professor at Lehigh University, Steven Cook, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and on my far right and certainly not least, Kemal Kirişci, our Turkey Fellow here at Brookings.

I'm going to moderate a conversation amongst these four gentlemen and then at a certain point we'll open it up to your questions as well. So, let's get started.

Let's begin with, I think, what's been one of the perhaps unsurprising but perhaps controversial means around discussions of the protests that began in Istanbul and spread to cities around the country; the idea that this might be some sort of Turkish spring along the lines of the Arab spring that began in December 2010 in Tunisia. Now,

of course, we're not so sure that the Arab spring itself is an Arab spring but we nonetheless can't help but pose the question of whether Istanbul represents a Turkish spring.

Omer, as I recall, you once actually wrote a monograph for Brookings about whether Turkey was a political model for the Arab world when it came to democracy and development. So, perhaps we can start with you. Is it appropriate to think of the protestors in Istanbul as modeling themselves in some way on their Arab compatriots?

MR. TAŞPINAR: No. I think we would be comparing in many ways apples and oranges if we are comparing Turkey of 2013 with Egypt of 2009, 2010. For a very simple reason, despite all the imperfections of Turkish democracy and the imperfections of Turkish democracy I think can be best summarized by the term illiberal and majoritarian, where individual rights and liberties are still very problematic.

Turkey is probably the only country in the Islamic world where political power has changed more than a dozen times through the ballot box. I don't want to praise the ballot box because we're going through a time when the ballot box is problematic; hence the term majoritarian democracy's problematic. But the State where Egypt is today, I would argue, where the Muslim brotherhood is in power and is becoming more and more authoritarian through a majoritarian type ballot box oriented democracy again is potentially has some similarities with Turkey.

In that sense, I can see the parallels with where Egypt is today in post-Mubarak stage. Turkey is definitely the post-Kemalist stage. And again, despite all its imperfections, the AKP has been the party that has taken Turkey to the post-Kemalist stage by ending the military tutelage system. By ending basically a system where we

had not the tyranny of the majority, some people can see what's going on today in Turkey as the tyranny of the majority, but what we used to have, I would argue, in Turkey was perhaps the tyranny of the minority. An authoritarian type of system where a minority, an elite used to basically suppress arguably the Anatolian periphery.

Turkish political science, I think, can be still to a certain degree understood through this paradigm of center periphery. The AKP is the representative of the periphery, the Anatolian masses, the Anatolian countryside, the urban poor. One would have hoped in a European system, in a European pattern, the poor, the lower middle classes, the underclass would be represented normally by a social democratic leftwing party. But in Turkey we never had a leftwing party. And partly that's the problem.

The blockage of the Turkish political system, the absence of an alternative, perhaps a leftwing alternative, a social democratic alternative, but the AKP in a way has become this voice of the underclass. And managed to take Turkey in the last 10 years to a place where the military is out of the picture. If there's one silver lining, and I will conclude with this, there's a lot of pessimism in Turkey and rightly so. But I would say two things.

First, suggest Mark Twain or Obama, whoever we want, the rumors about the demise of Erdoğan are highly exaggerated. He's not going anywhere. This is not Mubarak, this is not Ben Ali, he still has an overwhelming base, a very powerful base in Turkey. If we had early elections tomorrow he would, I would argue, still win. Maybe not in a landslide but not with 50 percent but he would still win easily because of the absence of an alternative. And that's the problem.

The second thing I would argue and that's the silver lining. No one is

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talking about a military coup in Turkey today. You may chaos in the street. You may have room for an emergency law. Last time I checked, even on Twitter, no one is calling for the army to step in. And that, to me, is a testament to the maturity of Turkish democracy right now.

MS. WITTES: Okay. So, Erdoğan in a way is a populist leader, at leader a popular leader and you see these protests as a manifestation of weaknesses in Turkish democracy, not of failure of Turkish democracy. Would that be an accurate summing up?

MR. TAŞPINAR: Couldn't say it better.

MS. WITTES: Okay, now, you mentioned at the end of your remarks the role of the military which, of course, in the history of Turkey's democratic development has occasionally played that role to sort of step in and reset the system, if you will. And there are those who see some parallels between these protests and protests that have occurred earlier in Turkish history, particularly in 1960 I think it was, some significant student protests that led then to a military coup.

Steven, do you see those parallels and what do you think about the role of the military going forward?

MR. COOK: No, I don't see the parallels. I don't see the parallels at least to the decade of the 1970s which was an extraordinarily violent decade that led to the 1980 coup. The 1960 coup was a coup of young officers who were unhappy with the way in which their privileges and pay were being affected by another populace government. And some have made some parallels between that government and the Justice and Development Party. But I don't think that there is really a parallel here.

In terms of what the contemporary role of the military is, beginning in

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2003 and 2004 in order for Turkey to qualify, to meet the Copenhagen criteria to begin formal negotiations with the European Union, they had to take steps to start bringing the military under civilian control. And they did that by civilianizing the National Security Council, bringing that Council under budgetary control, taking parts of the Defense budget and bringing it under civilian oversight. Taking military officers off a variety of boards that engaged in surveillance of the political system, looking out for Islamism and Kurdish Nationalism that were the major threats of the state.

Those things were important things. Those were in a kind of Huntingtonian civil military relations theory course that I teach we talk about objective control of the military. What they have done since 2007 has not necessarily been to subordinate the military to institutions of the state. But as a result of the revelations that there was a plot against the government hatched by military officers and others, there has been an effort to kind of lop off the top of the military. Some of this, I mean, given as you pointed out this proclivity for stepping into the political and interventions at levels below the coup, these plots are entirely believable.

Yet, the political system, the government seems to have gone way beyond. And there are large numbers of military officers who are -- have been arrested, serving in prison. What that does is undermines the professionalism and corporate cohesion of the Turkish Armed Forces. Now, let me -- before I say the next thing I'm going to say, there's no publicly available evidence of this but you can imagine knowing what happens to militaries. That in an environment like this, what you do is you create actually a more politicized military, one that is less effective and more politicized cause what you do is you create factions within the military.

I'm not saying that that has happened. But what I'm saying is that

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instead of continuing to subordinate the military to the actual democratic institutions of the State, they've gone one step too far in a sense in retribution. And that's probably not healthy for the civil military balance. All that being said I can't imagine -- I can't imagine under the present circumstances the military stepping in in ways that we've seen in the past or in any way.

MS. WITTES: But if you're right that these moves by the AKP going one step too far will have the effect of politicizing younger officers, then that might be a danger in the future?

MR. COOK: I certainly think in the long run that is in the realm of possibility. It would be among a range of outcomes for the Turkish military in the future as a result of what they've done is politicizing another group, a younger group of officers as a result.

MS. WITTES: Okay, now it's also clear that along with this suppression of the military or the reduction of the role of the military in recent years, there's been repression of civil society, of media in Turkey in the last few years that in a way has gone hand in hand. And so, one interpretation of these protests is that it's essentially a civil society correction to an authoritarian impulse by a party that as Omer said doesn't face sufficient opposition; that this is, in a way, self-correcting phenomenon.

Henri, what do you think we can expect politically coming out of these protests? Might we see Erdoğan step aside in favor of someone else from the AKP? Might we see the opposition cease this moment and come back politically in a way that they haven't been able to do in the last 10 years?

MR. BARKEY: No. Look, first of all, I mean you're right in one sense that this is a reaction from civil society to a government -- I mean this is about the

governance. It's not about the regime in Turkey. Nobody is talking about changing the regime in any way, shape or form.

People are talking about the excesses of the AKP in power. And look, AKP has been in power for 10 years and has had absolutely no challenge. There is no opposition in Turkey today. The only opposition you can think of in Turkey today might be the Kurds at one level. Some people think it's a Fethullah Gülen movement at another level but now we're seeing for the first time civil society emerge as an alternative. And the reason we've had demonstrations is because the Turkish opposition parties, mainly the Republican People's Party and the Nationalist parties are essentially, totally incompetent.

I've rarely seen political parties that come to anything. I mean, sometimes I like to say this is in public, I will still say it; I mean these guys are Neanderthals when it comes to politics. I mean, I may be doing a disservice to Neanderthals. I mean, because they don't know how to operate as political parties. They don't know how to get votes. All they do is get on television and shout against the government.

So, there's enormous of frustration. I was in Turkey just before the revolt started and you could see talking to people there was an enormous of frustration but nobody thought that the main opposition party would be able to do anything. And that's why you're seeing the reaction. The 20 or 100 or a thousand trees are just the spark of something which I think is actually very good for Turkey.

You have to think there's, in the short term, nothing is going to change. But in the medium term you're seeing civil society emerge for the first time and having a voice. This is a black eye for the Prime Minister. He's seen his comeuppance in many

ways. Even though he will probably pretend that nothing has changed, something fundamentally has changed now in Turkey.

But we will not see the results of that change immediately. It will take some time. You're already, I mean, again when you go back to civil society, ironically, I should also say that what we are seeing in Turkey today is what maybe the French saw in 1968. You have a student body, a young population that is better off thanks to the AKP, can now think about other issues and for whom lifestyle, politics, ideology, the environment is important, right? And now they can demonstrate.

All right? So, and just like de Gaulle didn't understand what happened to him in 1968 I don't think Erdoğan understands what happened to him in 1968. I'm sorry, I'm taking your de Gaulle examples away from you but --

MR. TAŞPINAR: Waiting for the sexual revolution --

MR. BARKEY: So, I think something very fundamental has happened but it will take some time for us to see it.

MS. WITTES: If you're right, we'll get some really good cinema out of this.

MR. BARKEY: Okay, that's good.

MS. WITTES: Okay, so, Kemal, Henri just mentioned that civil society has emerged in a dynamic and surprising way as a political corrective here in the absence of an effective opposition party. And I wonder if you can help us drill down into this and understand why did this issue become this spark? Why was it, what's the symbolism here beyond a small environmental movement in Istanbul? What's the symbolism behind this park, this location that's leading people to see this as something so much bigger?

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MR. KIRIŞCI: Yeah, I think it is steeped in symbolism. I don't how many might have seen Geza Park here. Taksim Square is very much seat in symbolism, political symbolism. Maybe in the media you may have read a lot about these army barracks that would be reconstructed in the form of a shopping center.

But the Geza Park sits really between three international hotels. The one surrounded by buildings and one has to be fair that the municipality and the government in Ankara has gone out of its way in terms of planting trees. Truly there are many more millions more trees. So, why this fixation with about 50 or 60 trees, plain trees in this particular Park here?

Just about a month ago, trade unions wanted to have their May Day event there. They had it the year before. Until then it was banned. It was banned because back in 1977, just as I was finishing my university degree, there had been a nasty experience where 30 plus people had been killed in a May Day demonstration there. It's still not clear what exactly happened but they were caught between snipers from shooting from the top of these high rise buildings and the police.

This was repeated in the late '80s and then again there was another incident in '96 I think. I was there as a university professor then and demonstrations were banned in Taksim Square. There was a lot of pressure to bring it back and this government last year brought it back. And there was a joyful May, May Day.

But this year because of the construction in the Square to convert it into a pedestrian area it was banned. And there was a confrontation again between some trade unionists that wouldn't listen to the ban on the access to the Square and the police. And the behavior of the police was not that different from it. But the Army barracks, what is very interesting here is the Army barracks were built back in at the beginning of the

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19th century. And the incident that is politically significant in many ways is that the military units that were housed in that military barracks in 1909 rebelled against the then Committee of Progress and Union.

It was the ones that had come to power against the Sultan of the time. And this Army unit walked to the Ottoman Parliament at the time with the intention to raid it. So, another Army unit from Macedonia was brought along and the Staff Officer happened to be Mustafa Kemal at the time, Atatürk. So, there is a symbolism in those Army barracks.

What is more fascinating, this is a tiny detail that has, I think, political significance is that the very person the botanic who actually put the Park the way it is today, had completed his degree during the first World War with great difficulties and had been assigned in the first days of the Republic to some botanic gardens somewhere in Istanbul or the Republic. And when Atatürk turned up at this to inspect this botanic garden, Atatürk was received by his wife.

And Atatürk was not particularly pleased with the fact that he was being received by the wife of the person who was supposed to be running the place. When he angrily asked for where he was, his wife turned around in kind of very Anatolian Turkish he said, uh-huh, he's out there in the fields. And on that, Atatürk became very impressed by it. He called him up and he said, what do you want from me? I'm very impressed what you're doing and expecting that he would want a pay rise or a promotion, et cetera, he said, I'd like to go and study in Hungary where the botanic study is most advanced.

So, he goes off there for three years, comes back just at the time when the Square is being reorganized by a French city planner and takes up the job of planting these trees. So, a lot is being said about how some of the demonstrators here feel that

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their lifestyle is being threatened by some of the recent policies that were introduced by the government. And although, initially the whole thing started with a group of environmentalists that were determined to defend a couple of trees there against the contractors that were about to move in, incidentally without due authorization and the paperwork that was necessary there, and that's how the whole thing flared up there.

MS. WITTES: So, these environmentalists essentially are trying to defend a park constructed by a disciple of Atatürk?

MR. KIRIŞCI: But they would not be aware of it. It's not part of, this is an academics' perspective. But to link it to the point about civil society, this did not come out just like that. There was civil society very active there. A solidarity with the park itself, they had been having festivals there. They had been collecting petitions, signatures, et cetera, so, civil society was active in a manner that may not always be associated with where Turkey stands.

MS. WITTES: Okay. I think we have to ask ourselves, given this popular mobilization, first of all is this just an urban phenomenon? Are these just secular urban university students and so on? Or is there something broader and nationwide going on here? Who wants to take that on? Henri?

MR. BARKEY: Well, I mean, Turkey is mostly urban today. It's no longer a rural society. So, I think 70 percent of Turkey lives in urban cities. But it is not also completely nationwide. I mean, not every -- we haven't seen it in every town in Turkey but we have seen it in a number of places and to say that it is essentially a national movement. But it is also not just students, by the way, it's all kinds of people. You've had, and that's the interesting aspect of this. That this is -- you've seen people of religious persuasion. You've seen left-wingers, liberals; you name it, all kinds of people,

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young and old.

I mean, yes, mostly it's 25-35 year olds but it is a much broader. But the other interesting thing about this group is that to link it to the discussion on the military is if the military were to decide to move, those people who turn against the military immediately. They are not in any way, shape or form want the regime to change. They want governance to change and they don't want the AKP and Erdoğan to essentially decide on a daily basis what it is they can do and they cannot do.

And look, Erdoğan, the thing about Erdoğan is why -- he's becoming a polarizing figure not -- because he gets involved in just about every aspect of society. He's not just the Prime Minister but he's also the art critic. He's also the person who decides on commercials, what commercials goes up and down. He's the person who decides exactly what shopping malls will go. This is not what your Prime Minister is supposed to do. You have to have a little bit more decentralization.

But on the other hand, I mean, you also have to remember that Turkey is in the process of a major change especially because of the Kurdish opening that the Prime Minister is trying to introduce. And in many ways, this is the greatest fear I have that this will create some repercussions on that process. And --

MS. WITTES: Can you explain why?

MR. BARKEY: Well, because look, this is a process that is actually quite murky in a sense that there is a deal between the PKK and the government. Most people don't know what the content of that deal is. So, there are a lot of suspicions, there are a lot of concerns but when you also -- and this is okay. It doesn't have to be necessarily in the open but when some things are obscured, the chance for making mistakes increase.

And the Prime Minister has to respond to all these things. He cannot just

come back today and completely ignore what has happened for the last few weeks. So, he is on the defensive and he or people in his entourage will make mistakes.

I mean just look at the way, one of the things we forgot to say is the police reaction is what really made this (inaudible). So, did the police act because it was ordered to do it this way? Not necessarily. So, you see, for example, police behavior triggering unintended consequences.

So, what I'm saying is I don't know how this will affect the other issues. But the unintended consequences are quite serious, potentially quite serious.

MS. WITTES: Steven?

MR. COOK: Yeah. A couple of things that Henri said sparked a sense that we're struggling. We want to know is this an urban-rural thing? Is this secular? Is it left? What is it? And I'd say it's about politics.

In a metaphorical way, all of the complaints that people have about Erdoğan and the AKP came together in Geza Park. The perception of environmental degradation, police brutality, the arrogance of power, crony capitalism, the sense that people have been marginalized, that Erdoğan governs half the country his supporters and intimidates the other half. And I certainly agree with Ömer that we can't talk about this as the Turkish spring or the Turkish uprising.

The only way that Erdoğan leaves is by dint of the ballot box. But if you take it up a level of abstraction, you can make a connection between uprisings in the Arab world and the current unrest in Turkey. And that is, that people are responding to the perception that their leaders have either rigged or are in the process of rigging a political system in which they have absolutely no say, no power, are powerless to change anything. Now, part of that is a function of the fact that the political parties are nowhere.

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I mean, if you had viable opposition political parties, you would have a check or a balance. I don't know which one but you would have one or the other on the political system.

Yet the Justice and Development Party has proceeded in that environment to do things that people perceive to be as institutionalizing the power of the Justice and Development Party and essentially aggrandizing the power of Prime Minister Erdoğan, if you can possibly do that at this point since he's the sun around Turkish politics revolve.

MS. WITTES: Okay, now, you mentioned a number of issues. The one you didn't mention was Islamism. So, Kemal, how relevant is the religious-secular dimension or the Islamist element in the AKP to this broader political confrontation, this sense of marginalization?

MR. KIRIŞCI: I mean a lot is being made about this secular versus the conservative religious people in Turkey. And just before these protests erupted, the government had introduced this new piece of legislation bringing some restrictions to the sale and consumption of alcohol. And then if you follow the media there was a lot of articles about the Iran versus raku war. Iran is this yogurty drink and raku is ironically when mixed with water turns white and looks a bit like Iran, too.

But a lot of it was presented as a confrontation, black and white. In all fairness there were also lots of columnists rightly saying that this is not really about secularism versus this polarization in Turkey. And many kept making references to Sweden, Finland, Holland as well as the United States where restrictions exist on alcohol consumption one way or the other.

But where I think they differed from the way I look at these things, no one

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actually mentioned that Sweden, Finland and Holland are countries where freedom of expression are at a much higher level. And this is where I'd like to link to Steve's analogy to some similarity between the Arab spring and let's call it the Turkish spring here.

In the Arab world I think again people, a bit resembling the ones out in Taksim Square, were pushing for a change, for a transformation. Take Egypt and other countries to another level. I think what's happening in Turkey is something similar. We were introduced to what you would call a multiparty system back in 1950. And this system finally in the hands of, just like Omer mentioned, in the hands of the governing party matured in the last 10 decades or so.

As it matured and as the government followed the successful economic policies, I think a new class began to emerge. A bourgeois, a professional class, who's failing to find a way out in what you could call formal political party based politics. And there are frustrated and some of them are really one, I mean if you could just Google it, Google the word *çapul*. It's fascinating. The whole country has introduced to the English language a new term called *çapuling*. And maybe where the Prime Minister has missed out on what's happening, this pressure is this new Turks, call them new Turks. And amongst them I think there are people, there is a movement called Muslims against Capitalism Movement.

So, in the ranks of those who are protesting, you don't have only leftist bourgeois professional students but you do have also biased people. And yesterday was a religious day in Turkey. An effort was made together to observe the significant of that.

I think what the word is here is individualism. Individualism and they're looking for a way out to express themselves. And I agree with Henri, rather than regime it's governance seeking for an adjustment in governance that listens to individual

demands. And that will be a tough one for a country like Turkey, not necessarily just RKP.

MS. WITTES: Well, and of course one reason why these governance questions are coming to a head now is because Turkey is looking at revising one of its core governance documents, the Constitution. And I recall when Prime Minister Erdoğan was here a couple of weeks ago, Kemal, you asked him about the Constitution. He didn't seem very eager to address the substance of that question. Omer, do you think that there is some -- you know that the anxiety over the Constitutional process plays into this and what do you think will be the impact on Erdoğan's ability to put forward the kind of majoritarian constitutional process he had in mind?

MR. TAŞPINAR: Well, I think that he had in mind more than a majoritarian constitutional process was ideally a presidential system. And I think after what happened this week and more may be coming. I think he's back in Turkey now and I'm kind of dreading the press conferences because I'm just scared that his abrasive style may trigger more demonstrations. I think it's over, the idea of a presidential system in Turkey now after all these demonstrations.

That dimension of the constitutional change, it was already I think that in many ways because even within AKP there was strong voices against the presidential system. They did not have the majority. Only a referendum giving him tremendous majority would have made it possible. After what happened last week, I think that that's gone.

When we talk about a new Constitution in Turkey, the most important issue we're talking is actually the Kurdish question. The definition of citizenship, decentralization, education in mother tongue and Kurdish, so the irony, the paradox of

what is going on in Turkey today and that's the testament to the complexity of Turkey is that despite all the illiberal, authoritarian tendencies of the current government, this is the party that is pushing for a Constitution that will address this Kurdish problem.

And they have been in coalition with the BDP and the MHP, the CHP, the opposition was not willing to really support this change. So, that's the kind of paradox. I mean how can you be so willing and able to change a paradigm shift in this Kurdish, basically bringing multiculturalism to Turkey. Bringing multiculturalism to a system that used to assimilate the Kurds, that's a tremendous change.

If number one change was the civil-military relations, the end of the military tutelage system which they have successfully accomplished, the number two change was to change basically this Kurdish question and bring a more multicultural dimension to Turkey. They're about to push that, too.

How can this authoritarian leader, this abrasive style, this illiberal style, you should all see the cover of the Economist this week. I mean it's hilarious. It shows Erdoğan as the Sultan and asks is a democrat or a Sultan. And how can this person that is so polarizing be at the same time the agent of change in Turkey, the agent of democratization on the Kurdish question?

And that, the only answer I can give is that it took someone like Erdoğan to change the system. It took someone like Erdoğan to really go after the memorandum that the military gave in 2007 when they said, we don't want Abdulac, basically the reading was we don't want Abdulac to become president. And if you don't disagree with us, we may do something. It was a very threatening memorandum.

A less abrasive politician in power, someone who is perhaps the better person for these times would have probably stepped down and said, okay, let's change

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the route. Let's not push too much. Instead, Erdoğan, the Erdoğan that we don't like today said to the military basically, bring it on. Let's have elections. And in 2007 we had elections and he won with 47 percent.

So, when Henri, you say, he faced no challenges, I disagree. He faced serious challenges. After winning the election in 2008, the Constitutional Court tried to ban his party. He lives with that kind of existential challenge. You know the Kemalists today, the secularists, the youth may have their narrative of victimhood. They feel that their lifestyle is being challenged. That there's all these bans, oppression, et cetera but these guys, the conservative pious Islamists, whatever you call it, they have their narrative of victimhood, too.

They have been the victim of this tyranny of the minority in the past. And they see basically an existential challenge. They see a coup around the corner all the time. They never take it for granted that they're in government, that they're governing the country today. They're insecure.

And as late as 2008, they came at the brink of being shut down by the Constitutional Court despite the fact of winning almost 50 percent of the vote. So, the dilemma I face today is what do I want in Turkey? The tyranny of the majority or the tyranny of the minority? Do I want a majoritarian democracy or a minoritarian republic?

Ideally I want a liberal democracy. I want individual rights and liberties. I want freedoms. I want Turkey to become member of the European Union. But this is not happening and this is the failure of center right politicians. If Turkey had made this transition to a post-Kemalist order where the military has been silenced under Ozal, under Demirel, under (inaudible), we wouldn't be in this position today because we wouldn't be as polarized; the fact that the change, the historic change that Turkey came

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under a neo-Islamist, a moderate Islamic government has polarized Turkey.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Omer, what's ironic, if I may --

MS. WITTES: Yes.

MR. KIRIŞCI: -- the Constitutional Court of 2008 was presided by a President who was appointed by AKP and played a critical role in tipping the balance in favor of not closing the party, today is drawing attention to individual liberties and respecting that.

MS. WITTES: Okay, so is this a recipe, Henri, for further polarization? Is that where we are now?

MR. BARKEY: That's a tough one. I would say in the short term yes, there will be more polarization because I don't see how -- first of all I think people are going to draw the wrong lessons from this. I think the opposition parties will think that they can take advantage. That somehow the people are behind them when they're not. I don't think any of the people who are in the -- well, I should say the majority of the people who are demonstrating wouldn't necessarily vote for the two major opposition parties, the Nationalist and the Republican People's Party.

But they will draw the wrong lesson and in some ways increase the level of criticism and the attacks on the government. The government, I think, will be on the defensive I think unless Erdoğan comes in and there are some news -- I mean before I came here I was checking the Turkish papers. Some rumors that he's going to make a major declaration tomorrow but I don't what the content is. But let's assume that he doesn't. Let's assume that he sticks to his guns and he wants to build that shopping mall and the mosque and et cetera.

And they're going to be on the defensive and that's also going to be

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creating further -- but the other thing to understand is that in terms of the basic political dynamics in Turkey, that hasn't changed. The majority in the country or 50 percent of the country will still vote for the AKP no matter what because people vote their pocketbook. And if you're going to go to the polls tomorrow and you look, I mean are you better off today than you were four years ago as Ronald Reagan once asked here? Yes, they are better off. And hence they will vote for.

And also, because, Turkey has become a very -- in some ways is a bizarre place. In Turkey the left is right and the right is left, right? The right which is represented by the AKP really has embraced the working class, the lower middle classes and the left, the Republican People's Party has embraced essentially the upper levels of society and doesn't want to change. They become the conservatives.

And this is underlying essentially a great deal of the polarization that we see because the left is not playing its traditional role of being the vanguard of change. They're against the peace process and they're against most of the changes that are taking place in Turkey.

MS. WITTES: Okay. I'm going to open it up for your questions at this time. Let me ask three things of you. First, before you ask your question tell us your name and where you're from. Number two, keep it brief so that we can get to as many of you as possible. And number three, make sure it's a question with a question mark at the end.

Okay, yes, sir, we'll start with the gentleman in the striped shirt.

SPEAKER: (inaudible) Johns Hopkins Studies. My question will be about the pol -- should we expect new political formation in Turkish political system since you said the current political opposition parties are not, I mean, cannot answer the

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current questions? After these events is there any possibility of having any political opposition party in Turkey?

MS. WITTES: Okay, who wants to take that on?

MR. COOK: I will. Well, welcome. I'm a CISR myself. The problem with the current opposition parties is that they don't offer a position for Turks about what it is. As Henri just said, the Republican People's Party is this -- mourns for Turkey's insularity and old order. That doesn't work for a society that has developed along the lines that Turkey has developed.

There has been some discussion I've seen over the course of recent days about the emergence of new political parties. But as I said when I started seeing these things, how many heroic new Turkish liberal parties that we're going to capture the center of the country are going to emerge that we're going to capture the imagination are mostly foreigners. And then they flame out at the elections. They get one percent of the vote, two percent of the votes.

I think Omer said something that was very, very important. This is not necessarily an issue of the AKP which has done extraordinary things over the course of the last decade. It has taken an illiberal turn and that's perhaps because Erdoğan himself has been around too long. I long for the Erdoğan of 2003-2007 who was pragmatic, who was interested in consensus building, who did not heat up the political order.

He has not proved since then that he's capable of those kinds of things. And it perhaps that at that moment in 2007 he was the right person there. He was the right vehicle, the right personality to forge these changes but after having been in power for a decade he cannot be that -- who will step in? Where will the knives and night of

long knives come from? I don't think -- I can't identify anybody.

I think that this is the current configuration in politics right now is what you're going to see. Of course, the X factor here is what does President Gül do? And this has been on everybody's mind for the last week or so. I don't know. I don't know. He's so implicit about everything, it's entirely unclear. He leaves the door open. He closes the door, he leaves the door open. But that is something and that is a relationship I think to watch.

But as far as some new political party emerging that captures this energy, my sense is that that's not likely to be the case.

MS. WITTES: So, not like the story in Israel where you had a social protest movement completely upend, okay.

MR. COOK: I don't think so.

MR. BARKEY: Well, ironically when you look at the political party scene in Turkey, the only one, the only political party that could benefit from this and make use of it, is RKP itself. I mean, if Erdoğan could go on back and make the speech he did in 2007 after he won the elections and just make an effort not to use that sometimes very denigrating language or expressions, I think he may.

And Gül has tried to soften things. His Deputy Prime Minister has tried to soften it. This is the dilemma of the Turkish spring in many ways.

MS. WITTES: Okay. The gentleman in the red sweater in the back. Just wait for the mic if you can, thank you.

MR. GRIMM: Actually my question was answered because you already addressed the Gül question. Maybe if the other gentlemen would also like to add something. I'm Oliver Grimm. I'm a newspaper correspondent from an Austrian

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newspaper here, so. The Gül role, I'd be interested in that if you could elaborate.

MS. WITTES: The role of President Gül.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Look, Turkey is a one party one man state and the one man is Erdoğan. And nobody is going to challenge him. And if people think that Gül is going to take him on they must be smoking something. But so, Erdoğan is going to remain there until he decides to leave whichever way that may take. But so, I don't see Gül challenging him. I don't see -- by the way, there are changes in the making in the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party.

There are challengers emerging and I think these events especially because they were in Istanbul is going to give rise to possibly at least one challenger that I know. And whether or not he can mobilize the Party to win Istanbul for the municipality remains to be seen. But there might be but it's --

MR. COOK: Fess up, who is it?

MR. TAŞPINAR: Huh?

MR. COOK: Fess up, don't be such a tease.

MR. TAŞPINAR: It's the mayor of Shishilee, what's his name?

MR. KIRIŞCI: Suga-good.

MR. TAŞPINAR: I mean, I don't he has national character but he fancies himself to be able to take on Erdoğan. At least that's what he says. So, but I don't see anybody else.

MS. WITTES: Okay, watch that space. Yes, the lady in the orange jacket. Just wait for the microphone if you can, thank you.

SPEAKER: I'm a Senior Fellow at the Transatlantic Academy this year. And I'm a bit more pessimistic about the moral and sometimes mistakenly referred to

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lifestyle questions in this issue. And I would like to throw out both Kemal and (inaudible) on these issues. Look at what he has been trying to do around women's rights questions, the whole debate about abortion last year; the attempt to try to block public health payments for women in need of abortions.

This is not a theological moral issue in Turkey. Nobody, of course, accepts it, et cetera but you know this was basically an attempt not only to control women's rights but now also comes his family policy recommending to every women that they have three children. I'm sorry this is a page from a kind of rightwing populace agenda, very well known in European politics of the 1930s and so on. And Prime Minister Erdoğan has moved away from this language of pluralism towards increasingly more and more a kind of Muslim moral majority style.

So, I think that the young people who are concerned about what this meant, what the alcohol ban meant are quite right. So, I'd like to ask your opinion about this.

The second issue is there's nothing contradictory between a presidential system and a democratic system. We have examples. And Omer my question is to you because it's not being reported in the American press sufficiently. Let's talk about the details about the shift to the presidential system in Turkey. What prerogatives does it involve? How is it different than a system like the US for example? Because Erdoğan is famously on the agenda for having said in the US the President can't even buy a helicopter or order a helicopter. What is it that he's supposed to get out of this presidential system so that we can understand the purpose? Thank you very much.

MS. WITTES: Thank you, thank you. Kemal, do you want to start with the parallels?

MR. KIRIŞCI: Yes, I'll take the question there. Thanks. The way I see it is that it's somewhat ironic. Omer earlier on mentioned how in Turkey we had majoritarianism of a minority. And now, we're arriving to a point where we have the majoritarianism against minorities, different types of minor and one of them clearly are the women.

Turkey has always prided itself that it -- in the context of Turkey's politics. And although Turkey has always in the past and today, too, prides itself for having been one of the first countries to introduce votes for women, when we look at UNCTAD statistics and human development statistics, it's very appalling the performance of Turkey when it comes to women rights, when it comes to women's participation in the economy, when it comes to women in the bureaucracy especially. And it's getting from bad to worse over the couple of years.

So, the way I look at it, the challenge today for RKP and I don't see any other political party on the scene, is to try to transform from this majoritarianism that is increasingly suffocating minorities, minorities that may prefer to consume alcohol or women in this case. But I don't use the word minority in a derogative manner that would take the country towards true pluralism.

It comes back to Steve's point that this is a pressure to move up a league. To push Turkey into a higher league, into a league where the Copenhagen political criteria would genuinely be met and a league where finally Turkey can live in comfort with its own diversity, a diversity where, yes, the majority wants to enjoy their conservative values and their piousness, religiosity. But also that those who feel, prefer a Western style of life, secular life, and these protests, these demonstrations have actually shown that at least a part of Turkey is capable of doing it out in the public space in very

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difficult circumstances where now and then police moves in an effort to break up this protest.

MS. WITTES: Okay, thank you. Omer, will he be able to buy a helicopter?

MR. TAŞPINAR: I think he already is able to buy a helicopter. The presidential system that he wants in many ways depends on what kind of majority one can have in Turkey. When the Prime Minister has this kind of majority in the Parliament, I think it's very easy to act like the president. I mean Turkey has a very patriarchal political culture to begin with. Where are the people that can provide checks and balances around him?

My fear is that the presidential system will only worsen the patriarchal tendencies of Turkey. I mean, what Turkey needs -- the last thing Turkey needs is a big man politics. Opposite what we need are institutions that would provide checks and balances. And the first part of your question necessarily deal with this question of how do you provide institutions? How do you create institutions that guarantee rights and freedoms?

It doesn't have to be about really gender rights, minority rights, cultural rights, et cetera. It has to be about individual rights and freedoms. This is about liberalism and there's a clash between liberalism and democratization in Turkey. Turkey is more democratic today but it is still illiberal. It was very illiberal in the 1960s, '70s, '80s. It is still illiberal today.

So, there is a sense of continuity. And just one quick note about I've been thinking about an analogy. We are trying to compare what's going on in Turkey today with the Arab spring. I think a more interesting analogy would be the urban riots in

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France that we had in 2005 if I'm not mistaken. Especially the way Sarkozy back then called the protestors "acai voyeux" basically slums. And that, police brutality was a factor there, the way Sarkozy reacted made it worse.

I think the parallel is this, that we don't have really the level of mass demonstration of millions in the streets to compare it to. Even the (inaudible) meeting did it. I mean I asked myself why this did not happen during the Jumboliet meeting there in 2007, 2008 when you had one million people walking to the mausoleum of Atatürk with slogans. Actually not bad slogans like "We don't want Sharia," "We don't want military," and there was no police interference with that. And they peacefully protested and went home.

There could have been many provocations back then. It did not happen. This time somehow there is this question of police brutality. And if you want to understand police brutality in Turkey, you have to look at the political culture of Turkey; this notion of public order and protecting the State from the individuals. This is at the heart of Turkish constitution-making too.

All Turkish Constitutions has been made in the spirit of protecting the State from individuals and groups and classes. Not in the spirit of limiting the powers of the State and empowering the individual and citizens. So, this is still the challenge we're facing in Turkey and it's not there. I'm not sure if the new Constitution will be able to do that but that's the main challenge.

And if we can have a Constitution that limits the power of the State and empowers individuals, I think we would be at the beginning of institutions that would really change the country.

MS. WITTES: Steven, on the liberalism point?

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MR. COOK: One quick thing about that. The helicopters and the liberalism is that that statement in and of itself tells you about the kind of illiberal world view of Erdoğan. Because the right answer to him is in the United States we want the President of the United States to ask Congress for a helicopter, not I can just order up a helicopter.

And what this, I think we need to keep in mind when we talk about presidential system, now I'm going to geek out on the social science stuff. Is that presidential systems tend to fail more often than parliamentary systems especially in these kind of big man political systems where you don't have the kind of robust checks and balances that you have. And that's clearly not the kind of Constitution that Erdoğan wants to write.

MS. WITTES: Okay, here in the front, second row.

MS. ASKOY: Hi, Pinar Askoy. Both Ömer and Kemal has been talking about majority and a minority in Turkey, a country where 50 percent of the people voted for AKP and the other 50 percent didn't.

So, I'm curious to hear about how you define the majority in Turkey and how we define the minority but please not the 1990s or 2007 but in Turkey of 2013, who's a majority and who's a minority?

MS. WITTES: All right, is this a country that's just split down the middle right now and what we see in the political system is a manifestation of what's happened in society? Is that in essence the question?

MR. TAŞPINAR: It's the right question in many ways because a party that receives 50 percent should not be perceived as the majority. You can argue that the 50 percent block is in unison against it hence our party doesn't deserve to be labeled as

the majority. I think that's the spirit of your question.

That assumes that the 50 percent that did not vote for the AKP can act in unison and that they can provide basically the other 50 percent block that can balance this party. Unfortunately, the 50 percent that did not vote for AKP is in disarray. You have now within that 50 percent a big chunk of vote going to CHP, the CHP itself is divided. Everyone is talking about when the party will split. You have the Kurdish party that is more in line with the reforms that the AKP wants to do. They even signed off to the presidential system. I think they're stepping back now but then you have the MHP. What is the MHP?

If there's one party in Turkey that is close to the AKP in terms of the voter base, it's the MHP. Erdoğan looks at the polls every month and he is very concerned about the OPTC and the MHP because that's the base of his party as well. He can easily win votes from the MHP. The CHP block is lost to him. The Kemalists will never vote for him. There's a 25 percent of Turkey that basically hates Erdoğan.

There's another 25 percent of Turkey that considers Erdoğan as God. And then you have basically this 40 percent in the middle. And in that 40 percent you have 10, 15 percent MHP, that is to me the Turkish Islamic synthesis. They're nationalist but they're also religious. They're very close to an AKP type of conservatism. So, they can easily vote for that.

In that sense, maybe mistakenly Pinar, but when we use the term majoritarian versus minority I tend to use AKP, religious conservatives or basically the coalition that the AKP represents, the 50 percent against the Kemalist minority, the 25 percent that is basically, unfortunately, the more educated, the kind of upper middle class, the Western educated. I mean, if someone speaks English in Turkey it's very likely

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that they will be anti-AKP. That's the reality. If someone Tweets for instance, it's very likely that they will be anti-AKP because you have this upper -- I mean in general terms I think there is an urban upper middle class that is overwhelmingly CHP in Turkey.

And they're very frustrated because they have nowhere, they're CHP. Their instincts are with the secular social democratic party. They want a secular social democratic party but what they see in CHP is not a social democratic -- it's secular. But it's authoritarian. It has neo-nationalists in it. So, they can't really identify. They need a political party.

The first question that we had, will a political party emerge? When I was a PhD student at SAID, Jim Boyer had established a political party called the uni democraceriquite? I was so excited about that party. I voted for them. Zero point five percent.

MR. COOK: One percent of the vote? Oh, was it zero point five?

MR. TAŞPINAR: Zero point five percent. He had a beautiful slogan which said Turkey has to go beyond Atatürk and Muhammad. Beautiful. He managed to alienate 99 percent of the vote.

MS. WITTES: Henri?

MR. BARKAY: First of all --

MR. COOK: And you've clearly pulled back from that as well.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Yes.

MR. BARKAY: But you still voted for him. Look, I actually think this is the wrong question. Turkey is not a two party system like the United States. In the United States where you have, where you go to presidential elections, you either vote for the Republicans or you vote for the Democrats and if you're in Florida maybe for Ralph

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Nader. But in Turkey, the fact that 50 percent did not vote for the AKP does not mean they're against the AKP.

It just means that their first preference was for something else, right? So, as Omer said, the first preference may be for a nationalist party, a party that is more nationalist but their second preferences could be AKP. In fact, we will see the range of the AKP when Erdoğan runs for the presidency in 2014 because that's when you're going to have essentially two candidates going against each other. And I suspect that he will get 60 percent of the vote because people don't always in such elections will not always vote for the second choice. They'll vote for the first choice knowing very well maybe how the outcome is going to be.

I mean, they may already know that the AKP is going to win but they want to express another opinion. That doesn't mean they're against the AKP. So, I think to say that AKP has only 50 percent and therefore 50 percent of the public is against them is a very incorrect way of approaching Turkey. I think AKP is --

MS. ASKOY: I didn't mean that though. I just meant that socials were not necessarily minorities, just people leaving differently so. Just because AKP has the 50 percent doesn't mean the rest of all of these groups are the minorities.

MS. WITTES: She was objecting to the labeling of majority and minority.

MR. BARKEY: Right but I am also saying that there is no minority. I mean, the minority is very identifiable, the hardcore secularists or the Kurds, right? Those are very, for whom there is no second choice in terms of AKP but for others I would think -- so, I think the AKP's reach is much wider than we think it is. That's what I'm saying.

MS. WITTES: Kemal?

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MR. KIRIŞCI: Maybe at the end of the day the critical parameters here is to try to understand what makes individuals in Turkey vote in a particular direction. And I think the majority tends to vote on the basis of economic factors. If I vote for this party will I get a job? And what is the likelihood of me continuing to get a job?

And for those who are owners of capital or shops or factories and businesses, I think they calculate, they say what is the likelihood of stability being provided by whichever party? And that's the dominant. And then identities come. Kurdish identity plays a role, (inaudible) identity plays a role. Other identities play a role but primarily it's economic driven and the challenge of what's happening in Turkey is that the Prime Minister, before boarding the plane, made some statements and that has immediately impacted on the stock exchange.

And earlier on the stock exchange reacted to the protests. The protesters were reacting to the Prime Minister's remarks. So, the performance of the economy may at the end of the day be the telling factor as to in which direction people would vote.

MS. WITTES: Thanks, do you want to? Okay. Front row.

MR. CEBECI: Thank you. Erol Cebeci, SETA Foundation. I would like to ask Henri Barkey, in your presentation you used the words revolt. This would never be the same again, a new civil society is formed up. For a government and for a leader who has seen the Jumboliet meetings in 2007 and in the last two years who has seen the separate celebrations of May 19th, 29 Octobers and all those things, why do you think they should feel, the government, that this is different from what was happening in the last two and a half years? Especially if you look at the group who was talking to Deputy Prime Minister yesterday, one from the architect's board, the other one from the doctor's

board and the groups who does this task which has been there for the last 10 years in the same positions.

If you allow me one question to Steven Cook, you had mentioned that until 2007 what was done in terms of suppression of the military is something reasonable. But since 2007 the change and that shifted and you also a very similar point, a type like Erdoğan can function in a Turkey until 2007 but last five years it might not be helpful. Do you think that the Kurdish solution issue which is the last six months of issue can be done if the military of Turkey was the military of 2007 and if the one that you like the kind of Erdoğan could run a program of that type of a Kurdish function? Thank you.

MS. WITTES: Okay, Henri?

MR. BARKEY: Well, look, I think this is different. I really do think this is different because the other demonstrations that you talked about were essentially demonstrations that were organized necessarily by one specific political party with one specific goal in mind. Whereas these are chaotic, much larger coalitions, were spontaneous, right? And they come at a time when in society there was a great deal of angst and uncertainty about this issue of governance that I talked about. So, in that sense it's very, very different than the previous demonstrations that we saw.

Secondly, what is also very interesting is the way the press reacted. We haven't talked about the press and in some ways the press, for the first time we've seen a press that has been scared to report. I mean, the event started on the 27th, I mean the 27th of May Istanbul was up in arms, right? The next morning the Sabah newspaper which is per government, if you looked at the front page, there was not a single reference to the events that happened in Istanbul that day. I mean you think that these people were reporting on Mars or something like that.

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I mean nothing happened on Mars yesterday. Oh, yes the Prime Minister got an award from the United Nations for his anti-smoking campaign. Well, listen I'm all in favor for that. I mean, but --

MR. COOK: Mayor Bloomberg, too.

MR. BARKEY: -- as soon as you saw the day or the demonstrations, when the demonstrations were taking place, the television stations were not reporting what was going on. That tells you something that is actually quite different than what is happening before in a sense that the government itself was reacting very differently to the events. Was seeing these events as a potential threat, as a potential -- I don't think it's a threat, as I said, to the regime, but it was a threat to the image and to the governance of the Prime Minister. And that's all I said. And I think things are going to change because I think in this particular case, you'll find a civil society that is now empowered. It's going to take, as I said earlier, time for this to emerge.

I just want to say one thing about the military which I did not earlier. Look, I don't want to give credit only to the AKP for putting the military back in its barracks. The military made so many mistakes that the public wanted them to go back into the barracks. I mean had they not messed up the way they did, I think AKP would have not necessarily been able to -- I mean, the military was its own worst enemy in some ways and made it easier for the AKP to stand up and say, you go back to the barracks.

MR. COOK: What he said. No, let me start by saying, Erol, that the underlying presumption of your two questions is that you need an illiberal leader in order to get to democracy. And my feeling is you need democracy to support democracy.

Now, directly to your questions, I would have wanted the government to

continue the process of objective control of the armed forces subordinating it to democratic neutral institutions of the State. That is clearly not what has happened since the Ergenekon Conspiracy broke. Now, I'm not dismissing the fact that there is evidence that there was a conspiracy. I certainly don't have any brief for the Turkish Armed Forces. I mean it would be a surprise to the Turkish Armed Forces to suggest that I have some sort of brief for them. But that there was a way of bringing this military under civilian control by deepening and broadening the process that they began in 2003 and in 2004.

And precisely what Henri said, they had allies among the population. In 2007, people were out there saying we don't want Sharia and we don't want a military coup. There was a way of going about doing this without actually threatening precisely what the goal has been which is to get the military out of politics.

Now, in terms of your Kurdish, I have the same exact answer. The best way to get to a resolution of the Kurdish issue is through democratic consensual politics. That has not been the case in Turkey. There has been a hollowing out of democratic institutions. The Prime Minister hasn't been interested in the kind of politics that one would think is appropriate in a country that bills itself as a liberalizing democratizing country.

MS. WITTES: Okay, I'm going to take three more questions in a row and then I'm going to come back to our panelists for each of you to make final comments. The gentleman in the beard, actually there are two beards. So, we'll take you one after the other. No, go right ahead.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Nothing wrong with that.

MS. WITTES: We're beard neutral, I just want to make that clear.

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MR. KEANE: Rob Keane, Brookings, thank you all for your words. I had a question about the presidential election next year. There has been some talk about basically the opposition running an anybody but Erdoğan candidate including maybe talk that CHP would even back Gül or another candidate from within AKP or from within the conservative movement. And I'm curious as to what your thoughts on that are and also what your thoughts are on a possible division within the conservative movement, especially along the lines of sort of Milli Gorus versus Fethullah Gulen movement.

MS. WITTES: Great, thank you. And just hand the microphone to the gentleman behind you.

MR. LOBE: Jim Lobe, Inter Press Service. It's a little different but implications if any for US policy toward Turkey and the back and forth this week and specifically with respect to Syria.

MS. WITTES: Okay. And one more question on this side. Yes. Microphone is coming your way.

MS. DRIBBEN: Betsy Dribben, McLean, Virginia. I'm interested in hearing your comments about the number of media that are in prison for having written even the most benign criticism about Erdoğan.

MS. WITTES: Okay, so, we've talked a lot about the consequences of this crisis on the political system but what might it mean for some of these basic freedoms and individual rights including free speech?

The US policy question, if I can, add a twist to it. We have Erdoğan who, of course, was just in Washington as Steven noted in an article he wrote for Foreign Policy. Got a lot of praise and no public criticism from the Administration during that visit and this is the world leader that President Obama --

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MR. COOK: Oh, I thought you meant the article got --

MS. WITTES: And this is the world leader that President Obama has said he feels closest to. So, to what extent does President Obama have leverage here? And if so, how might he use it on the situation? So, why don't we start where we ended. Kemal?

MR. KIRIŞCI: All right. To start with Rob's question there, I think it's too early. It is still a while to go to the presidential elections and we have a former president references were made Süleyman Demiral who had once made the remark that 24 hours in politics is a very long time.

So, I think we need to wait a bit and especially what's happened over the last week or so may also have repercussions on politics as well as the issue of presidential elections. RKP is usually seen as a political party of, a coalition of different groups and maybe one explanation why the Prime Minister has become the kind of Prime Minister he is, increasingly referred to as authoritarian, may well be a function of trying to keep this political party together in a unified and homogenous manner.

On the United States and it relates also to your question, if indeed Obama has the kind of relationship that we, the public, think he has it's none of my business to interfere in the affairs of Presidents and Prime Ministers. I would kind of expect him to take the phone and in a very friendly way say, politics is very tough. And it can get very dirty. You know, you've achieved a lot in Turkey in the region but watch out your language. And my experience here is that I'm not doing that well in terms of capturing politics as broadly as possible.

MR. BARKEY: That would be a very short conversation probably.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Probably. So, I will leave it at that. On Syria, it's

interesting that you should bring up Syria. During our discussions it didn't come up. But amongst the commentaries that have been made about why this is happening there are references to people in some ways also protesting against the policies that government has been pursuing on this issue.

My personal opinion on this is that, I mean, there's a catastrophe and a tragedy unfolding right next door to Turkey in a country with which Turkey until about 10, 12 years ago had mine fields, literally mine fields separating these two countries. And then suddenly in the course of the last decade, this incredibly intimate relationship evolved. Not just with the regime but the country itself, too. And there's a close social relationship between the two. And I can understand that on the part of the government there's going to be this burning desire to do something about it.

Yet, there is also a reality that that catastrophe, that tragedy is spilling into Turkey and is undermining Turkish security let alone go beyond it. So, it's a bit challenging, it's a difficult situation there.

Media, very good. Interestingly, these protests have been directed against the media as well, the media itself. The media, the manner in which the media has failed to defend freedom of expression. I mean, yes, I will go along and criticize the government for having repressed this media expression. Two aspects of Turkey and Turkish politics that have always personally deeply embarrassed me is the issue that Sheila brought up, the status of women in a country like Turkey.

That we're lagging behind countries like Jordan, Morocco, Algeria in terms of the status in human development in indecencies and the other is media. The fact that there are people behind bars and when you talk to government people, just like the previous regime, they produce excuses and argue that these people are not all media

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people, journalists. However, let me stress, I think media bosses in Turkey are going to have to make a big effort to recover their image in society and society's fast discovering that some of the repression on the media is product of media patron, we say; media bosses choosing to rub shoulders with the government to protect their business interests rather than defend freedom expression.

MS. WITTES: Thank you. Steven.

MR. COOK: Quickly, I'll just address the US policy. I don't think that this is going to change Turkish-Syria policy. Erdoğan changed Turkey-Syria when he came here the third week of May and essentially accepted the administration's view of things after spending a lot of time trying to convince the United States that a more robust approach to Syria is necessary.

Now, as far as this question of whether President has leverage or not, one would think perhaps that he should maybe make another telephone call with a baseball bat again and that might send some of message. Just kidding. It's unclear whether the Administration has any leverage with Erdoğan on this particular issue given the way in which he believes that he is right on this. But it is interesting that the Administration really hasn't tried all that much.

There has been little to no public criticism of Erdoğan from the White House. There's been sporadic statements from the State Department over the course of four and a half years but just to give you an example. I knew that this question was likely to come up and I was chatting with a friend of mine who was a former government official who was directly responsible for the Turkey account. And what he basically said to me was this, it's not like we didn't know that there was a kind of illiberal turn or authoritarian in Turkish politics. But we turned an eye away from it because we need Turkey on a

variety of other important regional issues because of what's going on in the region.

This is an appropriate -- you know, Turkey is a strategic ally. This is the way in which we had seen Turkey over many, many, many years. It's just hard, as we have done, to hold Turkey out as a model to the Arab world while we're not saying anything about jailed journalists for example. Which is a pretty serious thing, so, it struck me that there is an opportunity for us to voice these issues publicly. Perhaps that will have an effect on the way the Prime Minister views these things.

MS. WITTES: Thank you. Henri?

MR. BARKEY: The reaction to what Steve said is I'm shocked that there's human right violations in Turkey. But look, first of all, the United States has no leverage when it comes to these issues with Turkey. It never had, it doesn't have it now. It's unlikely to have it any time in the future. So, we shouldn't expect. All we can expect is for the Administration and Biden, by the way, the other day did it at the ATC meetings very subtly. He did say a few things about the press.

But this is not, first of all, enormous, this is not Saudi Arabia. This is not the big issues in terms of human rights. So, this Administration or the Bush Administration before that would not have said something. But the Syria issue is actually quite important.

Syria policy is not going to change, as Steve said, but here's what's going to change. Remember everybody is misinterpreting what's going on in the States of Istanbul. You see, by the way, the government itself is saying oh there are foreign agents. I mean the initial FARC and all these poor government papers are looking for foreign agents. They've arrested some foreign agents. Apparently from Houston there are some secret codes being sent.

I mean, so people, I mean the government is misinterpreting. You can be sure that Assad is misinterpreting what's going on. He thinks that Erdoğan is really in trouble because he wants to believe that. And you know, he just said a travel advisory to people going to Turkey. So, I had this image of a cartoon in the New Yorker of Syrian refugees going to this Turkish border and one is saying to the other, by the way our President Assad just said that there's trouble in Turkey, that we should not go there.

I mean, so, but perceptions are important. And there is a way in which Assad and others, the Iranians, Malachi, Hezbollah will think that Erdoğan has been weakened by these things, right? And will act accordingly. And therefore will set a set of reaction, or a chain reaction that may not be necessarily positive. But Syria policy, I can't tell you how it will change but I think Syria and the other countries will probably react, their behavior will necessarily change things on the ground.

Finally, on the presidential question, look, I actually do believe that it's going to be between Erdoğan and one other person. And who that other person is, it's not going to be Gül. It's not going to be somebody from the AKP. It's going to be maybe somebody that the opposition parties agree on, a distinguished lawyer, somebody who may have some appeal to the public but this is a foregone conclusion. Erdoğan is going to become president so there's no point in even talking about it.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Just quickly, I'm not 100 percent Gül will not run again. This past week has put Abdullah Gül under a very positive light in Turkey especially among the people who are protesting, in the eyes of the business community. He is the wise man of Turkey. He said message taken. Democracy is not just a ballot box. We understand that.

When Erdoğan was asked the same question it was very clear that he

was irritated with Gül. He said, what message? And he said, in democracy ballot box defines everything. So, you see the beginning of an increasing rivalry. I mean there was already always a kind of rivalry but I would not be surprised if a Gül candidacy for the presidency gains traction among the upper middle class educated because there's not another strong alternative. But again, as Kemal said, even 24 hours is a long time.

MR. KIRIŞCI: It would be funny if the military was to support Gül for president.

MR. COOK: He'll win the presidency in Washington.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Very quickly on human rights issues, most of the journalists in jail, the government argues are Kurds linked to the PKK. The problem in Turkey is freedom of speech and freedom of the media is also very problematic. When you solve the Kurdish problem, when you change the Constitution, when you change basically elements that curtail freedom of speech you solve also this problem of journalists in jail.

But the argument that there are more journalists in jail in Turkey than Iran and in China and therefore Turkey is less democratic than Iran and China does not ring true. And I think that's the worst way of trying to criticize the AKP because they turned basically tone deaf and they turn a blind eye to such criticism. They don't agree that they're more authoritarian, that Turkey's less democratic than Iran or China.

I even heard one of them say, look there are no journalists in jail in North Korea. Does that mean North Korea is more democratic? When you have journalists in jail that means there's a contested area. People write certain things and there are risks taken. So, this is a complicated issue but it's very closely linked to the Kurdish problem in Turkey.

And the EU used to have more leverage on the question of human rights and freedom of speech in Turkey. Today Turkey's narrative on the EU is summarized as the EU is welcome to join Turkey if they're interested. We're no longer interested. The EU is in disarray. We're doing well. They're not interested and thank you very much. We would probably be in a different Turkey if the EU had taken a different approach to Turkey.

If France and Germany had the wisdom to say yes to Turkey five years ago, six years ago, instead of having Cyprus in the Union blocking everything, there would be, I think, a different kind of opposition in Turkey. Even this current political party would not give up the EU. I think part of what we're going on in Turkey in terms of authoritarianism, et cetera is because Turkey has its EU vision. And that's very sad. The US cannot replace the EU because the US is a real politic oriented country. They have too much business to do with Turkey to put human rights on the agenda.

MS. WITTES: Ladies and gentlemen, we're going to have to leave it there. Please join me in thanking this fantastic panel. And thank you for your great questions.

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