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Transcript

BEYOND THE BALLOT BOX: ADVANCING DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY

September 25, 2013 | Brussels

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JAN TECHAU: Welcome to Carnegie Europe. Good evening and thanks for stepping over to have another discussion on Turkey tonight, after your working day in the office. This event and publication that Marc Pierini has put out marks the continuation of a process now which we've done over the last year or so, where we really have - along with Sinan Ülgen, who's been our Turkey scholar for a while here at Carnegie and who's done great work - increased the focus on Turkey.

Just to do a little bit of self-bragging, we just heard recently that somebody said that in the European debate on Turkey, Carnegie Europe has become one of those points that you don't want to miss, which is very much to the credit of Sinan and Marc, and I think very much the fruit of this increased attention that we've put to the topic. Turkey is one of the big unresolved strategic issues for Europe.

We've just had our pre-meeting upstairs, before we started here, and we fear that we've reached a point in the Turkey debate where this might create reactions of: ah, gee, this is too complicated, let's just... attention goes elsewhere: let's not do this any more, let's not put the same kind of energy into this thing that should be put into it given the enormous importance that Turkey has for Europe, in many, many ways, both domestically but also in its foreign policy posture.

Marc published a report last year, which won an award, on press freedom in Turkey. Inspired by that award that he received, he set out to broaden the focus and broaden the scope and now not look only at press freedoms but at individual freedoms, in a wider sense, and to give us an idea of what the picture is like. The product is this publication and the event tonight.

We will hear what he has to say, his findings; also, some of his policy recommendations for the Europeans, not only for the Turkish government, but also for us. Then Sinan and Marietje Schaake, Dutch MEP from D66, is here with us tonight to comment on these findings. It's great to have you back here at Carnegie. We had a similar discussion about a year ago with you. You've been very active on the Turkish issue; you are in the Foreign Affairs and Human Rights Committee; you've been watching Turkey very, very closely. It's a great pleasure to have you again with us and to hear what you have to say.

On top of all of this, we do have two other things; we have very fine Turkish food tonight and Turkish wine. The last time we did this, we made some kind of comment on Turkish wine and then we got lots of reactions from you. Now we have really done our homework and we have found the best Turkish wine in this town, and it will be served afterwards.

The second thing is that we do have a photo exhibition going. It's not entirely visible now because the chairs are here, but once this is over we will move all this to the side and you can see photos hanging here on the wall and also in the back, from Gesi Park, from the Taksim protests. We have, I think, a fitting decoration here on the wall, something that tells us something also about the dramatic political events at the time.

I'll leave it at this. Thanks again for coming. Marc, the floor is yours.

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MARC PIERINI: Thank you, Jan. As you said, this is a follow-up on the Press Freedom report, which was not a year ago but in January, but seems a long time ago. The situation, as most of you know, in Turkish media has not improved. To the contrary, it's got worse.

This time, the focus is on individual freedoms, especially freedom of cultural expression, which is a big subject, and also coexistence of lifestyles. I researched this from February to July, but, of course, towards the end the Gezi protest erupted, so I had to take this into account. I've seen quite a number of people in Ankara, in Istanbul, including in the Government. The Ministry of Culture only replied to my questions after we sent this to the press, but we have their reply; it's already something.

In a way, it's one of the first attempts to systematically document freedom of cultural expression. If you compare with freedom of the media, there are quite a number of NGOs, Turkish and international, quite a number of regular reports on the subject on freedom of cultural expression, on lifestyles, you don't have them. You have small evidence, bits and pieces, but for the first time I've tried to put that into a coherent way.

When I started, I also included urban transformation, but this was just too inconsistent with the rest, so I published a separate article, which some of you may have seen in May. It's already on the website and it's here in print form. Of course, after the report was published and some of these scholarly recommendations for dialogue on cultural issues and so on, the Gezi protest erupted.

I think we need to look beyond the specific issues on which I've commented here and documented, and the recommendations, for two reasons; one, that in the report and, of course, in the Gezi protest, what you see is an increasingly conservative posture of the AKP government, in their statements, in their actions, and what at the beginning of my research was simmering discontent in a large segment of the population erupted and morphed into a nationwide form of protest, a very largely peaceful protest - don't be fooled by the images that you've seen on television. That was a host of small issues that suddenly converged into a big social and political explosion.

Secondly, once it erupted, the government's reaction further polarised the society. That is an event as big as the protests themselves. It not only further polarised the society but it also distanced the government from EU norms and from the expected behaviour of a western country, a country which is in NATO, which is in Council of Europe, which is an applicant to the EU, and which is an ally of the United States. There's a considerable loss of image outside.

In a way, you have now a split policy: what is good for the AKP government inside, which is polarisation and a very hard language and a repressive policy, is, of course, very bad on the outside scene. That is an important element that we will look at in the discussion, I suppose, because the electoral interests of the AKP no longer match its international obligations, aspiration and image. That is a very important element, especially in this town, with the EU-Turkey relationship and negotiation.

You have seen already and you will see even more with the upcoming cycle of elections next year and the following year, anti-EU rhetoric from the part of the governing party. That is

part of an electoral tactic. At the same time, the EU is more indispensable than ever to the Turkish economy, for example, or to the evolution of fundamental liberties. The questions we are asking here in this report but also in this debate here is: will all this have a medium- and long-term effect on Turkish politics? We don't know yet. It may, it may not. Will this have an effect, in particular, on conservative politics in Turkey?

There is a crack in the party. The governing party is not split in any manner; it may not even lose any election – it may lose some perhaps; but there is a crack. There are dissenting voices within the AKP on the way to conduct policy and the way to take into account the fundamental element, in my view, which is a diversity of the society.

Of course, the third question we have to ask ourselves: will this have a consequence on the EU-Turkey relationship? There too we have a contrasted image: we've been shocked, the European Parliament has been shocked, and the Council has been shocked by some of the words against the EU, against the Parliament, against the German Chancellor; members of the German Parliament and the European Parliament have been gassed inside a hotel in Istanbul; a lot of shocking developments and images. At the same time, what we've seen is a very substantial segment of the Turkish society upholding liberal democratic values. I don't want to even call these EU values. These are their values and they're totally EU-compatible.

Is this the moment to turn our back on Turkey? Of course, we're going to see a few, maybe member states, maybe just parties, trying to take advantage of the situation and say, this is enough; we don't understand these people any more, we don't understand this prime minister; let's interrupt this whole circus of accession negotiation. I don't think that's a reasonable stance.

I think, on the contrary, while being critical of what has happened, it is extremely important that EU institutions, starting with the Commission and a progress report being issued in three weeks' time, to give a signal not just of criticism for excessive use of force and whatever else, but a signal to the liberals in Turkey that we recognise them, that they are speaking the same language as us in the EU, and, therefore, signs of support.

I think if the Commission has the guts to do it, they would increase, maybe double Erasmus and Leonardo, and they would increase the use of the European instrument for democracy and human rights. The European Endowment for Democracy will also play its part. There are also other instruments, with foundations and so on. I think now is the moment to give signal.

I will stop here because I have many more things, but you have a few other speakers.

JAN TECHAU: Thanks a lot. I will just follow very quickly with one thing; one of the most fashionable things in Turkey that's something that you always say is this big conspiracy theory. It's very fashionable to explain complex developments by blaming it on a simplistic kind of scheme. Now I have a conspiracy question theory to put to you, because this is one of the things that come up in the western debate about Turkey, and it's a simplistic one. It's this idea that there is this AKP master plan to build Turkish society, rebuild it, to transform it, to islamise it, and to basically completely change it and carry it away from the Kemalistic legacy. Is that too big a thing to say, or is there a half-truth in that?

MARC PIERINI: I like your reverse conspiracy. In fact, what you have with the governing party and with the prime minister is this mode of revenge. The discourse, which was implicit before and has been explicit after Gezi, is that we religious conservatives in Turkey – I'm speaking like the prime minister now, for a minute – we've been suppressed and oppressed before; these times are over, this is our time. This is very much the language. Sinan can speak about that much more [overtalking].

SINAN ÜLGEN: As a typical religious conservative, yes!

MARC PIERINI: That line has been followed at a time which, for a foreign observer, is extremely surprising, because you are now in the middle of the third mandate of the AKP; three electoral victories, three single-party governments. This is just unheard of in Turkish republican history since 1923, so this was utterly unnecessary, but this is what we have. Of course, if you speak to Kemalist Turks, they will tell you, yes, this is the intention of the government.

The only answer to this is more dialogue and inclusiveness. Unfortunately, while the Gezi protest offered an opportunity to at least start a dialogue on urban transformation, on environmental issues, on cultural policy issues, small things that would have built up to... the government has chosen the exact opposite way, so you can have this theory even more than before.

I think for us Europeans it's probably the time to show that we are built not just on the ballot box but we are built on the ballot box and dialogue. This is what liberal democracy is about.

JAN TECHAU: Thanks, Marc. Sinan, now it's over to you. Marc has already pointed at you; we need a Turkish perspective on this, obviously. Ballot box and dialogue: where are we moving?

SINAN ÜLGEN: I'll start with, you must have read, for those who are interested in Turkey, and obviously you are here for that reason, about the Gezi events and so on, so I'm not going to talk about that. Suffice it to say that the government's position on the Gezi event has been very clear and very critical.

Now, yesterday or the day before President Gül, however, said something interesting which I thought reflected his insight on this one. He said that he was proud with the initial phases of the Gezi movement. Now, that was interesting to hear, because, obviously, Gül comes from the same political family as Erdoğan, but, nonetheless, increasingly, he has adopted a more conciliatory approach and he's trying to almost become the anti- Erdoğan of Turkish politics.

When you look at what he's said by saying that he's proud of the initial phases of Gezi, he, as well, constrained Gezi as a movement, as important as it may be, essentially of tree-huggers, that it was a movement about environmental concerns, about criticism for urban planning and so on, which, to some extent, it was, but it certainly was much more than that. That, I think, needs to be ascertained.

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After these introductory statements, I essentially have two observations to make. The first observation is really to understand why is it that somebody who is a very tactful, very intelligent and very successful politician as Erdoğan decided to adopt a very different stance than Abdullah Gül, than the president. The government is driven by what Erdoğan has to say, not by what Gül has to say.

Erdoğan's position on Gezi has been very critical, very polarising, and, in a way, he used Gezi and didn't really try to reach out to the other side. On the contrary, he used Gezi to create the other side, to create the division within society, and to use very heavy, inflammatory language, criticising the people who took part in that movement.

Now, the question is why is that so? Normally, you would expect a politician who is, again, as tactful and intelligent as he is to do the exact opposite, to use this and to try to reach out to the other side because there is actually no threat to him as a politician. He is not in a normal political environment where there is an imminent threat to him; he is actually in a very comfortable position, almost in an ideal position to do exactly that. That's really been the question that bothered many of us, trying to understand his reaction to this.

Increasingly, because he's had a very consistent, pervasive and sustained reaction, and politically he seems to have made the right call, because what we're seeing in the polls is that the drop in popularity for the ruling party by four or five points which were registered by the public opinion polls at that particular point in time, he's been able to recuperate. Now, today, the ruling party stands exactly where it stood before Gezi and they've been able to recuperate the loss of popularity that came about as a result of the Gezi protest.

One way to look at it would be to say he's been very astute, politically. He consolidated his constituency, he's cemented his constituency, but essentially eliminating the middle ground in Turkish politics, because, interestingly, the main opposition party also gained from this. We did see, again, according to the polls, increased support for the main opposition party and for the ruling party, and almost a total disappearance of the middle ground.

From that perspective, he's right, but let's think this through: what does that mean for the future of Turkey and Turkish society? I'm afraid that there the judgement is not that positive, and I have here two statements to make. One is that even though short-term tactics may pay off, this is creating such a wedge in Turkish society, this is so deepening the already existing cleavages in Turkey that even if Erdoğan wins in the next electoral cycle, he's going to find a country that's much more difficult to govern. This is a paradox that he may end up facing because of the depth of these cleavages that this sort of political tactic is creating.

To borrow a term from Fukuyama, who wrote about the concept of social capital and trust, what this current political tactic doing is undermining the trust that's embedded in Turkish society. The sad story is we are already starting at a very bad point; Turkey is a low-trust society, not a high-trust society, not even a medium-trust society. A number of studies have been done around this, and according to the studies, which are trying to compute interpersonal trust index, Turkey is one of the lowest countries in the world in terms of building trust, in terms of the trust that people have vis-à-vis each other. We are in a select group of countries with Rwanda, Cambodia, Indonesia, Ghana, Trinidad and Tobago, and

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Brazil; these are the lowest countries in the world in terms of interpersonal trust. What's been done is further undermining this.

Again, according to Fukuyama, the negative aspect of this is that, obviously, the stock of social capital is what, presumably, produces a dense civil society which in turn is universally seen as a necessary condition for a modern and well-functioning liberal democracy. Today's de-polarisation is tearing apart the fabric of Turkish society; that would be my argument. That, to me, is the fundamental threat we are facing going towards another electoral cycle where things are likely to be more acute.

Now, my second argument regarding this, and here I will heavily borrow from a Turkish political scientist who just... a few days ago we had the pleasure of sharing the same platform at the General Convention of Turkish Businessmen Association of TÜSİAD where I was invited to speak on foreign policy. Bekir Ağırdir, who is a political scientist and the head of a public opinion poll organisation, talked about these issues of liberties. Then he wrote an article, after this weekend's football game – there was a game in Turkey, Besiktas-Galatasaray. At the 90th minute, when the home team was losing two-to-one, but at the exact point where the referee had shown a red card to one of the players of Galatasaray, fans basically invaded the football field and the game had to be stopped. This sent shockwaves, because we've had violence in sports, but this type of very overt, in-the-face, we hadn't really seen.

He wrote a very insightful article, basically arguing that what we see in Turkey, I'm sad to say, is a gradual increase in interpersonal violence: violence at home, violence against women, violence in sports. The reason, his argument goes, is that Turkey as the body politic of Turkey has been unable to respond to the growing multiplicity of identities, to the growing aspirations about cultural freedoms, individual rights that Turkish society holds today, so no changes on the constitution, no real changes on the legal side, no real reform of the education system.

Now, to be fair, this is not the AKP's doing; we had this problem before, and the AKP perhaps didn't really improve it. This clash becomes even more palpable today as the gap between this multiplicity of identities and the inability of the state system to reform and to continue to nurture monist positions, a monist world view, about how Turks should see the world, how they should see it, how they should live their lives, how they should take part in associations of life, and so on.

The imposition of a monist view is the real problem, and the inability of the state structures of the body politic to tackle this is creating such dissatisfaction that it is finding itself in forms of interpersonal violence. That's his argument, and I think there is truth in it. This is the second reason why I think this process is becoming increasingly inimical.

Now, to end my short comments, first of all, Marc, I would like to congratulate you, because I think you put the accent exactly where it needs to be today. The challenge of Turkey is not so much to build a superficial democracy; I think the ballot box democracy, we've been there, we've done that, that's not the point. I think the challenge for Turkey is really to build the type of inclusive democracy and certainly more tolerance and diversity. That's exactly what

Marc is doing, is analysing, categorising, aggregating the evidence of where Turkey has failed and what needs to be done.

Now, secondly, I think Erdoğan is a politician that has a grand vision; he has big ambitions. I think if he really wants to go down in history as the truly transformative leader that he wants to be, this is also the area of focus, otherwise his legacy may be a more introverted and more divided Turkey, not the opposite. I don't think that's what he wants to do. That sort of Turkey is neither good for Turkey nor for the world because, to end on a positive note, I think that the world still needs the quote, unquote, Turkish model of being successfully able to wed democratic principles to a modern polity and society.

I'm afraid we're not moving towards that but we're moving away from that. Again, this is something that the politicians, at the end of the day, need to tackle. That's where the problem starts. I hope they will see this under those terms. I think that speaking in Brussels to an accomplished audience on Turkey and EU, I cannot end my speech without saying that this type of political approach of making Turkey or transforming Turkey towards being a more inclusive, a more tolerant society, would certainly be facilitating an environment where the Turkey-EU relationship is progressing and not the opposite.

JAN TECHAU: Thanks, Sinan, absolutely fascinating, also, about the ability of society to address the newly-emerging multiple identities that weren't probably in existence a generation ago. One of my initial reactions to what happened in Gezi Park was that Erdoğan obviously wants to modernise Turkey in many ways, but he's now finding that you can't modernise a society and then treat the people as children. I think it's interesting how he's so innovative on the one hand, but then fails to see how that, of course, will have an impact on the other side of the equation, on the social equation as well. That arrested development that you've described seems to be a very fascinating sociological phenomenon.

Marietje, it's finally now to you. You've been waiting very patiently. In the European reaction to Gezi and Taksim, you basically have two schools of thought; there is one, the school of thought that says, all right, now we have to actually open up, we have to take a step forward, offer Erdoğan something and invest in the guy; we now need to show ourselves from our best side. Then there's the other side that says, no, no, this is about principles. You can't reward the guy for indecent behaviour of this kind. Now we really have to take a stand and actually engage less instead of more. These are the two major currents, roughly speaking. Where do we stand now on this? Where is Brussels heading in its response to what's happening in Turkey?

MARIETJE SCHAAKE: Thank you very much. Thank you for the research Carnegie is doing and the role you play as a think-tank and facilitating this important debate and for including me in it. Let me pick up on two things that Sinan said towards the end of his remarks, and also answer your question. One is this notion of Turkey as a model, and the other is, of course, the role of politics, because as a politician I'll try my best to say something on behalf of all of us.

In 2011, right after the uprisings in the Arab world were still in full swing, uncertain where they would end, I wrote an article in Turkish Policy Quarterly - maybe you know it, it's a Turkish Foreign Policy magazine - addressing this issue of the notion of Turkey as a model. I

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said something about, it may now be the case that the Arab street looks to Turkey as a model, but if Turkey doesn't respect the rights of its own people, the individual freedoms, if you will, the rule of law, then the Turkish people may look to the Arab street as an example at some point.

I knew it was a provocative statement, there were a lot of responses to it, some people said I went too far, but I think the real problem of the European Union is, we knew all along what was wrong. I think for far too long politicians chose to have Turkish-EU relations be based on government-to-government contact, to give Turkey the benefit of the doubt and to really wish that the economic prosperity and Turkey's ambitions in the region would tilt the country towards the right side.

The AKP government, I think, masterfully drew attention to precisely those points, those interests that the EU had as well, to hide some of the domestic problems from public discussion, to work with what was workable, to pick and choose. I think the EU has been way too complacent in this process and has failed to address a number of issues. I also saw this in the media. I was surprised by how many journalists were making multi-year analyses after the Gezi Park or during the Gezi Park demonstrations, saying that the signs have been clear, that there was a brewing storm that was about to emerge, while so many journalists were in Turkey for years and never, ever, ever wrote about these issues.

I feel like it's been a kind of explosion of awareness that has been unavoidable, obviously, but that has now rushed to the surface. I'm not sure that EU politicians are quite sure yet how their role in this relationship should be redefined, how to make that transition. Of course, people hear the calls for liberal democratic values that came from the streets, far beyond the Gezi concerns, but really addressing problems with the rule of law, with a pluralist society, with the need to include minority forces, whether they be political, ethnic or otherwise.

I think we're at that point, where, on the other hand, we see the AKP government, and this also touches upon what Sinan said, seeking to redefine itself, in a sense, very much blaming the international community for a lot that has happened, whether it is international media, whether it's the international financial markets. The aggressive tone towards international players as though there had been a mingling or a responsibility in creating these kinds of uprisings has been remarkable, I think, especially if you look at the contrast between the kind of language that has been used. I've sat at these tables, I've spoken to these people personally - the switch in rhetoric is remarkable.

I think it will not go unnoticed, whether you belong to the school of people who think that precisely now we should see closer ties, precisely now we ought to push for opening up of negotiation chapters, that precisely now we should address the people instead of the government. I think I still belong more to that school, but it's not easy and it's not becoming easier, if you hear these scathing attacks on the European Parliament itself.

I was smiling because we initiated a resolution in response to the crackdown on the Gezi Park protests in the European Parliament, and it was a critical resolution. In the morning, I was on Dutch radio and the only question the Dutch journalists asked, five times, was: do you think Erdoğan's going to lose any sleep over it? What does it matter what the European Parliament says? As you may know, Europe is not so popular in Europe either, the EU.

I said, well, I believe it's important that we speak out for our principles, that we let the people in Turkey know that we hear them. This is not necessarily a message to the government, this is also a message that we say as a Parliament, a people's representation, to the people in Turkey. I tried to answer these critical questions. That same evening, Prime Minister Erdoğan said that he didn't even acknowledge the European Parliament as an institution, in reaction to this resolution. It leads me to believe we struck a nerve.

We're at a difficult point; I can't emphasise it enough. In the past couple of days we've seen a chief negotiator, Egemen Bağış, saying that he doesn't think that Turkey will ever be a member of the EU, throwing more fuel on the fire. It's going to be difficult for European politicians who are seeking a reason to cut ties, to stop the accession process, not to find one in either the crackdown on demonstrators, or the lack of reform, or the attacks on international institutions and media, or in these kinds of comments. It's almost like there has to be a response at some point, and I think it will be... I hope there can be constructive response, I hope there can be a new avenue for engagement, but it really takes two to tango.

I've been fighting for Turkish accession for years, and I still think it's worth it, but it's not getting any easier.

JAN TECHAU: I have a question for you. Marc gives us this rundown of things that are going wrong, obviously, more conservative norms in various fields, such as cultural policy, dress code, women's lifestyles, the Kurdish rights of cultural expression diminished, and you can just continue the list almost endlessly. Then Sinan tells us Erdoğan won the four to five points that he lost, he won them back very, very quickly. Earlier we talked about a 70/30 kind of divide; 70% of the people are basically in Erdoğan's camp and are very happy in his camp, and the opposition can maybe muster 30%, if it really works hard.

Not an awful lot of people in Turkey, and certainly not the majority, seem to be worried about any of these things. This reflects a little bit, like the question that that journalist asked you, we keep on pressing on these things, but how much can we do when 70% of the people actually say, it might not be nice but it's also really not very important for us.

MARIETJE SCHAAKE: I actually tend to believe that the majority...

SINAN ÜLGEN: It's not 70%; the 70/30 is the right/left split. AKP right now holds about 50%.

JAN TECHAU: Good, thanks, that's important. Still this is not causing the kind of storm that, when you come from an exclusively Western standpoint, you'd think must happen. Is this not a luxury position? We keep on preaching what's good for Turkey when the Turks actually see that maybe a lot differently.

MARIETJE SCHAAKE: I'll try to come back to the preaching later, but I think that a lot of Turks – I won't go into percentages, but a lot of people in Turkey, in my experience, do not feel represented by any political party. I think all of the situations that you sketch are also a result of the underlying problems that took people to the streets, to begin with.

On the one hand, I think the opposition parties have made it far too easy for the governing party to continue to claim power and to go on with increasingly authoritarian style. There is a serious problem with media freedom and digital freedom, so where is the alternative story going to be told? There is a very high threshold for new political parties, so where is the plurality in the political landscape going to come from? I think that that's a real problem, and on various levels the sophistication of control and repression has been fine-tuned, let's say. Perhaps the Gezi Park protests were also like a test of the strength of this increasingly authoritarian system. Perhaps we should conclude that the result is actually more pessimistic than we thought.

Following that line, that should prompt the EU to engage on a deeper level and to also realise that checks and balances don't come through the streets but they must come from the rule of law and from fundamental freedoms that are guaranteed for all people in the country. The proposals to open up precisely those negotiation chapters that deal with the rule of law and fundamental freedoms has been on the table as part of this positive agenda that got snowed under a bit by the news that eventually did reach the world that there were a few people on the street.

I think that that positive agenda still stands on the European side, but, again, if we open up Chapters 23 and 24, the ball will be even more strongly in Turkey's court. There is really going to have to be delivery in actions in these fields; if that doesn't come through, then what do we have left?

JAN TECHAU: What do we have left? Hopefully, lots of questions. It's now the time for you to come in and challenge maybe some of the views here. We've heard a number of things - I think a rich bouquet here.

SAMUEL: Samuel, from the Young Friends of Turkey. Hi, I just wanted to ask a quick question about the reform package coming on Monday, in relation to what you already spoke about. Is there a positive tag on this, and how will it affect all of the issues, including the Kurdish issue?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: My name is [inaudible]. I wanted to ask about the football question, football perhaps as a microcosm of Turkish society. I was looking to book a holiday in Turkey at the time when the events happened, and we didn't cancel but we ended up in Istanbul in the days between the police interventions, so we didn't have time to see the political [unclear] on Taksim Square.

One of the things we saw was a big march against the government by groups of football supporters of all of the major clubs, which, for myself, I know how difficult it is to get football fans to march together, especially football clubs in Turkey, so I was surprised to hear about the violence recently. I wondered whether that was reflected... [unclear] that you talked about - does that image go back down in the society as well?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: [Inaudible]. Yesterday the European Court of Justice ruled on mainly the new [?] countries, saying that the Turkish passive providers of service still need a visa to travel [inaudible]. Given that we are [unclear], we need to pass [?] a government-to-government, a people-to-people approach. Is this a missed opportunity?

What should we do about it? Is this not high time to start with dialogue on visa liberalisation in order to make it easier for Turkish people to come to Europe and see how [inaudible] on that and start with a civil society? Thank you.

JAN TECHAU: Marc has agreed to start with the replies.

MARC PIERINI: On this question, I think if you make a cold, serious analysis of the visa issue, you will see that Europe loses a lot with the current visa regime; we lose in terms of business and we lose in terms cultural and academic influence in Turkey. That's absolutely clear.

In my time as EU ambassador to Turkey, I even had instances where people were listed on Erasmus or Leonardo to come to Brussels, and visas were refused by member states' embassies. It was Brussels or other places. We have this kind of product. Unfortunately, this situation is not going to evolve very quickly. The particular case, Demirkan, that you are referring to is a very specific case about Turkey and Germany, but could have set a precedent – it did not.

What we can hope for at best is a somewhat relaxed position for business, academia and culture, and that would go a long way to ease the situation. Whether we like it or not, member states in the EU, starting with Germany, of course, for well-known reasons, have this fear of family regrouping, massive immigration and so on. It's all fantasies, we know that, because there is, rather, reverse immigration from Germany than anything else at the moment, but this fear is there. The visa policy is driven by foreign policy analysts, certainly not by think-tanks, but by Ministry of Interior, and that's what it is. It is a defensive policy.

With the amount of specific interest that we have from business, plus the cultural and academic influence, we could ease specific segments. Of course, the language used by the Turkish government recently against the EU doesn't help. If in 24 hours you gas two Members of Parliament from Germany, plus the German hospital where people are being treated, you don't build a big image in Germany.

JAN TECHAU: There were questions on football fans standing together, actually, and then the question on the reform package. Sinan, this was mostly for you, but, Marietje, you can come in as well.

SINAN ÜLGEN: Before, I just want to say a few words about the European crisis, ECJ decision on Demirkan, not on the visa issue as such - I think Marc covered it very well. There is a political bond there which I think will be increasingly clear, because what the European Court of Justice did to substantiate its view that the rights awarded to EU citizens do not apply to Turkish citizens despite the fact that there is an Association Council decision in place, despite the fact that there's an additional protocol in place, and despite the Ankara Association Agreement, is to say that the Ankara Association Agreement and the Additional Protocol do not have the same finalité politique as the treaty. If you find a wording that says the same thing in the treaty and the same thing in the Association Agreement or the Additional Protocol, the ECJ decided to interpret it differently.

Now, it has done that previously, in the case of Portugal in 1974, when Portugal was still not a member, in a case called Polydor, but Portugal's agreement was different, whereas

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Turkey's agreement is an agreement that envisages membership. Until today, until this decision, all of us who interpreted the different provisions of the Turkey-EU contractual agreements were under the impression that we have to interpret them in light of the ECJ jurisprudence. We all tended to believe that this should be the case because the finalité politique was the same.

Now, the ECJ said something very different and very threatening to the relationship itself. I'm not talking about visa; I'm talking about the nuts and bolts, the spirit of the relationship; that is something that merits a new assessment, I believe.

Now, on the football case, yes, those were glamorous moments; it was called Istanbul United; Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray and Besiktas fans all together, out in the streets, all these colours and so on. That still is the case. What happened, however, is that these cleavages have also started to impregnate football clubs. We saw this first in the Fenerbahçe stadium – that's also a place where there's been a lot of protests. On the 34th minute of every game Fenerbahçe fans stand up and chant those slogans. There has been a group within the Fenerbahçe fans that started to protest against the protests.

Then the same thing happened with Besiktas fans; there was, apparently, a new group formed against Carsi, which is the main football supporters' club of Besiktas, which were in the vanguard of the protests. Against Carsi, there has been no opposition group formed within the Besiktas fans, called 1453, which is the date when the Ottomans conquered the Byzantines, and the 1453 eagle, which is the symbol of Besiktas. There, the group stood up for government, within the Besiktas club. Those are the ones who allegedly entered the football field to create some kind of chaos.

Again, these are very unsavoury incidents, unfortunately. Just to show how deep the divisions are today - even in a game like football which tends to unite at least fans – they look at the ball, they look at who's going to score, and so on – even within the fans now there are these divisions, just to show you how deep those divisions are.

On the package, we are hopeful about the package; there are people like Ahmet Insel as well, who have written extensively about this. Whether it's going to be sufficient to appease, we don't know. There certainly is a democratisation package that is now online, that the government will announce on Monday, and certainly a step in the right direction. Whether it is an ambitious enough step to really address the sum of the core problems is a question-mark. I think it may not be, but it's certainly a good step in the right direction, no doubt about it.

MARIETJE SCHAAKE: Briefly, about the visa issue, it's been a discussion in the parliament for a very long time. A lot of people feel that it is unjust, like myself, that it's so difficult for Turkish people to visit family or to do business in the EU. I think that's a point that stands regardless of what has happened, but you have to understand that the political reality doesn't make it easier to make such a move.

This is also because everything that has been happening in terms of the accession process, chapters opened, new steps taken, have been framed as though they were a reward for the government. I think the AK government has done that itself. I also think that it's been

framed that way, which is not the relevant way to look at it, I think, because the EU has policies because we believe that it benefits the greater good.

When you look at visa-free travel, it certainly benefits all kinds of different people and it shouldn't just be a reward to any one party at any given time. I think we have to step out of that kind of way of looking at the accession process, because if we continue to do that, then every decision becomes highly politicised and will be seen as either a reward or, let's say, a punishment.

I don't think that that's helpful, because besides visa-free travel, there are so many issues where the relationship between the EU and Turkey will remain important, security issues where both in NATO the very, very fragile and dangerous situation of the Middle East affects all of us and Turkey in the first place. There are other relations, about energy, that are very important. We cannot see this in black and white terms, but we have to think about how we want to frame this discussion. I would suggest that we step away from this reward kind of notion.

JAN TECHAU: Let's go into a second round.

STEFAN LEHNE: Thank you very much. Stefan Lehne, [inaudible] Institution. Now, about the question about the EU response to all of this, I'd very much like to ask, I guess the issue [inaudible] out through society, basically, the Erasmus programme, etc, etc. I think this is going to be the [inaudible]. The idea of opening new chapters is a bit counterintuitive, because the normal act of accession negotiations is that there are entry criteria for opening a chapter.

Now, if the situation deteriorates, it's not really logical to open a chapter. I know now this new approach is opening the 23 [inaudible], but still it, again, in terms of this traditional conditionality approach, isn't it now strange [?]? My question to you is whether this conditionality approach that underlies accession, generally, is still relevant in place of [inaudible]?

My sense is it's a little bit early [?] to discuss it, through disillusion with the EU, that those who advocate engagement with Turkey are now facing [inaudible], meaning that there is a reverse conditionality, that we have to offer more and more and more, not the most Turkey will get. If this is the dynamic in this process now, the question is: for how long is that sustainable? Is that something that really can go on for a number of years? Is it necessary [inaudible]?

JESPER PEDERSEN: Hi, my name is Jesper Pedersen; I'm a Fellow with the German Marshall Fund in Washington DC. Some analysts that I've spoken with, especially in the United States, tend to indicate that a big part of the reason for the continued support for the AKP is the fact that it's delivered such impressive economic growth and the opportunities that have come along with that in terms of jobs and exports and so on.

The Turkish economy has already slowed down and the projections are certainly not as impressive as the years that we've seen leading up to now. I'd be interested in the panellists' views on whether this could lead some of the voters in Turkey to take a renewed look at the

broader policies of the AKP, including individual freedoms, social policy, maybe also some of the harsh statements on foreign policy issues.

JAN TECHAU: Do we have a third question for this round? I don't see an arm, so I might add a question myself. One of the arguments that the pro-Turkey camp in Europe, the ones that say that Turkey must become a member at some point, one of the primary arguments that this group makes is that Turkey is important for the EU foreign policy, that it is a strategic player, it is an emerging big power in Europe, it is a neighbour to some of the most crucial countries that are crisis-ridden and where Europe needs to form its own position in a more assertive way.

My question to all three of you is, if we look at the last one and a half, two years, the Arab Spring, Libya, Mali, and, of course, most importantly, Syria, would a Turkey inside the EU have made us more strategic in responding to these developments, or would it have been a problem for us? I just want to test this kind of argument that Turkey is such a strategic player, that it really needs to become part of the EU. I'm of the opinion myself, but I'm not sure what it actually would bring to us in practical terms, so I'd like to start with this round here.

MARC PIERINI: I'll say a few things of a general nature that more or less answer some of the questions. We've reached a point where, in a way, because of the Merkel-Sarkozy era on Turkey and this very negative approach and this insistence on privileged partnership and so on, we have, of course, lost Turkey to a certain extent. Now, with Gezi, we've lost the most enthusiastic supporters of Turkey, in the European Parliament, for example, at least some of them.

The key point here is that something that was underlying has become very apparent, that the EU process has become an impediment to Mr Erdoğan's electoral ambitions, both as a future president, possibly, or as a victory of his party in the 2015 elections, because the benefits of the accession process so far have been pocketed. If you look at the rise of foreign direct investment from the EU in 2005, 2006 and 2007, it's there and it's directly linked to both the Customs Union pre-existing and to the opening of the accession negotiation and to, of course, the good economic policy of Turkey. That is in the bag and the rest is only political impediment.

As Prime Minister Erdoğan put it one day: why do you want me to bother with all these conditions on new chapters if I'm told by Sarkozy every other month that I don't belong and I never will? There you have lost something. At the same time, you have this extraordinary rise of, let's say, urban, liberal, young Turks who are here and defend a different view of the society. That's an important element.

On the Turkish foreign policy, much has been written about how strategic Turkey is and how important their foreign policy stance has been, etc, etc. The problem is that Turkish foreign policy has been very ambitious in words and has been a total failure, in at least the last two years, in deeds. There's not much to coordinate with Turkey. We now realise that we are at odds as EU or as Western countries, in general, with Turkey - with the Turkish government, at least - on Egypt, on Syria, to a large extent, and on just about everything.

There are very good words from the Turkish Foreign Ministry, but there is very, very little to coordinate with the EU, let alone whether the EU is a big player or a small player in issues like Syria and Egypt; that's another, entirely different subject. The fluctuations, when you look at Syria, only four years ago you had an extremely warm and close embrace between the Turkish prime minister and the Syrian president, whereas the entire bureaucracy and the foreign ministry were saying, don't try that because they will never reform; if you know the way Syria operates, if you know the Assads, it will never lead to any reform. Any one of you in the room who's ever worked on Syria knew that too. Yet there was this warm embrace, and then because of disappointment, of course, there was a reverse position.

Look at Israel – even with the forced reconciliation induced by Obama in May, you don't have much of a result so far. There, I think the domestic political imperatives of the AKP don't really play towards strong coordination of foreign policy with the EU and perhaps not even with the US.

JAN TECHAU: Did you or Sinan...?

MARIETJE SCHAAKE: A few things, just to clarify that I'm not one of those people who was a great advocate of Turkish accession and is now lost; I think we just have to redefine the way in which we're going to go forward, and it's not an easy process. I just want to be very honest about that.

Then, about this whole foreign policy position of Turkey and also the way in which the government has played with this, I think it's fascinating because for a couple of years, in every opportunity that ministers had, they really made a sketch of the world - all kinds of problems, India, Pakistan, Middle East, Africa, Europe, Russia - and positioned Turkey as a key strategic player in relation to each of these problems or conflict situations.

I think that Turkey has under-delivered vis-à-vis these very, very big words, but we also see, I think, a few challenges, more of identity matters, especially in relation to Syria, where I think that it's undeniable that Turkey is also standing on the sunny side of the bigger picture of the proxy alliance in relation to what is playing out in Syria. I'm not sure that that is so much on the surface, but I don't think it's an immediate alliance with how the EU sees itself, which I think is far too unorganised and doesn't play a strategic role, is irrelevant. I think that that's a problem, so let me be critical about that as well.

I think, increasingly, the rhetoric of the government of Turkey is going to put itself in a bind, because for domestic purposes perhaps there is now this notion that Turkey is the victim of how the EU treats it, just like an emerging economy, like the Ukraine, as though the EU doesn't want Turkey to be successful economically, doesn't want Turkey to flourish as it is. That doesn't match with this big ambition of being a regional player. It's a strange mismatch. Of course, in the end, the relationship between the EU and Turkey is not about foreign policy considerations; the Copenhagen criteria are about domestic reforms and not about foreign policy considerations.

It could be that strategic goals are shaping a perspective and an incentive on the EU side, but it won't change the fact that the Copenhagen criteria have to be reached and that those reforms have to happen on domestic issues. I think there's a bit of a mismatch in using this

foreign policy card vis-à-vis both the negotiation process and the actual role that Turkey plays not only in policy but also in more identity politics in the region.

In that sense, I wanted to respond to this notion of reverse conditionality. It may be a nice try, but I don't think it's going to work. There are too many people in Europe who are all too eager to say, fine, if you guys don't want it, then why are we still fighting? We're spending money, we're spending political capital, the EU is in a crisis, our people don't want it... it's a very, very tricky game, I would say, and I don't think it can be sustained very long. That's why I think this phase that we're in and this redefining of the process of accession is such a complex one, because it's very, very easy to tilt the balance to a point of no return, by either side.

SINAN ÜLGEN: Let me try to be provocative. Jan, to you, that's an odd question, in the sense that you cannot know what sort of Turkey you will have if Turkey's an EU member. That necessitates a convergence of minds which doesn't exist today. Comparing the Turkey of today and its foreign policy and trying to extrapolate from that to understand what the Turkey within the EU would do is, I think, an extrapolation too far. That's one thing.

Secondly, this may sound like a strong statement, but I think the last two years of Turkish foreign policy has been an aberration; it doesn't reflect the true proclivities of the country as a foreign policy actor. Again, extrapolating from those last two years would lead you to the wrong places, places where you don't want to go, or, at least, I don't want to go.

On the, Stefan... there is still a constituency interested in the EU, and I felt that very strongly last Friday at this meeting of the Turkish Businessmen Association. Whoever took the floor was very pro-EU. They advised the government to revitalise the relationship. They understood both for domestic purposes but also foreign policy purposes how important inherently the EU anchor was. The difficulty is that we cannot have that narrative any more in Turkey because you are treated as a, at best, politically naive.

I cannot go in front of people in Turkey, in universities, and explain to them this narrative. Instantly, I get criticism: how do you think that this is ever going to work out? The answer that we have developed today in Turkey, and that's basically been my speech there as well, is to say, and with all due respect to some of the Russian diplomats that are in this room, but the Americans have a saying when they negotiate with the Russians: they're such difficult negotiators that sometimes you have to buy the same horse twice.

I think, for the EU, that's the same thing for us. I think the EU that we aspire to is now a dead end; the negotiations, as we know, have stalled. I don't think they have any chance of recuperating any time soon. The only EU that we can, as Turkey, aspire to be included in would be a reformed EU, viz. the EU that will come out of this crisis in its new structure, with its new ambition and with its new confidence. That seems to generate a new level of enthusiasm in Turkey, this sort of vision.

Now, I'll add to that the UK dimension. I say that if the UK is trying to renegotiate its membership, if it's successful, then that might also provide the blueprint for the future of the Turkey-EU relationship. At worst, if the UK is unsuccessful and if by the referendum they decide to leave, there will need to be a new form of association between the UK and Europe.

The UK will never be satisfied with the EEA-type model, never satisfied with being a strategic partner of the EU. It will have to have a place at least in the single market. Whatever the relationship will be, an engineered device, for the UK, it can also be a blueprint for Turkey, going forward.

When I say these things, there seems to be an audience for that sort. Then they think then we can start to champion the EU objective as well, because there is something that we can use to counterbalance the criticism of: the EU will never accept us, this relationship will go nowhere; how dare you talk to us about the EU, because you try to basically... you're lying to us? That's the sort of reaction that you get.

Now, on the economy, maybe... but the Turkish economy actually did get a fresh breath of air with the Fed decision. Things were quite critical before that, so the surprise move by the Feds also allowed Turkey to gain new breathing space. The economy's slowing down, but still we expect growth to be around 3% to 4%, and that's respectable. It's not going to have a huge impact on the popularity of the government.

Secondly, the government has fiscal room to increase domestic demand. Year-to-year growth in Turkey was 3.6%. 2.5% of that, out of the 3.6%, came from public investment and public consumption. You see the degree of fiscal stimulus that the government is able to accomplish, and they can still do it, going through the electoral cycle. I don't think the economy will be a huge factor, at least for 2014.

MARC PIERINI: I would like to add a few things. Obviously, extrapolating in Turkish politics is a risky game, we know that, but if you look at the domestic politics of Turkey, the real danger is simply that because of the electoral predominance of AKP, of the phenomenal electoral machinery that they have, and of the inefficient main opposition party, the risk is simply that the protests or the spirit of the protests will carry on.

You'll have street politics, you'll have neighbourhood discussions, and so on, very much like you have the indignados in Spain, but that doesn't translate into politics, at least it doesn't translate into it much later. That's the first, immediate extrapolation that you can make. We'll see what happens, of course, with the municipal elections; that depends on who will be candidate in Istanbul, in Ankara and so on.

Extrapolating EU policies also are risky business, obviously, but the main danger that we're all facing here is outright lassitude. This is it: we don't understand Turkey, the prime minister says this, then even the EU minister says the most anti-EU things that we can think of, so leave them alone. That is a solution that may end up satisfying a lot of political parties in the European Parliament or a lot of member states in the Council. That's the main danger.

On the economy, we're going to hear all sorts of things; Turkey doesn't need the EU any more, this, that and the rest, except that, more than ever, investment, tourism and trade are the EU and not anything else. Even the dreams of an alliance with Russia, the dreams of foreign direct investment from the Gulf, or dreams of a strong relationship with China, or the dreams of having these new markets in the Arab world – none of these has materialised in any big way, perhaps with the exception of exports to Iraq. Other than that, when all things

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are done, you see that the EU is the fundamental partner of Turkey. That is bound to produce some effect, some moderating effect.

JAN TECHAU: Marc, thank you very much. I will make these the final and concluding words. We've heard a number of very clear statements here today from our three panellists. The great thing about being in the Foreign Policy business is that, basically, every time you have an event like this, you go out of these things depressed and, actually, with more questions than answers, and still you just like this job. That's a really weird kind of counterfactual psychology of the business that we're in...

MARC PIERINI: This is why we have wine!

JAN TECHAU: Exactly! This is fantastic – I'm now going over to the funny part of the evening, which is the food and the wine element in it. I'd like to thank all of you, the three of you, for your great statements; you, for your patience and for staying in this sauna-like environment that we've created for you. You're all invited to join us for food and drink. We'll continue our Turkey work here and you will be invited in due time to continue the debate. Thank you very much.

I would like to thank two organizations: The Open Society Foundations – Turkey for the great support of Marc's research, and Anadolu Kültür for the help with setting up this photo exhibition.