



## TURKEY: NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

A Panel Discussion\*

On June 29, 2006, the U.S. Department of State's International Information Programs in Washington D.C., the Public Affairs Office at the U.S. Embassy in Israel, and the Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center jointly held an international videoconference seminar focusing on the state of Turkish domestic politics and foreign policy, especially Turkey-Israel and U.S.-Turkey relations.

Brief biographies of the participants can be found at the end of the article. This seminar is part of the GLORIA Center's Experts Forum series.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Zeyno Baran:** What is the goal of the AKP government? Is it Islamic, is it conservative, or is it Islamist? I would answer that by saying, compared to what? Compared to other Islamist organizations in the Middle East, and also compared to Erbakan and his party, the AKP is much more traditional center-right. Yet I think that by now we do see that it does have a *political Islamist* agenda. Even conservative Islamic circles in Turkey are critical of the AKP in that they think it doesn't necessarily have a conservative or an Islamic agenda.

The record is mixed. We have seen how the municipalities and bureaucracy have been manned by like-minded people. We have heard of booklets being distributed in municipalities that are closer to the Salafi ideology than the traditional Turkish-Islamic way of addressing issues such as the treatment of women, and the kind of anti-Semitism and the anti-Americanism that has become prevalent in Turkey. And we do see increased segregation between women and men, though the fact that the prime

minister's wife is constantly with him is very interesting. We have never had that kind of visibility of any prime minister's wife in Turkey before. And yes, she wears a headscarf, and maybe this is a statement, but this situation is starting even to concern people who are traditional conservatives.

Now, what is the end goal? I think it is closer to the Malaysian model, which the AKP leadership thinks is modern yet Islamic, and not the Middle Eastern model. They are also following a Russian model, not in matters of religion but regarding having a top-down controlling society and very little criticism. And we have seen Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan and Russian President Putin develop a very close relationship and I think they both like to have a lot of power, very little criticism, and they are very much soul mates in the way they'd like to recreate some sort of a powerful, post-empire, major power status for their country.

The AKP's key concern is to stay in power as long as possible and that means of course, putting more of its own people in the bureaucracy and

gradually making the population more comfortable with a more Islamic and Islamist approach. And for that, they have been showing a lot of pragmatism, and members of the AKP leadership have openly talked about it. They say, "On issues like headscarves or education, we push up to a certain point, but when we see resistance from the system, we take a step back because we don't want a confrontation".

From the experience of the Erbakan government, and from Erdogan's own experience, the AKP leadership has learned that a direct confrontation does not get them what they want. So they are pragmatic and also very much focused on economic independence to be able to do what they want to do in the broader region. Ironically, the European Union (EU) membership process and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have been the key allies so far in achieving their goal—the EU opens up more of the democratic process, but also weakens the military.

What is the situation with the opposition? I would say it is really pathetic. They have no vision, and no strong leadership. So, because of that, we don't see really a very strong movement coming together. We have seen a shift in the media. They are much more openly critical of the government. Women's organizations are becoming more vocal; and civil society, to a degree, business to a degree, but I think everyone is trying to see if there is going to be some sort of a signal from America. There are a lot of questions as to where the United States stands in regard to the AKP government.

I think before the presidential elections, we are definitely going to

see a showdown, and either there will be early elections or the military will step in some form. I think the opposition would use the inevitable crisis over Cyprus with the EU. No government could handle the approaching Cyprus crisis. I think with Cyprus and the economic instability that is starting, or at least concern from the international financial community, the opposition is going to be much more visible.

A final question is whether we will see more of a military involvement in politics? We have not seen military act more in politics because General Ozkok has been very cautious and is really committed to democracy. He has had a difficult time, keeping in control some of the more hot-headed junior officers. I'm not sure if the next head of the military will be able to restrain the military as much. And because the opposition is so divided and weak, and because Turkish society has historically looked to the military to get rid of unwanted governments, I fear we may see the military become more active in politics. This could of course have a huge impact on Turkey-EU and possibly even Turkey-U.S. relations.

**Prof. Barry Rubin:** I agree with almost everything Zeyno said, but there are a couple of different emphases which lead to perhaps different conclusions. The first question, how well has the ruling party done, might be summarized as: not great but good enough. The key question here is: Will this government be a long-term hegemonic party for five, ten, and even fifteen years or will this prove to have been a transient period in Turkey's history. I think there

are real signs that it may be a long-term ruling party.

It has benefited from two factors. The first is the improving economy. The second involves EU membership. Turkey has moved forward and while no one expects Turkey to become a member soon the government does not have to succeed completely to get credit for the progress.

The third is, as Zeyno indicated, they have advanced their program, but haven't gone too far, too fast. Certainly, they have alienated people, but they have not, I think, gone so far that masses of Turks are saying these people are Islamists who want to transform the country entirely and we must get them out of power by whatever means possible.

We are coming up to some crucial tests: parliamentary and presidential elections, the placing of AKP nominees into judgeships and other positions, and the direction of local governments. I think these are showing signs that this party is a long-term ruling party which is certainly the critical question for Turkish politics and policies.

I think that a long-term continuation of this government is a problem in U.S.-Turkish relations simply because, no matter how good they keep that bilateral relationship, it is going to be fairly disappointing from the point of view of where it is been in the past,

Regarding the opposition, Zeyno is completely right, it has been one of the worst political performances of any country in history. Faced with a total challenge to their interests, faced with being pushed into irrelevance, faced with a program which they don't like, five parties have not been able to appeal to the masses or to work

together. It is remarkable. And no matter what happens in the election, the ruling party can always form, if it needs to, a coalition, dividing the opposition.

On the third point, clearly the military has moved up one notch. I don't believe they are on the point of intervening a year from now, precisely because the government has been careful not to push them too far; and even if there were people within the army who would want to intervene, the provocation is not so strong as to make them do so- maybe if they were to push further in three or four years, I don't see it in the short term, and there are a lot of factors militating against it.

One other specific point, I think that the Cyprus issue is going to be manageable by the EU; they are going to do what they need to to resolve it. I would see the trend as very favorable to the people who are now ruling Turkey and I think they will continue to rule Turkey for some years to come.

**Dr. Alon Liel:** I would like to start with what is going on between Turkey and Israel. While relations have been damaged slightly in the last four years they remain very strong, including regarding economic relations, tourism, and the solid infrastructure of these links. There are short-lived mini-crises and then it is over.

At times over the years there has been talk of major projects. Now a new one is emerging: the idea of a corridor for gas, oil, and water pipelines. It looked like a dream until recently but now there is hectic diplomatic activity on this project. Russia is also an important player here because they are pushing hard since this would involve Russian gas and Azerbaijan oil. Of

course, water is an old dream for such projects and this is all being very widely discussed, almost on a daily basis now.

We also have our on-going crisis on the Kurdish issue. There has been more information on Israeli activities in northern Iraq. I think it is very clear that Israel was massively involved, technically on a private level but with government knowledge. Turkish public opinion doesn't trust Israel on the issue; Israel, on some of the official level, but definitely a public level, is not aware enough on the sensitivities. And when things will deteriorate, if they will deteriorate, this wound can bleed again.

Another issue has developed since the election of Hamas and given the fighting going on after the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers by Hamas and Hizballah.

While the Turkish government quickly invited Hamas officials to visit, it is possible that Turkey could be a link between Israel and the Palestinians.

**Prof. Amikam Nachmani:** One interesting point concerning domestic politics is the growing risk of a rift between the ruling echelons and the masses over EU membership. The former are eager to advance Turkey's membership and for them success is the fulfillment of a dream. But if you look at certain trends in public and intellectual opinion, there is less enthusiasm. One author, of *Metal Storm*, said that whenever he asked his audience, who is in favor of Turkey getting into the EU, nobody raised his hand, in particular among young people.

Regarding foreign policy, Turkey has experienced one of the greatest

transitions since the Cold War's end. From 1990 onward, practically all of Turkey's crises disappeared. Communism collapsed; the Soviet Union disintegrated; Iraq disintegrated; the PKK lost, and its leader was in a Turkish prison. In the case of Greece and Turkey's conflict with the Hellenic world, one of the causes of that problem's diminution is that Turkey now has no other crisis to confront apart from the Greek-Turkish one. For Greece's security, that development necessitated second thinking and, eventually, the opting for dialogue with Turkey instead of alienating it. The reason: Traditionally Greece counted on Turkey becoming embroiled in a number of conflicts at a time, something that was supposed to ease pressure of the Turkish-Greek disputes.

Despite these external changes, I think Turkey's foreign policy is very consistent. It has stayed out of wars, despite living in such a wild neighborhood. At this point, it should be added, that embroilment in any Middle Eastern or Central Asian conflict would also be seen as undermining Turkey's EU candidacy: As a country that aspires to become a Western, EU country, Turkey will *not* spend much energy on the Arab Middle East, neither in Central Asia. It seems senseless and futile to waste your energies on the Arab world while your aim is Brussels. This is a crucial point: If Brussels is your most sought-after haven, then you are not going to burn your fingers in the intermittent Middle Eastern conflicts, nor in Central Asia.

**Yasemin Congar:** One factor that should be mentioned, and it does affect Turkish-American issues as well, is the

rising nationalist and populist sentiment in Turkey. Even AKP leaders complain that they have to be more nationalist than the nationalists to control this trend. The same situation exists in other parties. The public, which is not necessarily very educated and does not necessarily follow world events closely, is receiving everyday from its political leaders some version of the concept that Turkish nationalism is the only way we can defend ourselves against international changes and regional challenges.

**Barry Rubin:** A lot of it depends upon whether Turkey faces a foreign policy crisis, probably brought about by external forces. Let us consider what direction these might come from. First, it is possible the Cyprus issue will become a bigger crisis mobilizing Turkish nationalism vis-à-vis Europe. I think it is unlikely, but certainly possible. Second, will Russian ambitions grow to the point that it would also create a Turkish nationalist reaction concerning Azerbaijan or other places?

Third, Iran, by its growing influence, by getting nuclear weapons, appear to be posing more of a threat to Turkey, even though the current government wants to play down a potential problem. Fourth, will events in Iraq, having to do with Kurdish nationalism and the status of Iraqi Turcomans, push Turkey and create a crisis. And fifth, might a resurgence in PKK activity create Turkish-Iraqi problems and lead Turkey to examine who is sponsoring this group.

These are five potential crises, all possible but unlikely to lead to a major crisis that is going to involve Turkey in the next two or three years. In other

words, Turkey may get through several years without being directly involved in a major international crisis which would mobilize the country and lead to major developments. I would say the last major crisis, of course, was Turkey's policy towards the U.S.-led attack on Iraq. I wouldn't take for granted that there is not going to be an external crisis to mobilize Turkish nationalism, and shift policy but if you look at other countries, you'll find more and bigger potential crises at a higher likelihood than for Turkey. Consequently, there might be a high level of continuity in Turkish policy.

**Ambassador Marc Grossman:** I do think that the increase in nationalism in Turkey is one of the most dangerous things happening currently in Turkish society. I think there is a fair chance that AKP is a long-term government for Turkey. The question is: do you see them as an ultimately tolerant or ultimately intolerant fixture on the Turkish scene? For example, it is one thing that a woman wearing a headscarf can go to the presidential palace, which is fine, but do you see a time when the AKP party says that only women in headscarves can go to the presidential palace?

**Barry Rubin:** That is a critical point. In terms of their domestic policies, clearly there are factions in the party; clearly there are people who want to go much faster and that would lead to a crisis. The current leadership is smart; they know they can't go too far. They sometimes miscalculate. So they continue to try to push the boundaries, but know there would be limits. So I don't think it would be a question of saying, 'No woman who isn't wearing a

headscarf can come into the presidential palace or meeting.' And of course at this point the AKP does not even control the presidency. But their approach is more along the lines of: let us do things to encourage this cultural shift, so that more women will want to wear headscarves.

In the foreseeable future they are not going to go to a position of mandating Islamist behavior, but they are going to fight the culture war and try to encourage people to adapt it so it becomes more and more normal and the seculars are pushed to the boundary. The current leadership understands very well that it has a long-term project of 50 years to make Turkey an Islamic society, but they know that they can only go so far, so fast. And I don't think the more radical factions will take over the party. If they did, then either a) they would lose the election massively or b) the army would intervene. So Turkey has insurance against going too far too fast, but the longer term kind of project I think is under way.

**Alon Liel:** The AKP whose picture we see is a party supported by many nationalists in the last election, and I don't think it would be difficult for the AKP to position itself as a more nationalistic party. It is a kind of modular ideology; an ideology that is a work in progress, and I think for some leadership like Erdogan and Gul to turn and lead their parties to a more nationalistic direction would be almost natural. I think there is no conflict between the Islamic element and the nationalist element. It is not a kind of a party that is locked into an anti-nationalist corner. It is a party that can

easily adjust its ideology close to the next election and to its needs.

**Barry Rubin:** The question would be though, what is the operational effect of a very strong nationalistic feeling in Turkey. I suggest three things. Number one, an attitude of anger that the EU isn't treating Turkey well enough, including regarding the Cyprus question. But I don't think this means the government would tear up its membership application. Number two, a desire to help Turkmen in Iraq or hit the PKK harder there. Again, I don't think that is going to lead Turkey into a war. And three—the easiest one because it is largely rhetorical—increased criticism of the United States, which in a sense is a relatively no-cost thing for Turkey. So what does it actually mean in terms of Turkish government behavior? Nationalist fervor is there but I am not sure whether in practice it is going to mean any major difference in how the country behaves in terms of foreign policy.

**Amikam Nachmani:** In Turkey's history, I think there were three topics that probably raised more nationalistic behavior than anything else: the conflict with Greece, the Kurds, and the Armenians. Today, of these, only the Kurdish issue could provoke such a reaction. The current government or any regime in Turkey could manage a crisis in a prudent way to avoid an eruption of nationalistic feelings that would exceed the normal level.

**Marc Grossman:** I would like to make a couple of points about the state of U.S.-Turkish relations. To begin, I can remember very clearly, sitting in Turkey in 1989 and 1990 and having

Turk after Turk coming to visit us and saying “My goodness, the importance of Turkey is over. We're finished, no more Russia, no more NATO, and no more crises.” And I can remember U.S. officials saying to the Turks, “Not so fast. It is possible that the way this may all play out you will become a more rather than less important country.”

In Turkey's relations with its neighbors there are two important points to be considered. One is that there are issues in all of those areas that cause rational anxiety to Turks; and, secondly, Turkey is a great country that lacks a certain self-confidence. As a result, instead of looking at the world by saying, “Positive, positive, positive, positive,” Turks tend to look at the world from a more pessimistic point of view and they see anxieties and challenges all around them. I think that applies absolutely to their relationship with the United States. The Council on Foreign Relations issued a report entitled, “How do you regenerate momentum in the US-Turkish relationship,” and I think it is the right title for a couple of reasons. One, is it implies that there isn't much momentum at the moment; and secondly, that it is important that this momentum be regenerated.

I don't think that there is a crisis in U.S.-Turkish relations. What I think is that you have to keep putting things in the bank of U.S.-Turkish relations, so that when there is a crisis, you can draw down on some of that capital. And I think at the moment, in U.S.-Turkish relations, there isn't enough of that capital in the bank. There aren't enough things going on, so that small-ish things or even large-ish things loom large enough for people to talk about a crisis. If you look over the timeline

since March 2003, you can see how this goes up and down. No question that the vote in March 2003 on not allowing U.S. troops to transit Turkey for the Iraq operation was a disappointment in the United States.

I think Turks have had a harder time getting over that vote than most Americans have. The prime minister said he would take this issue to parliament and he did. We always wanted more democracy in Turkey; we got more democracy in Turkey. I think most Americans believe that it didn't come out the way that we wanted but now it is time to move on to other issues. Turks are still focused on that event. No question that U.S.-Turkish relations took a serious dip after March 2003.

But when the prime minister visited the United States in June 2005 this laid the basis for a new U.S.-Turkish relationship. After that, things built up slowly. At that time, the prime minister's responsibility was really quite simple, which is to speak out in favor, in his own voice, of the U.S.-Turkish relationship.

I think what no one could foresee was the impact of an anti-American book and film and the impact of the invitation to Hamas to visit Turkey, which really struck people in the United States quite hard. It is interesting to note that Khaled Meshal of Hamas lives in Damascus, and there are those of us who remember that this is where Abdallah Ocalan lived. And I think people in Turkey who made these decisions didn't realize the impact it was going to have on the United States. Similarly, I think for strategic and for nationalistic reasons and for policy reasons as well, Turks have continued—and I believe very

rightly—to wonder why the United States does not do more against the PKK in northern Iraq.

I think more is being done but there is no question that more can be done. So you have, it seems to me, a series of these issues, between the United States and Turkey, which have taken the momentum out of the relationship.

Of the things that will be on the agenda to regenerate momentum, first and foremost is Iraq. There has to be a conversation between the United States and Turkey about Iraq because no matter how Turks felt on March 1, 2003 they will a) be the biggest beneficiaries of a successful Iraq and b) Turks and Americans and everybody has to get Iraq absolutely right. And here I think there has to be a conversation certainly about Kirkuk, and I wouldn't even know how to begin to participate in such a conversation, but clearly, Kirkuk is going to be a symbol for getting Iraq right, for nationalism, for Kurdish aspirations, and that is something I think Americans and Turks need to have on the agenda.

Second is Iran, and that I think could be a positive or negative in U.S.-Turkish relations. I believe it could be a positive, because surely Turkey, in its strategic vision, doesn't want to have an Iran with nuclear weapons. I was kidding with Turkish friends a couple of weeks ago in Istanbul that anti-Americanism in Turkey will stay at a high level until the day after Iran sets off a nuclear weapon and then NATO gets more interesting and the relationship with the United States gets more interesting. But we need to talk about those things now, so that Turkey is clearly on the side of those nations working to make sure that Iran does

not get a nuclear weapon. If we don't do these things, I think the issue with Iran could be a real negative because of the energy relationship and neighboring status of Iran and Turkey.

For the United States, it seems to me two things going forward are important. First, that we continue to speak out for the success of a secular Turkey, and a democratic Turkey, and that we don't sort of drift into the easy way of talking about Turkey as an Islamic state, and sometimes you can hear that in the United States. I think for mostly Americans, it is just not a distinction they make, and it is a misuse of words. But I think for the American government and for Americans who talk about Turkey, it is important to talk about a secular, democratic, and Muslim society, and not an Islamist or Islamic society.

It is also important that the United States not consider that its responsibilities regarding Turkish candidacy for the European Union has ended. I think it is perfectly natural that Turks would be tired of being told what to do and how to do it. I do think it is important that the United States continue to press Europeans regarding this huge strategic decision to make Turkey a member and to keep Turks focused on what it needs to do as well.

Regarding Cyprus, maybe what we need over the next few years is a little less United Nations and a little more European Union. Maybe that is a way to generate some momentum on Cyprus, given the fact that an overwhelming majority of Greek-Cypriots voted against the Kofi Annan plan. Another is that I think this point about the army and civil-military relations in Turkey is really important. Among the greatest beneficiaries of a



collapse in Turkey's aspirations to become an EU member would be those non-democratic forces in the military which I think have had to adjust themselves over the past few years to the project of European Union.

The same might apply to the undemocratic parts of Turkish society were this project to fail or be put on the backburner. I think that would be too bad for Turks and for the United States. So I think there is momentum to be generated by paying attention, and dealing in Ankara with the importance of the United States and Turkey, and in the United States recognizing that we have some work to do as well.

**Yasemin Congar:** I would like to look at the U.S.-Turkish relations from the domestic Turkish angle. I think that the problems we have been encountering in recent years in U.S.-Turkish relations are deeper rooted than AKP's own prejudices and even perhaps its agenda. I view these problems as a consequence of the change in the world and in the region, and I trace some of these directly to Turkey's own insecurities.

The Cold War and the pre-September 11 era in the region provided some sort of comfort for Turkey in that the situation was clearly defined. Afterwards, a vacuum emerged. This is less true today, but I think Turkey is still having a very difficult time in adapting itself to new definitions, and this is because of the basic lack of self-confidence of the Turkish society.

In this new era, Turkey is not only important for where it is, but also for who it is. Turkey is now important also for its Muslim identity: secular, democratic, modern, investment-

oriented, but yet 99 percent Muslim. However, the fear of political Islam has always been a major factor in these discussions, and that is why the United States initially wanted to emphasize Turkey's identity as a "moderate Islamic" country, perhaps even a "model" for others. Now we all know that there is almost an allergic reaction to these definitions, because Turkey is not secure enough about its own Muslim identity.

In terms of identity and nationalism, the Kurdish issue is also a key factor. It has come to the forefront of the discussion especially after the Iraq war began, given the possibility of a Kurdish state in the region or a very loose federation where Kurds have more rights, freedoms, and much more say in the country's politics than they do in Turkey. This also is reflected on Turkey's view of its relations with the United States.

Many people in Turkey today, including some political leaders, many people in the media, policymakers, and other shapers of society believe that the United States has been using these issues—political Islam and Kurdish nationalism—to control and influence the domestic situation in Turkey. I don't agree with that, but that is the sentiment, and as long as you have that sentiment, that lack of self-confidence in Turkey, there will always be a problem in bilateral relations.

There is this belief in Turkey that the United States exerts much influence on domestic politics. There are people who believe that a politician who does not have U.S. support cannot become prime minister or president. There are people who believe that the United States is even influential on election results. This is naïve, this is

absurd, this is bizarre, but the belief is there.

So when it comes to domestic politics, you see many Turkish political actors are indeed try to conduct politics via Washington. That is why a meeting with the U.S. president at the White House is taken for its domestic political value more than its foreign policy value, more than its real importance in bilateral relations. That is also why you will see people coming to Washington from Turkey and asking that the U.S. government not give an appointment to the Turkish prime minister at this juncture.

It is a country where almost everyone in politics accuses each other of being pro-American, but then the minute someone wants to damage the image or the cause of a politician, he will say, "Oh, the United States is not supporting him anymore. The bridges to Washington are broken." As long as this situation exists, politicians will not be truly comfortable in conducting bilateral relations with the United States on their own merit.

What is worse, Turkey has, to a certain extent, become an anti-American, anti-Western and anti-Semitic country. Just look at the results of recent international surveys. Only 17 percent of Turks said they had a favorable opinion of Americans. Mind you, not the United States—the popularity of which is down to 12 percent, or President Bush who is down to three percent—but simply, Americans. As for Jews, their popularity is a mere 15 percent. For Christians, it is 16 percent. For Westerners it is also very low. There is a great deal of prejudice towards Westerners among Turks. If you look at the same surveys, Turks see the so-

called Westerners as arrogant, selfish, and so on.

So you have such a public. This is a problem for Washington. This could be a problem for Jerusalem, but it is also a problem for Ankara. We have the lack of political leadership. There are politicians in Turkey, even within the AKP government, who truly believe the relations with the United States are important; who truly agree with the United States vis-à-vis Iraq now, or at least, who are willing to cooperate with the United States to keep Iraq together, in order to have a stable, modernizing, strong Iraq that will be a friend to Turkey. Turkey also certainly recognizes the danger of an Iran with nuclear weapons and has been cooperating quite actively with the United States and the EU on this matter.

But Turkish politicians do not take the time to go to the Turkish public and talk about these issues in depth—why the United States is important, why there should be cooperation against Iran with the United States and the rest of the world, why we really need the EU, what EU membership means for Turkey.

Thus, while it is important that the United States and Turkey have a joint vision, it will be a good idea to put this joint vision on paper only if Turkish politicians are willing to talk about it at length and in depth and defend it before the Turkish public.

**Barry Rubin:** The central theme regarding U.S.-Turkish relations is very important and clear: for 50 years, Turkey and the United States were two countries that had a close and strategic partnership. Now they are merely two

countries that have good relations. And that is a big change.

We can talk about how you keep good relations or how to try and make them better. Yet this gigantic shift must be at the center of any discussion on this issue. What might change the relationship back closer to what it was in the past? The answer is: something that makes Turkey appreciate the United States more.

One such trend would be Turkey's disappointment with Europe and the prospects of EU membership. It has often been said that such a development would turn it in a more Islamic and Middle Eastern direction. I think it would turn Turkish leaders back to the importance of the relationship with the United States.

Another such trend would be a perceived threat from Russia or from Iran. I was the only non-EU speaker at a conference in Istanbul where people went on at great length about how great is the EU. I said, "We should remember that Europe shamefully betrayed its historic commitments to defend Turkey before the Iraq War, openly stating that if Turkey was attacked, they wouldn't help it." That was a shocking development. The question is: who is Turkey going to call if it faces a threat?

An EU official responded, "It is true we've never really been that concerned with defensive issues. We always left it to America." I suggested that it was very important to consider that statement's implication. As an illustration of Turkish nationalism, one person in the audience responded that the Turkish army didn't need anyone else's help to defend Turkey. Nevertheless, it is clear that on some very important contingencies there is

no substitute for the relationship with the United States.

I agree that the situation is not just due to the AKP. But a very big and real shift has happened. What might shift it back is if Turkey feels that it needs the United States, which it does not feel today. There will come a day when American forces are out of Iraq. There will come a day when there is another president of the United States and any personal considerations no longer apply. But if Turkey feels it needs the US, because Europe isn't performing, or Europe doesn't want them, or there is another external threat, that relationship could build back to one of reliance. Short of that, I don't see any prospect for a major positive shift. Good relations are a good thing, but the United States has good relations with a lot of countries, it doesn't have strategic partnerships with that many.

**Marc Grossman:** In addition to the very good points that Professor Rubin made, about why there might be a return to strategic relationships with Turkey, we should add the energy factor. If you consider the kind of energy sources around Turkey, through Turkey, the possibilities of the Russians misusing their energy power, I think that is a place for dialogue as well. I hope that will be something that Turks and Americans can talk about.

Another aspect, and I will give percentages only to illustrate the point rather than as an exact measurement, is that today the U.S.-Turkish relationship is about 75 percent official and 25 percent private. I'd be happy if in five years you could reverse those numbers so that when something between the governments happens that

the two governments didn't like, you still had a foundation of a relationship.

**Zeyno Baran:** I agree with what has been said on Turkish insecurity. This sentiment brings Turks and Russians very close together because both talk about when they used to have much more control over their backyard, when things used to be much better. I think there is a sense, perhaps mixed partly with nationalism, that when Turks were much more powerful or independent in their foreign policy, they did things much better. There is a sense that the EU and the United States are not really conducting effective foreign policy in the Middle East or the Black Sea region or Central Asia.

As for energy, I think that the United States has lost an important window of opportunity. Putin has been very aggressively locking in gas markets and infrastructure. Turkey is surrounded with Russian-dominated oil and gas pipeline networks. While Turkey is still officially supportive of the East-West corridor, it has taken steps that are going to weaken the corridor's viability, especially in terms of gas.

**Yasemin Congar:** I want to go back very briefly to an issue raised by Professor Rubin at the beginning, about AKP's possibly becoming a long-term hegemonic party in Turkish politics. The possibility is of course there, but I think that will only become true if AKP manages to hold on to the center of Turkish politics. When they came to power, they were supported by many moderates. They gained the center's backing because of their priority on EU membership. They were widely supported, because the Turkish

public and Turkish businessmen were fed up with the corrupt politicians. They were also supported by the majority of the media.

The tides are changing. The majority of the Turkish media is not behind the government anymore. Turkish businessmen are also complaining, though they do not necessarily aim to bring down the government or see any reliable alternative. But I think this public pressure is very constructive, because it is aiming to bring AKP back to the center. If AKP redefines itself once more as a centrist conservative party, if the fear about a "hidden agenda" can be eased by AKP's own statements and actions, and perhaps if they can let go of the presidency and show the rest of the country that they do not seek to monopolize power, then I think they will have a long life in Turkish politics. If they go on to consolidate power, if they remain as keen on gaining the presidency for themselves as they are, I think they might be short-lived as the ruling party.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **\*PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES**

**Zeyno Baran** is Director of the Center for Eurasian Policy and Senior Fellow of the Hudson Institute, Washington, D.C. Headquarters, since April 2006. From January 2003 until joining Hudson, Baran directed the International Security and Energy Programs at The Nixon Center. From 1999 until December 2002, Baran worked as Director of the Caucasus Project at the Center for Strategic and

International Studies (CSIS). For more than a decade, she has written extensively on Caspian oil and gas pipeline projects and frequently travels to the region. In recognition of her prominent contribution to the development of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the South Caucasus gas pipeline projects, she was awarded with the Order of Honor by Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze in May 2003. Baran was a C.V. Starr Distinguished Visitor at the American Academy in Berlin in January 2006. Baran received her M.A. in international economic development and her B.A. in political science from Stanford University.

**Yasemin Congar** has been a weekly columnist and the Washington Bureau Chief of the Turkish newspaper *Milliyet* since January 1995. Ms. Congar is also the Washington Bureau Chief of the television news network CNN Turk and the anchor of its new political talk show, “*Burasi Washington*” (Washington Calling). Before coming to Washington, Ms. Congar worked as Vice President and Director of Political Research at the Strateji-Mori Research Group in Istanbul (1993-94), radio producer for the BBC World Service in London (1993), diplomatic correspondent for the Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet* in Ankara (1989-92), and diplomatic correspondent and economic analyst for ANKA News Agency in Ankara (1984-89). Ms. Congar has a B.A. in Economics from Ankara University and an M.A. in Liberal Studies from Georgetown University.

**Ambassador Marc Grossman** was the U.S. Under Secretary for Political Affairs from 2001 to 2005. Grossman has been a career Foreign Service Officer since 1976. He was Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources, from June 2000 to February 2001, and Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, from August 1997 to May 2000. From November 1994 to June 1997, he served as U.S. Ambassador to Turkey. Prior to this, from January 1993 to September 1994, he was Special Assistant to the Secretary of State and Executive Secretary of the Department of State. Before assuming these duties, Grossman served as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs. Grossman earned a B.A. from the University of California, Santa Barbara and an MSc. in International Relations from the London School of Economics. Upon retirement from government in 2005, he joined the Cohen Group, a global strategic consulting firm.

**Dr. Alon Liel** is a retired diplomat, and is outgoing Chairman of Israel-Turkey Business Council, Chairman of Global Code LTD, and a member of the board Gazit Inc. Dr Liel is a Lecturer in International Relations and Diplomacy at The Lauder School of Government IDC, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv University. He served the Israeli government in a variety of positions: Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2000-2001); Director General of the Ministry of Economy and Planning (1994-96); Ambassador

to South Africa and non-resident Ambassador of Israel to Mozambique and Zimbabwe (1992-94); Consul General of Israel to the South Eastern United States Based in Atlanta, Georgia (1990-92); Spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1988-89); and many other positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1971-88). He has published several books on Turkey and South Africa. Dr. Liel holds a PhD in International Relations from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

**Prof. Amikam Nachmani** is a Senior Research Associate of the Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies, and Associate Professor in the Department of Political Studies, Bar-Ilan University. He specializes in strategic affairs of Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus, and is an authority on the politics of water in the Middle East. He completed his M.A. in International Relations, Cum Laude, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and holds a Ph.D. from the University of Oxford. He has written numerous books and articles in professional journals, and speaks frequently at Israeli and international conferences. His latest English book is *Turkey: Facing a New Millennium Coping with Intertwined Conflicts* (Manchester University Press, 2003).

**Prof. Barry Rubin** is director of the Global Research for International Affairs (GLORIA) Center at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya. He is editor of the Middle East Review of International Affairs MERIA Journal and of Turkish Studies

Journal. His books include *Yasir Arafat: A Political Biography*, *The Tragedy of the Middle East*, and *The Long War for Freedom: The Arab Struggle for Democracy in the Middle East*. Among his 23 edited or co-edited books are *A Timeline Encyclopedia of Terrorism*; *Political Parties in Turkey*; and the *Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*. He has been a Fulbright and a Council on Foreign Relations/National Endowment for the Humanities International Affairs Fellow; a U.S. Institute of Peace, Harry Guggenheim Foundation, and Leonard Davis Center grantee; a Senior Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Johns Hopkins University Foreign Policy Institute (where he directed the program on terrorism funded by the Ford and the Bradley Foundations), and Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies.