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PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN:
TURKEY'S ELECTION AND THE FUTURE

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Introduction and Moderator:

KEMAL KIRIŞCI
TUSIAD Senior Fellow and Turkey Project Director
Center on the United States and Europe
The Brookings Institution

Panelists:

ÖMER TAŞPINAR
Nonresident Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution
Professor, National War College

KADIR ÜSTÜN
Research Director
BETA Foundation, Washington, D.C.

ROBERT WEXLER
President
S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. KIRIŞCI: Well, good afternoon. I'd like to welcome you to our discussion today on the Turkish presidential elections. Glad you were able to join us and were able to find us over here at Carnegie. We appreciate Carnegie allowing us to borrow their conference space while ours, the Brookings' conference halls are being renovated. I am Kemal Kirişci, the senior TUSIAD Fellow at the Center for U.S. and Europe at Brookings Foreign Policy part. It's again exciting times in Turkey. I had long longed for a boring, democratic, stable, and prosperous Turkey, but alas this is not yet the case. Both the neighborhood surrounding Turkey as well as Turkey continues to fill the headlines around the world. Now today we're going to address the presidential election that took place last month and then the inauguration of the former Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to the presidency and the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmet Davutoğlu taking over his position. Now traditionally it was the Turkish Parliament that would elect or call it select the president in a presidency where the post was very much a ceremonial one with maybe the exceptions of some executive powers that were introduced by the constitution that had been prepared under some military influence. Now the outgoing president, Abdullah Gül, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs but a long standing colleague and friend of the current president and one of the founders of the Justice and Development Party that is currently in power was elected by the Parliament in August 2007, but after a controversial intervention by the military to preempt him being elected to the position of president this intervention or this attempt in an intervention came to be known as an E-coups, electronic coups in Turkish politics. This opened the way for subsequently the former Prime Minister, Tayyip Erdoğan, to call for a referendum in 2010 opening the way for the first time in republican history -- previously presidents were called sultans and they came to power in a different procedure -- to elect presidents

by popular vote. And this is a major, major move away from established practice. The election was held early in August and as expected Erdoğan won the elections with just about 52 percent of the votes, falling somewhat a few points short of what the public opinion surveys had predicted. His opponents were Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, he was the common candidate of the two leading opposition parties in Turkey, the republicans people party, somewhat a social democrat party, and the national action party, a more nationalist right wing party. He had distinguished himself as a scholar in also Islamic studies but as well as the Secretary General of the organization of Islamic Corporation. The other opponent was Selahattin Demirtaş, a leading Kurdish politician and a partner in Erdoğan's efforts to address and resolve the Kurdish question in Turkey. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu received 38 percent of the votes, a few points above what was predicted for him, and Selahattin Demirtaş received just under 10 points, almost doubling the performance that his political party usually comes up with in national or mayoral elections.

So last month Erdoğan officially became the 12th president of Turkey and one day earlier than that he held a party congress, a massive party congress with a participation of almost 40,000 party loyalists where he turned over the chairmanship of the party to Ahmet Davutoğlu who also subsequently became the Prime Minister. He declared his cabinet; the cabinet was accepted by a vote of confidence. The cabinet remained pretty much the same as the one that was led by Erdoğan with the exception of his position as Minister of Foreign Affairs being replaced by Mevlut Cavusoglu, who in the cabinet was the Minister for EU Affairs. He distinguished himself for having served as the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in France. His position as EU Minister was filled up by a former Ambassador, Volkan Buzkir who is an MP for the governing party. Davutoğlu also chose to keep Ali Babacan as well

as Mehmet Simsek who have long been behind the economic policies of Turkey, very much responding to the signals coming from the Turkish markets as well as beyond.

I won't go into the details of the rest of the cabinet, but begin to raise some big questions. One big question that I'm sure many of you have been following is who will actually run Turkey? After more than 60 years being run by Prime Ministers is Turkey going to become a presidential system? How will this transformation from a parliamentary system to what is increasingly looking like a presidential system impact on the list of economic, social, political, and foreign policy challenges that Turkey faces today? Will this mean for Turkey -- what will this mean for Turkey's democracy, stability, and prosperity? How will this transformation impact on Turkey's relations with the Transatlantic community, particularly with the United States at a time when its whole neighborhood, except for the western parts, is in a state of turmoil? Recently a lot has been said about Turkey's foreign policy drifting away from the west and you may have picked up from the New York Times that a former student of Davutoğlu, a young academic wrote a column, a piece saying that his former professor held fairy tale like ideological ambitions of getting Turkey to lead the Islamic world. And the column was entitled, *"Turkey's Imperial Fantasy."* The article has already triggered a very lively debate and I suspect we might come to recognize his name, Behlul Ozhan, as one of those authors such as the one about the clash of civilizations and the end of history. This article, mark my word, is going to generate a massive industry of foreign policy articles on Turkey. Clearly, the question of this presidential election, the composition of the new cabinet, and upcoming parliamentary elections in June 2014 will continue to raise a lot of questions and debate. And this is why we're here.

I'd like to welcome the panel. Robert Wexler is the President of the Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace, but a longstanding connoisseur of

Turkey, of its Turkish leadership, as well as a former congressman. We also Kadir Üstün, a good friend. He's the Research Director of SETA's D.C. Office. SETA is a Turkish think tank that follows Turkish, domestic, and foreign policy developments closely. And then on my left I have Ömer Taşpınar, a good friend and a Nonresident Scholar at Brookings as well as a Professor teaching at the National Defense University. He has extensively published on Turkish politics and foreign policy, but most recently my favorite is an article in the prestigious academic journal called, Survival, entitled, "*The End of the Turkish Model*." You're looking very serious.

MR. TAŞPINAR: I'm wondering when you're going to stop.

MR. KIRIŞCI: I will. We will have three rounds of questions and then I'm going to do my best to make sure that we have a good at least 20 minutes for questions and answers.

Robert, the first question I fire at you. You're familiar with the new president, you've had a close relationship with him, you're a long standing friend of Turkey, what do you make of these results and what will these results actually mean for U.S.-Turkish relations? A good friend, common friend, Henri Barkey, the other day published an article called, "Who Does Obama Talk to in Turkey." What do you think?

MR. WEXLER: I don't think we have to think. That question is answered this week at the NATO summit. President Erdoğan is there. President Obama will talk to President Erdoğan. Chancellor Merkel will talk to you President Erdoğan. The answer is clear. And just taking a step back this city is obviously filled with very smart and talented people who are suspect of Prime Minister now President Erdoğan, who are critical of several of the tactics and policies, particularly of late that he has employed. And I'm one of them in certain respects. However, whether you're a fan of President Erdoğan or a complete opponent to President Erdoğan there is one undeniable fact and that is that

President Erdoğan is the most successful politician in a democratic country in the world. He's won nine elections. And he doesn't just win them by a small margin, he wins them by consensus numbers. And he doesn't just win them when the economy is roaring, he wins them when the economy is not so roaring and in the middle of significant allegations of corruption and behavior that in most instances would undermine a candidate or an official in a democratic country. So again you may be a fan or a critic of President Erdoğan, but one thing is undeniable, he is a successful politician and I say that with the greatest degree of respect. Now also that is contrasted with what's happening in the rest of the world which is relevant in that as Turkey continues to have strong leadership look at what's happening in Europe. Most of our European allies as a result of dismal economic performance, as a result of an internal debate about Europe, as a result of in Great Britain a population that seems to want to remove itself from Europe as opposed to engage itself, and a French economy that is teetering on disaster, you essentially only have one leader in Europe, Chancellor Merkel, who even has the opportunity to exert leadership and strength. And historically for a whole host of reasons German foreign, diplomatic, and military policy has been limited by its own reticence. So when the American president looks over the ocean to see who's out there who can possibly exert leadership, whether you like him or not President Erdoğan stands out.

Now let me just take two more steps back and then I'll stop. A little bit more than a year ago after the protests I believed whole heartedly that Prime Minister Erdoğan was at a crossroads. A crossroads in the sense that having had this display of opposition, young people, middle class people, clearly riled up. Prime Minister Erdoğan had an opportunity in my mind to set himself on a path to arguably be the most consequential leader certainly in Turkey's history since Atatürk and one the most consequential leaders in the world if his reaction to the protests was a broadening of the

democratic tent in Turkey rather than a decrease in the tolerance and democratic opportunities. And I felt that Prime Minister Erdoğan was uniquely situated to be magnanimous because he had such an extraordinary record of economic achievement that he could afford to be gracious to his opponents in part because he really had none that could muster up real opposition. He failed to do that, that's clear. Most politicians don't get a second chance. I actually believe President Erdoğan now gets a second chance. He gets a second chance in his new role to show the world whether he has the composure to limit his own self destructive, inflammatory behavior at times and focus on his strengths which are his success in leadership, his proclivity to be able to manage an economy relatively well, and fight his internal battles in a way where they don't infect and create a poison throughout his country.

But I'll stop with this because part of the question was what does this mean for American-Turkish relations. We share enormous interests, the defeat of ISIS. The first thing I hope that happens when President Obama and President Erdoğan sit together -- and no one else is listening I hope -- I hope President Obama says to President Erdoğan, you know, you had a point two years ago, I should have been a bit more bold, I should have been a bit more aggressive. And you, President Erdoğan, you should be big enough to understand and appreciate that you too contributed to this problem by opening up your border and letting a whole lot of irresponsible and treacherous people into this process. So we're both partly responsible, but more importantly together we both need to extract this cancer from the community, from the region. Two, we're going to either or not resolve Iran's nuclear program, weapon program. In the next several months Turkey's got a great role to play if it chooses and the same of course in terms of the response to Russia. However, when it comes to American-Turkish relations there is one factor that President Erdoğan still either doesn't

care or doesn't acknowledge, and that is his behavior towards the State of Israel is not behavior that is representative of a first class world leader. It just isn't. You can criticize Israeli policy if you wish, you can be suspect of tactics, but what you cannot do and be held in high regard in this city and be deemed a legitimate, credible world leader is to refer to fascist Hitler-like tactics and compare them to the tactics of Israel. And that's what he has done most recently which of course follows a pattern of inflammatory behavior that hurts him more than it hurts Israel. However, I must acknowledge that in the last two weeks I believe for the first time he shook hands with an Israeli diplomatic official. So that is a hopeful sign. If he continues on that path his opportunity to engage in Washington more effectively will be enhanced significantly.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Thanks, Robert. You always make these issues very interesting and extremely prominent. Very well informed perspective. I wonder if sometime Erdoğan might not consider to include you in his circle of advisors. (Laughter) You may end up with a cabinet position there too.

Kadir, how do these issues look like from within Turkey, from the perspective of Turkey? Can you help us here in the whole to maybe better understand what the presidential election results mean for Turkey and what to make of the composition of the current cabinet here? You have five minutes too.

MR. ÜSTÜN: Thanks for reminding me and it's an honor to be on this panel with Honorable Wexler and the rest of the panel. Thanks.

So Erdoğan is now the first popularly elected president of Turkey. This is a historic moment in so many ways because this office, the president's office was originally designed to serve as a check on the civilian governments. It's the highest office in the country and for a long time military and civilian bureaucracy, what we call the totalist system, was based upon. So it would serve as the ultimate check on the civilian

initiatives, civilian authority. It was supposed to be a largely ceremonial office and despite that the president has some executive powers and lots of veto powers. So you can scuttle the whole -- you can sort of scuttle the whole system, lock it down or you can make it easy. But Erdoğan has already expressed his intention to use all the powers that are given to the president's office and that should be normal. And in that sense he will use his constitutional powers and he will act as the president and Prime Minister Davutoğlu will use his constitutional powers. He will act as a Prime Minister. So there won't be much of a problem there. But of course it's still uncharted territory in many ways because the president is now the first popularly elected president.

The election results were not so surprising as Honorable Wexler mentioned; he keeps winning, the party keeps winning. We tend to talk about the individuals a bit too much, Erdoğan and what he does, but when we look at sort of socioeconomic conditions that push AK Parti to power it keeps leading to these electoral victories for Erdoğan and his party we might find a more complicated story there. It's not just one individual who keeps running the elections. And in this last election once again I think there were competing visions. AK Parti came up with its -- put forward its own vision of this new Turkey and on the other side there wasn't -- there was some vision but that vision entailed too much of the -- what we call old Turkey. But that was the competition between these two sort of visions for Turkey. Are we going to entirely reform this system and fully civilianize the constitution and the country? Are we going to make headway in the Kurdish question? Are we going to make sure that military is under civilian control? Those were the questions and once again the opposition failed except BDP made some significant case against. We'll see if they can capitalize with the frustration with the main opposition parties.

In the new cabinet there's a lot of continuity obviously and Erdoğan will

remain a powerful figure in Turkish politics. There is no doubt about that. But this is a transition nevertheless. The next generation of AK Parti leaders are now in power, they're ministers although cabinet didn't change all that much, now we have a new Prime Minister who will stand for elections in 2015. And he needs to win that election without Erdoğan. So that's the -- we shouldn't ignore the fact that this is a transition, a transition within AK Parti but it's important.

The most immediate sort of priority will be to make headway in the Kurdish resolution process. That has been delayed for a variety of reasons. You're familiar with the political crises, Gezi and December 17th operations and we were in an election cycle. And then there are the regional developments as was mentioned. So the process has slowed down but there's a now renewed push on this -- I'll finish. The government passed legislation right before the elections to formalize negotiations with PKK leadership and (inaudible). So now it's official, the government is talking to PKK about solving this long standing problem that affects Turkey in so many different ways, in its threat perception, democracy at home, liberties, in so many different ways. So I won't go into that, but -- and then the 2015 elections of course, Turkey will continue to be somewhat focused internally on that issue.

So I'll pass on the U.S.-Turkey at this point. Thanks.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Thanks, Kadir. Taking the ball from Kadir, Ömer, uh, where will this transition go to that Kadir was reflecting on? And I know you take a great interest in the Kurdish issue. If you could also maybe reflect a little bit about how that will evolve as this transition period unfolds.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Sure, I'll be happy to focus on the Kurdish question, but let me make a couple broader remarks if you allow me. Robert, you mentioned that there's consensus in Turkey, that he wins these elections by consensus, that he won nine

elections. And it's true that we have an extremely successful politician in the person of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, however, consensus is not really what comes to mind when you think of the state of Turkish democracy and Turkish society today. Yes, he's winning with 50 percent -- 52 percent on this occasion. In the local elections he won with I think 42-43 percent. Yet when you look at opinion polls, when you look at the state of the political debate in Turkey you see an extremely polarized country. This is not a country that has managed to establish a consensus on basic issues such as human rights, freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of demonstration, independence of the media. What I see in Turkey, especially since the Gezi Park protests in the last two-three years is a country that is extremely polarized. And in that sense I believe Recep Tayyip Erdoğan despite his great success at the electoral level has managed to create a country where the level of democracy is no longer really comparable with the west. When you look at organizations that look at the state of democracy, that look at the state of the media, Turkey has been downgraded all over. And the state of Turkish democracy now is often referred to as an electoral democracy where basically elections define the result, but in fact you don't have real checks and balances on political power. You don't have a separation of powers in terms of the independence of the judiciary, the independence of legislative and executive powers. You don't have really a clear understanding of the freedom of expression issues. The term that is often used now by a lot of people in describing Turkey is that it's an illiberal democracy. And even admirers of Erdoğan such as Fareed Zakaria now compare him to Putin and the image that Turkey projects in that sense is not as rosy as the image that I think one would imagine when they look at the region. Yes, it's a stable country but is this really a democratic country? Is this a country that can provide a model for the region? The Turkish model was something that was talked about during the Arab Awakening, and I don't see any more this term used, the

Turkish model for any of the countries in the region. And I believe that the AKP and Erdoğan has squandered a major opportunity during its 12 years in power, especially towards the end of his tenure. He has become increasingly autocratic. He has lost touch in a way with segments of the Turkish society that wanted really to improve the democratic standards of Turkey and he has become a more populist and more autocratic leader. And the fight that he's engaged in with other power centers in the country, such as the Gulen network for instance has shown that the institutions of the country really don't work. When you look at the state of the Turkish judiciary today, when you look at the state of Turkish media, when you look at the state of the Turkish legislative powers, you don't see really a country where institutions are able to provide checks and balances. You don't -- you see a country that is increasingly polarized and a growing segment of the country is increasingly disillusioned with this kind of leadership. So it's not really consensus but polarization that I would underline as the main dynamic of the country.

Now there's a paradox in this picture and the paradox gets to the question you asked. How come a Turkey that is becoming more autocratic, more illiberal, is able to provide hope in terms of solving the Kurdish problem? This is a major paradox. Can a president with authoritarian tendencies who wants to centralize decision making, who wants to basically continue a more hegemonic style of governance provide home in the most important question of Turkey when it comes to democracy, to human rights, to minoritize the Kurdish question? I see a huge paradox here. I can't really understand how a country like Turkey can solve the Kurdish problem with more democracy, with more decentralization, with more human rights, more minority rights, yet at the same time distance itself from democratic principles of good governance, independence of powers, strong institutions, and independent media. And here I see basically two alternatives, either we're dealing with a politician who is very Machiavellian and who's a tactical genius

in terms of establishing a coalition with a major power center in Turkey which is basically the Kurdish political movement, and in the person of Selahattin Demirtaş and in the political party of BDP, we see that the Kurds now are becoming a very powerful force in Turkey. Selahattin Demirtaş won 10 percent of the vote and it's likely that the Kurdish political party, the BDP, will probably pass the 10 percent threshold in the next elections. So he wants to establish a coalition with the Kurds in order to establish a presidential system after the next elections in order to change the constitution towards the presidential system. So this may be tactical Machiavellian. And in that sense it's a risky strategy because trying to win the vote of the Kurds, trying to basically go for a Kurdish opening, Kurdish democratic process, talking to the PKK, may cost him votes with the nationalists, with the nationalist base of the party. So it's a risky road despite its tactical potential success. There are major risks involved in pursuing such a strategy.

The other way of looking at how Erdoğan is thinking about the Kurdish problem is actually to believe that he genuinely wants to solve this problem and he genuinely believes that there has to be a solution to this in the framework of what I would call a kind of imperial ottoman, sultanic way of dealing with the problem which is a very powerful leader granting autonomy like rights to a region the way the imperial center of Istanbul, the way ottoman sultan used to deal with Kurdistan by basically saying if you're loyal to me and if we have this (inaudible) networks of patronage I will give you certain rights, but I am the sultan and I will grant you these rights. And that may be his way of approaching to the Kurdish problem in the sense that he is at the heart of the process, that he can solve this as the very powerful leader the way an ottoman sultan would be willing to basically grant certain rights. In any case I don't see the institutional mechanisms behind solving the Kurdish problem because solving the Kurdish problem requires a first class democracy, it requires human rights, it requires checks and

balances, it requires decentralization. And I don't see Turkey evolving in that direction. And in that sense the Kurds I believe are to a certain degree betting on someone who may not be able to deliver at the end of the day. History now is on the side of the Kurdish movement when you look at the Kurdish issue, not only in Turkey but at the regional level, Syria, Iraq, Iran, the Kurds are basically in a position to become king makers. In Turkey, in Syria, in Iraq they play a very critical role and they are in a very strong position. And they are willing to negotiate with Erdoğan and Erdoğan recognizes that as a pragmatic politician. But I'm not convinced that he will be able to really solve this problem given the authoritarian tendencies that we are witnessing in Turkey.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Thanks, Ömer. Robert, the way I think I'd like to proceed is at the very opening of this session here I mentioned I wanted to see a boring Turkey. And as I listened to Ömer I felt that it's really a boring Turkey that could best address this very challenging question of the Kurdish question there. And I always felt that Turkey seemed to be becoming boring around 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006. In the last two years we have seen setbacks along the lines that Ömer has mentioned in its democracy. Now my question, Robert, in your earlier intervention I think you made references to those enormous common interests that Turkey has. Beyond that are we going to see the United States taking interest in a Turkish democratic performance and how might that reflect in prospects of cooperation between the two countries?

MR. WEXLER: I think the quiet answer is yes, American will have interest in the continued democratic evolution of Turkey. However those interests will be dwarfed by the immediate national security interests that relate to the various elements of terrorism and an Iranian nuclear program and an aggressive Russia. Ömer makes I think very valid points in a very articulate persuasive way, however I think those of us -- and I'll associate myself with your remarks, but I think we have to be intellectually honest and I

don't think if we take your analysis to its complete conclusion we are necessarily being intellectually honest. Number one, I don't think creating a degree of contrast and tension in society in which there are great divides is mutually exclusive from creating a political consensus in which you can govern which is what I think Prime Minister Erdoğan has done. But more importantly what many of us do, the ones that support liberal democracy, when Prime Minister President Erdoğan acts like the rogue autocratic we condemn him as we should. But when does the right things we tend to categorize it as tactical, Machiavellian, not really representative of the man we want him to be. Now that might fair if it was one instance, but the truth of the matter is with Prime Minister Erdoğan and now hopefully President Erdoğan there are far more than just one instances on very important issues that require extraordinary leadership where he has in fact taken the more progressive view. On Cyprus for instance while he has not been perfect he has arguably been more forthright than previous Turkish leaders. In instances with respect now to the Armenian question which is not by any means limited to Erdoğan, if I understand it correctly for the first time he acknowledged a degree of -- what were the exact words -- I believe he expressed condolences to the grandchildren of the Armenian community who have suffered. Not nearly enough, don't get me wrong, he doesn't deserve congratulations for that, however what other significant Turkish politician has ever even come close to doing a similar thing? So --

SPEAKER: (off mic).

MR. WEXLER: Ah, okay, yes, that's another fair point. But with all due respect, and I have nothing but respect for former President Gül, he hasn't built the type of he hasn't built the type of coalitions that Prime Minister Erdoğan, now President Erdoğan has. So all I'm suggesting is that while you're -- I think you're criticism is valid and meritorious that here in Washington because we tend to root for the liberal

democratic Turkey to prevail that when it doesn't we cast it in a light that is completely negative.

And I would offer one other observation, when I listen to you I would think that the past in Turkey was someone more liberal and that he somehow tore down the liberal fabric of society. And you know what he also deserves credit for but he doesn't get much in this town? He should get credit for putting civilian control on a military. Now I realize particularly many people in congress, and I was one of them, we felt comfortable when the Turkish military exerted influence and it tended to be quite pro-American, and it tended to be much more in line with American interest, but the truth of the matter is a military run by a military is completely antagonistic to a civilian run democracy. And it took a guy like Erdoğan to do that. Now you may -- I don't want to put words in your mouth, but you may say that was tactical to achieve his other goals and it may have been. But the truth of the matter is he has completely reformed Turkish society so that the military is not in a position to achieve a coups or an undue amount of influence. And he deserves credit for that but in this town he rarely gets it. So my only point is Turkey is a paradox in its totality. So I think we at least should be humble enough to appreciate that for every autocratic move of President Erdoğan that he's done in the past there is an even equal and in some cases greater impact that he has had in making moves that support a liberal democracy. And the test will be in the future which one wins out. And there's good reason to fear no doubt and be suspect of what the future holds. And in part if I understand it correctly you're right, the system of checks and balances in Turkey has broken down and that's problematic for the future. And I think that's one thing that America will watch very carefully in terms of how Turkey's judiciary evolves and does it become a rubber stamp, and if it does it's a problem.

One more quick thing if I could, I think President Erdoğan and Prime

Minister Davutoğlu made a big mistake in not including former President Gül in their immediate plans. Why? If they are successful in minimizing the role of the judiciary I believe if he chooses that former President Gül will have the opportunity to play the role of the conscience of Turkey. And while the opposition in Turkey remains completely feckless, completely ineffective, former President Gül will have the standing, maybe the only person in the country, if he sees the new Erdoğan administration moving in an illiberal direction where he can take a stand from within the AKP and be in effect the judiciary or the opposition and do it with a degree of credibility that few people can. And he will not have the shackles or the constraints that he had while he was president.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Thanks, Robert. The more I listen to you the more I feel as a former academic that having been a politician appears to open horizons to ones analysis that we academics seem to be denied. I wish you had not entered into the issue of the future. It was the next round of questions. So, Kadir, I'd like to encourage you not to address the issue of the future as well as Gül's roles might be, but if I could drag you back to a point that Robert raised in his earlier round of remarks, how do you see this cabinet and how do you see President Erdoğan approaching this immediate issue of the Islamic state in Syria and Iraq and the threat it appears to be constituting not only to the people immediately there, but to Turkey and to the west as well?

MR. ÜSTÜN: Okay. Without addressing the future I just want to put something --

MR. KIRIŞCI: We'll come back to it. We'll come back to it in the last round.

MR. ÜSTÜN: I just want to say a sentence or two --

MR. KIRIŞCI: Yeah.

MR. ÜSTÜN: -- about the institutional checks and balances. It may

sound odd but we actually don't want institutional checks and balances in Turkey, we want institutional checks and balances that are drawn from popular will. Traditionally what we have had in Turkey, you had judiciary, presidential office, army, bureaucracy, they held the real power and they wouldn't allow the elected civilian governments to make the important decisions in the country. That system is now kind of turned upside down and we are in a transitional anomalous situation actually. President was not supposed to be elected by the people, the president was supposed to be elected appointment by the parliament and kind of approved by the military. So that kind of language brings sort of old memories of how military would serve as a check on the power or judiciary. Judiciary is independent actually very independent but not accountable to anybody in Turkey. So these institutions to actually get to healthy democratic checks and balances, real checks and balances you need an overhaul of the entire system which is only possible with a constitution. It's truly civilian constitution and if you're saying that Erdoğan will give this thing in a sort of oriental despotism framework he can't move forward. He has 2023 goals. He can't move forward with a country with the Kurdish question burning and ready to explode at any moment.

Coming back to IS, the new cabinet, the Prime Minister Davutoğlu as you know he's served as a Foreign Minister, he's very well versed in these issue and Erdoğan the same way. With respect to Syria, Syria policy both for the U.S., for Turkey, and Europe it's been a big mess. There were moments of good things that were done but largely the international community including Turkey largely failed to forge a common front, common strategy to both empower the opposition and for Assad's hand into some sort of negotiation. I know they are all sorts of issues throughout the region, it's not easy to propose a solution here, but the fact remains as Wexler said two years ago if we could have done something things could have been different today. I don't mean, you know,

we should have intervened, et cetera, but it should have been Turkey, U.S., and the allies should have approached it in a different manner. Today every single day we don't sit down and forge a common strategy it simply gets worse. And every six months, three months, we are all of the sudden surprised by emergence of ISIS, all of the sudden we are surprised by the fall of the Baghdad government, or things like that. So Turkey, you know, has a long border, it is a serious security threat for Turkey. They are currently holding 49 diplomatic corps as hostages. It is not -- there is no easy fix to this but this one is a symptom of a broader political background, political question, which is how to -- how to get Iraq stable. How are we going to arrive at that? And that's not going to be possible without, you know, Baghdad government becoming more inclusive. At this point I don't even know if they can go back to the Sunni, you know, disenchanted groups and tribes and I don't even know if it's possible to draw them back away from ISIS. Things simply get worse and we are at that point, we keep going downward. But Turkey and U.S. can have a common strategy on Iraq and Syria. Now it has to be more difficult combination of alliances and sort of, you know, different kinds of pressure points now have emerged in Syria and Iraq. So it's going to be much more difficult. But I see no other choice but to come up with some sort of strategy to both stabilize the Baghdad government, help, you know, somehow Kurdish regional government to contribute to this process, and Sunni tribes are in a state of revolt basically. It's not just a matter of ISIS. And Syria is a whole other story. We haven't supported the opposition in a serious way and they're all scattered. I don't know if things would have been different even if it's supported in a serious way, but my personal belief is we could have made a difference but we haven't. So here we are, now there's so many broken pieces throughout a huge vast of land now it's hard to even call it Syria and Iraq in real terms. And Turkey has more than 500 miles border and it's a serious problem. I mean U.S.-Turkey has long

standing counterterrorism cooperation and that's not fickle actually. It's very, you know, longstanding and it's deep. They have to work on counterterrorism issue but the broader political problem has to be addressed.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Thanks, Kadir. Ömer has been fidgeting next to me, Robert, as you expanded on your sort of reflection on his views as well as Kadir, so, Ömer, try to control yourself (laughter). Give a few minutes to responding to their criticisms of what you just said. But I need to be Machiavellian and make sure that we do have a question and answers period just after the final round there.

MR. TAŞPINAR: I'll be very quick and in the spirit of intellectual honesty I'll just try to explain once again that criticizing the state of Turkish democracy today does not mean having nostalgia about the days when the Turkish Ministry was calling the shots. The question that I'm asking and I think what we should be debating is whether Turkey is becoming more democratic or more authoritarian. I don't have a clear answer to this. My sense is that under the days of military tutelage, during the days when the military, the army was calling the shots we had definitely an authoritarian system and Turkey was illiberal, there were military interventions, and no one could basically say that Turkey was really democratic in the 1960s, '70s, '80s. As late as 1997 the military intervened and basically played a role in the emergence of AKP by shutting down the welfare party. My fear is the following, I think one type of authoritarianism, the old type of authoritarianism in Turkey where the military played this role, where Kemalism as an ideology played that role is being replaced by another type of authoritarianism. The authoritarianism of a single man, one political party that says I am the nation, I am the people, I represent the national will. And this type of authoritarianism in many ways is similar to the old one because what is missing are the institutions that make a democracy. Yes, we have elections but elections are often just one element of a

democracy. You need to have basically checks and balances, individual rights and liberties, an independent media. These elements of a democracy are missing in Turkey. And we need institutions. We cannot just depend on elections as a checks and balance because that creates a populist type of governance. My fear is that in the past we had the tyranny of the minority in Turkey with the Kemalist establishment running the country, we had a second Arista Nationalist Elite that was basically establishing its hegemony over pious masses and Kurds. We had the tyranny of the minority under Kemalism. Now my fear is that we have the tyranny of the majority. We have a Prime Minister, a president that says I represent the people, I am the consensus. Well, he's not the consensus. What are we going to do with the 40 percent, 50 percent, 60 percent who disagrees with him? If their voices are shut down because the civil society is not very strong, if their voices are shut down because columnists are fired from newspapers, if their voices are shut down because they increasingly establish a more repressive system can we call this a better democracy than what existed in the 1970s? I have no nostalgia for the days when the generals were in charge. Like most Turkish liberals I'm a recovering optimist about the AKP. I used to be very optimistic about the AKP; I voted several times for the AKP. But I think since 2010, '11, '12, definitely since Gezi Park, we have a new AKP. This AKP can no longer play the victim. They can no longer have the narrative of victimhood. They are the state, they are now the hegemonic power and they are the ones basically defining the future. Yet listening to the Prime Minister you would hear that he's still the victim, that he's still facing conspiracies. This is what I'm criticizing. This is why I'm also pessimistic about the Kurdish problem. I can't really see how this kind of a leadership can genuinely tackle a very important Kurdish problem. You had to go back to Cyprus 2004 or Armenia, the Armenia protocols which were 2009 to remind us of the good policies that Erdoğan adopted. Well, nothing happened on these two fronts.

The border with Armenia is still closed, there are no diplomatic relations. Turkey indexes policy to Armenia to Azerbaijan. So, yes, he's willing to do the right thing sometimes but I think we're facing with an increasingly hegemonic and an autocratic leadership. We're facing with an increasingly hegemonic and an autocratic leadership. This is why I'm criticizing him and I have no sense of nostalgia for the military, but I'm afraid that the military may make a comeback.

I will conclude with this, in the absence of strong institutions in the country what the military is facing now is that their enemies are divided. Their enemy was the Gulen community and the AKP. Now the Gulen community and the AKP are fighting. The two strong Muslim political groups in Turkey, one social the other one more political, are divided. And the AKP which played this major role in emasculating the military now argues that the Ergenekon trial was basically a farce, that the military was framed. This is the ethical level of debate in Turkey. They basically are saying, you know, we want to be with the generals on this one. Is this the political party that will end military tutelage in Turkey? Imagine a scenario in 2016 where the PKK is totally frustrated with the absence of real democratization in Turkey and you have urban terrorism. You have, god forbid, a major terrorist attack in Istanbul and dozens of people are killed. I can easily see how a more powerful military can make a comeback by declaring emergency law, by saying look, there's a vacuum, a security vacuum. Well, what will the AKP say then? Because they believe that the military was framed. Are they really honest in what they did? If they are why do they believe that Ergenekon was a farce? As late as a couple of years ago they were behind Ergenekon. So this is the level of ethical standard we're facing in Turkey and this is why I'm pessimistic about the AKP.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Ömer, you've just hijacked my panel. (Laughter) That's what my Machiavellian concern is here.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Sorry.

MR. KIRIŞCI: But thanks for raising these very tough issues. But, Robert, may I plead with you to refrain from the temptation to respond to Ömer.

MR. WEXLER: I think we're having fun.

MR. KIRIŞCI: This is the last round and for me honestly it's very important that we should be able to get some questions from the floor and respond to them. May I suggest just maybe two minutes each, Robert and Kadir, in responding to -- I've lost control so. What I would like to discuss in this last round was to look into the future towards the June parliamentary elections and maybe begin to reflect a bit on what the relationship with Davutoğlu and Erdoğan will look like. You're a politician, what kinds of dynamics will push it and then try to make some predictions there. But please no more than two minutes each, Kadir and Robert and Ömer. You first, Robert.

MR. WEXLER: I respect enormously -- I won't respond but I respect enormously what Ömer says. I would offer in the context of the question (laughter) I wonder why there isn't somebody in Turkey making the exact speech you just made. I wonder why the opposition parties aren't literally verbatim making your speech. My instinct tells me if they were to make such a speech they would -- well, some were saying be fired. But that's not really fair because if you're the head of the opposition party they would be fired -- I mean the opposition party -- yeah, I understand there are newspapers that aren't printing and that there's media coercion and all of these very illiberal things, but there is an opportunity to make an opposition party and its argument and yet they've been unsuccessful, dramatically unsuccessful. And I wonder why someone isn't making your speech and riding it to a degree of victory because I would think it would have some success.

MR. TAŞPINAR: I think they are making these points. In all -- I think the

CHP -- Selahattin Demirtaş to be the -- they're making these points but overall reaction that they're getting from society is that Erdoğan is doing a good job because the economy is doing well. So they're not really -- these kind of messages do not resonate in Turkish society because Erdoğan is actually doing a good job with the economy. And the most important segments of Turkish society, the lower middle classes and the rising business community actually, they look at Turkey and they say I would rather have Erdoğan in charge rather than Kolisherolov.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Are you done? Kadir --

MR. WEXLER: For the future Davutoğlu should reinforce Turkey's move towards Europe and he should create a new dynamic with Europe that reflects the political reality. It's not going to be full membership but he shouldn't accept second class membership as Germany has defined it. He should use his extraordinary intellectual capability and come up with a middle ground policy that allows Turkey to pick and choose I would argue which part of Europe it finds attractive and helpful and go with it with gusto. And Europe needs to be pressured by the United States and others and hopefully from within to accept that and act in a much more forthright and honest way than it has in the past with Turkey.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Okay. Thanks, Robert. I'm glad you didn't bring up the issue of EU because I feel that the way the positions of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister for EU Affairs has been filled is a signal, is a signal that needs to be read correctly by the U.S. as well as the EU..

Kadir, very briefly too, please.

MR. ÜSTÜN: When we look at the political landscape some of what Ömer said I agree. There are serious freedom of speech issues, there are many issues that need to be addressed in Turkey in terms of, you know, quality democracy, to get to a

quality democracy. But in democracies you have different power centers that balance each other, and then in Turkey when this party, AK Parti keeps winning the elections the way it does and there is essentially no serious opposition it becomes a problem. So the opposition has to figure out how to speak to those masses. Ömer talked about how they want somebody like Erdoğan, it's not just Erdoğan. My, you know, my brother-in-law says as soon as he's not successful I won't work for him. He's very hardcore. But the people don't vote just because it's Erdoğan, they vote for certain things. The opposition has to figure out a way to speak to those masses and emerge as a strong opposition to balance the system if there's no balance in the system. Erdoğan doesn't -- he keeps standing for elections let's not forget. The election thing, yes, I understand democracy is not just elections, but after every major crisis he's going to elections and getting those votes. How is that possible What is that -- I would say center right voting bloc, the main voting bloc in Turkey, by now it's quite middle class as well, what do they want? One slogan before the presidential election was Echman for Echmech, you know, bread -- if you want bread vote for Echmel. And in social media some kid or some columnist said but we want cake (laughter) and that kind of reflects what the middle class expects from the next general of leaders. If somebody can seriously offer it people will -- this is not an authoritarian, you know, one man country, this is 80 million people also of beliefs and sects and all sort of ideas. So they're going to vote for somebody they believe who can deliver on economy, on foreign policy, on many issues.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Thanks, Kadir. Thanks for this very rich display of ideas even if they seem to at times appear to be running against each other. If I may dare to say my person opinion on this I think we will find out how democrat our current president is when he's able to accept that an election is needed in the country when the opinion polls and the prospects don't look very good for him. That's the day when I will be able to

conclude that we were led for a long time by a democrat.

I'd like to turn to the floor and take two or three quick questions please. I know you've been waiting patiently there. Please, you and then maybe the lady next door, and then here. And we'll go for another very quick round hopefully. Please keep it as brief as possible.

MR. ABUDLLAH: Thank you very much for this impressive panel.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Could you introduce yourself?

MR. ABUDLLAH: Yes. My name is Namel Abdullah. I work for Rudal News. And my question is for Ömer and Robert. You know the United States has been leading a coalition of countries and NATO members to fight ISIS in Northern Iraq and that list includes more than seven European countries, but in that list one country is missing to help Kurdish Peshmerga forces fight ISIS, that is Turkey, and that's surprising and ironic to me because Turkey has been probably the strongest ally to Iraqi Kurdistan. Why has Turkey been reluctant to fight ISIS and what can President Obama expect from him? Thank you.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Thanks. If you -- right next to -- the lady please.

MS. SOKOU: Hello. I'm Katerina Sokou with Greek Daily Kathimerini. I have a question for whoever is interested to answer and it concerns Cyprus. The first indictors from President Erdoğan is that he's looking again into an interstate solution and how do you view that? And in more general terms what do you think the nationalist role will be in this new era for Turkey's politics? Thank you.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Thanks. We have one more question in the front here and then I'll turn to the panel.

MR. BORRROZ: Thanks. My name is Nick Borroz, I'm with TD International and I'm a recovering student of Professor Taşpınar (laughter).

MR. KIRIŞCI: This is a planted question isn't it?

MR. BORROZ: Yes. (Laughter) Question is what do you think the effect will be of the election on relations with Iraqi Kurdistan, specifically the deepening of energy relations with Arabul at the expense of alienating Baghdad? Thanks.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Okay. I think maybe the way we could proceed is that I turn to each of you and take those three questions as a (inaudible). Kadir, shall we start with you?

MR. ÜSTÜN: Earlier actually the Cyprus question is related to EU prospects. EU membership is very important for Turkey. The government keeps putting it as a strategic goal still. But that's only one aspect of the relations with the EU. Turkey's exports are something like 40 percent to EU countries, right?

MR. KIRIŞCI: Forty five right now.

MR. ÜSTÜN: Forty five. So Turkey has, you know, through NATO, the EU membership process, and many other relationships, Turkey is already very much integrated into the European system. The membership remains a political problem and largely because of, you know, starting with Cyprus issue, but there is no, you know, the big guys in Europe are saying to Turkey well, it's not really going to happen. Turkey will I think after 2015 will pursue that but I may remain à la carte like what we saw in visa liberalization deal. But already at so many levels Turkey is very much part of Europe. With the nationalists I mean they have been confined to the coasts, western coasts and southern coasts electorally and they keep competing with CHP as much as they compete with AK Parti. They have kind of focused only on opposing -- their main platform is opposing the Kurdish settlement peace process and if things go sour on the Kurdish question -- that's always within the realm of probability of course -- they may sort of get stronger. But every past -- since the beginning of the peace process we have seen

increased support for this process and nationalists haven't been able to capitalize on whoever is unhappy with that process. So they'll have a role because they'll remain about, you know, 12-13 percent that will be important, but I don't see them defining anytime soon the main parameters of Turkish politics.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Robert, your turn.

MR. WEXLER: On the context of the third question I think it was said earlier that in 2015 Prime Minister Davutoğlu will have to run for reelection or election. And I think it's extremely important that he lay out a successful economic vision and I think it should look something like this, he should say to the Turkish public there was a time we looked west and we were going towards Europe, and then there was more recent time we looked east and we were headed towards central Asia and Asia, now we're strong enough, big enough, more developed, we can look east and west at the same time and that's how we should be successful. Part of that successful model must be that Turkey realizes its opportunity to become an energy hub and that energy hub will require that it in fact have energy relations with the Kurdish government in Iraq in one form or another and it should enhance its relations with **Azerbaijan**. I saw that President Erdoğan --

MR. KIRIŞCI: Was there.

MR. WEXLER: -- went first to **Azerbaijan**.before he went to the NATO Summit. It's about **Azerbaijan**, it's about Kazakhstan, it's about Georgia. And I think that if Turkey plays those roles effectively they can use the problems with Russia to advance its argument that the world, particularly Europe, needs alternative energy routes apart from the routes from Russia and that Turkey obviously is uniquely situated to create that type of a conduit for Europe and that it's a more reliable source and so forth and it fits with an economic argument in that Turkey becoming an energy hub would be an

enormous economic boon for Turkey and it's got to be a major part of its futuristic economic vision in my mind.

MR. KIRIŞCI: I thought you were going to also add East Mediterranean energy and the important of getting the Cyprus resolution.

MR. WEXLER: Yes. I should have.

MR. KIRIŞCI: And better relations with Israel.

MR. WEXLER: You're absolutely right. Yes. I should have.

MR. KIRIŞCI: I'm beginning to read your mind.

MR. WEXLER: I should have. And can I take 15 seconds?

MR. KIRIŞCI: Go ahead.

MR. WEXLER: There was a brilliant Greek Cypriot diplomat who years ago handed me a paper and said the paper essentially said the way forward was an economic union between Turkey, Cyprus, Greece, and Israel and that if there were such a union you could both resolve economic and political issues in a way that would be so profound as to dramatically alter the equation of power in the region towards those four actors. And you can include in Jordan, and if you really want to get crazy include in the Palestinians.

MR. KIRIŞCI: All right. Now there was one question and I --

MR. WEXLER: World peace would be good too. (Laughter)

MR. KIRIŞCI: Stop being silly. On the --

MR. TAŞPINAR: The question of ISIS --

MR. KIRIŞCI: And the Kurds.

MR. TAŞPINAR: In case you haven't noticed Turkey has 49 hostages in Mosul. I wouldn't blame you for not noticing because there is a censorship about this issue in Turkey which will tell you something about the state of Turkish media. In a

country where for two and a half months 49 citizens including the Consul General of Mosul is taken hostage, the Foreign Minister of that country who is partially to blame I believe for that situation has become Prime Minister. Now this tells you also something about the mere autocratic nature of governance in Turkey, but one thing is sure the idea that somehow Turkey cannot play a role here is not just related to the fact that Turkey has hostages in Mosul and that ISIS would not probably hesitate to kill them if Turkey was to allow Incirlik Air Base to be used. The other part of the equation here is that for a long time I would not say Turkey supported ISIS but Turkey turned a blind eye to infiltration, to what Robert Wexler referred to as basically bad guys infiltrating from the border. Now it's very difficult for Turkey to control all the border and Turkey says we cannot do this. But I think there was a sense of the enemy of my enemies my friend because ISIS was fighting the PYD, the PKK related Kurdish movement of Syria. So in that sense there was that element. There was also an element of turning a blind eye to these guys because they were fighting the regime in Damascus. So there is in that sense a certain level I think of the reluctance to change fully course, path dependency if you will. As sense that once you are vested in that strategy of basically not demonizing ISIS, arguing that ISIS is a product of lack of western interference. That's the narrative that we hear in Turkey, that ISIS is there because there was a vacuum. Where was there a vacuum? Because the west was reluctant to intervene in Syria. Fine, but if that's your narrative it's very difficult for a politician like Tayyip Erdoğan and also for Davutoğlu who likes to stand his ground and he never admits mistakes to say okay, we're going to change course totally. But the real problem is the 49 hostages. And it's amazing. I mean that there's a censorship on this issue and that the Turkish media doesn't talk about it. Imagine if there was a censorship in 1979 when American hostages were in Tehran. Why did Carter lose the elections to Reagan? That was a big deal. In Turkey

this state of media basically managed to ignore this, we forgot about the crisis, and the Foreign Minister was in charge when this happened is now rewarded with the Prime Ministry. Something is wrong with this picture.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Two questions. We have 10 minutes. Alan in the back and Susan and maybe yes, you. But very brief. I brought you on board, very brief. We have nine minutes.

SPEAKER: Okay. Okay. I'll try to not to betray your trust.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Yeah.

SPEAKER: Okay. First for Kadir, could you give an assessment of Prime Minister Davutoğlu's popularity both within the party base and within the public at large? I mean it's never really been tested. There were stories that sort of the new parliamentarians did not get paid, they were first -- the rookies as one of their critics called them within the party, you know, support him fervently. I just wonder what your sense is of how strong the base is regarding Davutoğlu.

And if I could just for either -- anyone on the panel, Ömer touched on this regarding the military, the chief of staff made a very strong statement it seemed to me regarding the Kurdish issue at the August 30th victory day reception. He suggested that he was supposed to be informed about the road map and he hasn't seen anything yet and there are red lines that shall not be crossed. And he also sort of implied regarding the Gulenists. It seemed to me there was sort of an implicit criticism of the way the government is handling the Gulenist issue without evidence. So I don't remember a statement of quite that strong from the military in several years.

MR. KIRIŞCI: You are betraying me, Alan.

SPEAKER: I'm sorry; that's it. Just a comment on that. Thank you.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Susan, yes. The mic is --

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SPEAKER: Sharon.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Sharon. The mic is right next to you. Yeah.

SPEAKER: Okay. To go back to the opening statements and then to try to get to what Kemal I think has wanted to do all along and talk a bit more about the future. Robert Wexler mentioned that Erdoğan had a historic opportunity to choose a more democratic path or a less democratic path. He chose the less democratic path which has resulted in a situation that I think Ömer has described quite accurately. My question is how sustainable is this situation that right now in many respects looks if not -- even though an illiberal democracy in some respects looks somewhat stable, I mean investors think it is, it's better than some of the options out there, but how sustainable is it? How long will the stability last and what are the risks? What kinds of things could cause it to get off the rails? Obviously, you know, a Kurdish terrorist attack. I think an ISIL major terrorist attack in this (inaudible) for example is not something to be ruled out, but there are lots of other things. And what kind of internal dynamics represent a risk to this long term?

MR. KIRIŞCI: Thanks, Sharon. Please very briefly.

SPEAKER: Very, very brief; I promise. Can you start from my question? My question is like, you know, PKK has been like, you know, fighting along with the Kurdish government (inaudible) forces against ISIS, how does, you know, Turkey would view that PKK joining the Peshmerga forces and how would this impact as a peace process in Turkey? Thank you.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Thanks. Let me start with Ömer this time and you guys have 3-4 minutes each, 4:23.

MR. TAŞPINAR: To Sharon's question about the future --

MR. KIRIŞCI: Two questions each.

MR. TAŞPINAR: -- I would say there are two variables to try to analyze the future. First the state of the economy. Elections still work in Turkey, that's the good news. I mean we're not talking about the rigged elections, we're not talking about the alleged (inaudible) results, we're talking about on the margins maybe some shenanigans, but at least we can say elections matter and people in Turkey, the middle class that Kadir referred to go according to bread and butter issues. They don't worry about liberalism, they don't worry about freedom of speech, they don't worry about YouTube, Twitter, corruption scandals, they don't care. But what they really care is unemployment, services, the state of the economy. If there is a real estate bubble in the next two years, if there is a semi crisis in the finance sector, a banking crisis, you have basically then a totally new dynamic which would mean that AKP would not be able to win with 45 percent. After this the fact that AKP no longer had Erdoğan as the propaganda machine, as the very skillful rhetorician, as the very skill politician. Ahmet Davutoğlu, I don't know if you guys have seen Ahmet Davutoğlu speech, he's a convincing speaker in an academic setting. I can't picture Ahmet Davutoğlu talking to 50,000 people. He's not the same kind of charismatic leader that Erdoğan is. So add to this I think AKP's chances of winning another election with 50 percent and changing the system into a presidential election, even with the support of the Kurds is limited. So it's not going to be easy for AKP.

The second variable is the Kurdish issue. If there is a major surprise on the Kurdish issue, a black swan, et cetera, then again this may bring back in my opinion that my fear is that it may bring back the military. Because the military -- tying it to Alan Mikoski's question, the military now is looking for an opportunity to make a comeback and AKP is playing a very dangerous game. They're playing with fire. They think they can basically tell the generals oh, no, it was the Gulen community that went after you, we were just watching. No one believes that. The generals don't believe that. So if they

think they can fool basically the generals who spent years in jail and that somehow they will not seek revenge they are mistaken. And I don't know the state about the young officers, et cetera, but I don't want to be in a situation where once again we're thinking about military interventions in Turkey. I used to think that it's over, the days of military interventions are over but if you have a major vacuum in Turkey, if you have a major derailment of the peace process, then an economic crisis, then an authoritarian president who's challenging the constitution by trying to run the country from the presidential palace you have a governance crisis. Those are the ingredients of the potential situation where the military can make a comeback. If I were apolitical risk analyst I would put this in my two to three year projections.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Thanks, Ömer. Robert?

MR. WEXLER: I think it's all about the economy and even just the opposite, if there were god forbid some kind of terrorist attack that would probably help politically the incumbent party. Obviously it's hard to tell and we never want to know, but more likely than not my sense tells me people would rally behind the flag and there would be a sense of nationalism and unity that would benefit the governing party. I think what is their biggest jeopardy is an economic downturn, but I also think their biggest jeopardy is the fact that their Prime Minister at this point has never been a politician. And the skill set to be a successful diplomat is completely, completely different than the skill set that is required to be a successful electoral politician and there's some transfer but not a great deal. I almost got a kick out of it, I was reading something of what Prime Minister Erdoğan said when he was campaigning for president out in Anatolia and I was thinking to myself Davutoğlu could never do this, he could never make this speech. So I think the biggest jeopardy for the AKP is how does Davutoğlu transition into a politician. And equally important what about the feelings of all those AKP parliamentarians who have

been serving their constituents, playing the back seat role of politician and now to have this diplomat come flying in because the Grand Poopah chose him. My sense tells me they probably resent that a little bit and they probably may not help him as much as they might if he were the true leader of the party having come up through the ranks in the parliament and so forth. So I would say internal division also is something that could create a tremendous problem for the AKP. And not to repeat myself but quickly, watch out for Gül, what does Gül do? Does he just fall into the background? Does he go make money, does he make supportive speeches, or is he out there making your speech? And if he's out there making a version of your speech then I think Davutoğlu will either be forced to confront him because he's still a big figure or he'll adopt more conciliatory policies which maybe is a good thing, or you have a bigger split in the AKP voting bloc. Those are your risks.

MR. KIRIŞCI: About Davutoğlu being or not being a politician Ömer Taşpınar has an article, a column from mid-August I think where he thinks that Davutoğlu has been inflicted by the Kissinger syndrome. I won't go into the details of what Kissinger syndrome is.

MR. TAŞPINAR: Power is an aphrodisiac. That's the --

MR. KIRIŞCI: Oh, right. My (inaudible) don't allow me to make such statements publicly. Kadir, final word is with you.

MR. ÜSTÜN: Davutoğlu has been kind of behind the scenes and part of the government for almost 10 years now, right, so he's not new, he's not unknown in the party and there have been a lot of deliberations within the party so people proposed different names, they eventually ended up agreeing on Davutoğlu. Of course Erdoğan is the most strongest who has the most power within the party, there's no doubt about that. And Davutoğlu will have to prove himself with the electoral, you know, 2015 elections.

But don't forget it's not just somebody landing from outside, there's no -- there will be -- Erdoğan stuck to the three term rule for himself and for everybody which means in 2015 70 plus MPs are going out of the government, out of the parliament which means there will have to be new fresh blood coming in. So that keeps the party dynamic and active because they can look to the next step up. And that's a lesson they learned from the welfare party in the '90s when, you know, Arokahn did not quite open up for the new leaders and Gül and Erdoğan and others emerged out of that as the reformers. And Davutoğlu's speech to the party was much better than expected for many people. So I wouldn't underestimate his ability to inspire the crowds. And he stood an election in Konya before as well in heartland Anatolia.

With respect to Kurdish issue there is a political process. I'm not sure exactly about that comment of the general, but I can sense that the military is still somewhat used to the sort of national security council making the political decisions, or political/security decisions. And it may be a reflection of that. But if there is a military security aspect of it, of that road map, he'll be informed. But this is a political process. I mean it's on the government. And I think the military has been under some fire about not being hardliner on this and maybe he was defending himself. Well, you know, this is a political process. It's not like we are running the show here. So in some ways it's progress in that way.

And last thing, just yesterday I was listening to CNN International and they were talking about whether media blackouts were useful, Ömer, and they were talking about how you have that in England, you have that in France, and et cetera. Media blackout in these kind of situations do happen and it's extremely serious. There is 50 people, they're diplomatic corps. I don't have a lot of creative suggestions about this. They are there, captives, they need to be rescued. That's the first priority. And I don't

know how they'll do it, but I don't see media blackout on this particular issue as a media freedom issue. There is media freedom issue in Turkey. I agree with you on that one.

Thank you.

MR. KIRIŞCI: All right. I notice you cut you're your (inaudible).

MR. TAŞPINAR: The media blackout debate in England is about showing the decapitation in of journalists, not about hostages being taken.

MR. ÜSTÜN: Yeah, yeah, hostages too.

MR. KIRIŞCI: Well, I'd like to thank you all for having been with us this afternoon. Robert, Kadir, and Ömer, thank you. (Applause)

I'd like to make a little publicity. One issue we didn't address is Syrian refugees. On the 16th of September at Brookings we will have a panel with UNHCR representatives from the Region in case it interests you. Thank you.

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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