

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

CENTER ON THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE

INAUGURAL SAKIP SABANCI LECTURE
"AMERICA, TURKEY AND THE WORLD"
PRESENTED BY

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT, FORMER U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE

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SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Strobe, for that kind introduction. I don't know about everybody else, but I could listen to you talk about me all morning.

Actually, I could listen to Strobe Talbott discuss almost any subject, at almost any length. His mind is indeed a national treasure and a service to our country as a journalist, an author, and diplomat and think tank czar and has earned our ongoing gratitude. So thanks again, Strobe, for everything that you do. And good morning to all of you here in Washington. And in Istanbul, good afternoon.

Years ago, former U.S. Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, claimed with pride that he was present at the creation of NATO and the United Nations and World Bank, and today we can say with pride that we are present at the creation of the Sabanci Lecture Series.

It may not quite have the same ring, but it is offered in very much the same spirit, because, like Dean Acheson, Sakip Sabanci was a visionary who believed deeply in the importance of transatlantic cooperation and the integration of democratic states. He believed that Europe and America belonged together and that the term "Europe" should embrace all of Europe, including its southeast pillar, Turkey.

And I'd like to dedicate this lecture to that same vision and to recognize the many contributions made by Sakip Sabanci to his own country and to the widely shared dream of Europe whole and free.

And I also am very pleased to be here with Ms. Guler Sabanci, who is carrying on the family tradition in a manner that would make her uncle very proud and that's an inspiration to women and business everywhere. So it's a great pleasure to have you here.

This morning I've been asked to speak about Turkey, the United States, and Europe. And to get in the mood, I have been reading a remarkable novel, "Snow," by Mr. Pamuk.

The story is too complicated to explain, but it takes place in Turkey and combines poetry and politics, love, God, and some truly bad weather, and I heartily recommend the book, although I can't tell you about all the themes in my speech. But it is fascinating in terms of understanding the mingling of West and East and the influence of the West on Islam.

Whenever I think about Turkey, I cannot help but remember one of my trips there as Secretary of State. I went to Turkey many, many times, either as U.N. ambassador or later as Secretary of State, and I found it always to be essential in terms of our agenda; central in terms of geography, culture; and obviously central strategically.

But the trip that I remember a lot is the one that took place in August 1999 following the earthquakes. Ismael Cem, who was then Foreign Minister, traveled with me to the affected areas, and we visited a tent city at Izmir that had been set up for the survivors. And I was horrified by the devastation, but also deeply impressed by the local population's determination to recover and rebuild.

Those earthquakes were a terrible reminder of the

turbulence in which we live. Whether the forces transforming the globe are natural or man-made, they are relentless and unforgiving. Technology advances quickly. Ideas come and go. The unpredictable happens. And the world is place of constant change.

To keep pace, we must be creative and nimble, but we must also insist that some things not change. In business, this means maintaining a reputation for integrity and customer service. You lose that, and you have no brand, as you well know. So branding and customer service is what you are so well known for.

In world affairs, it means preserving the

alliances and friendships that allow freedom to prevail over those who threaten it. For half a century, one such alliance has been that between Turkey and the United States.

For decades, during the Cold War, our nations served side by side in NATO, with Turkey tying down no less than 24 Soviet divisions, stemming the advance of communism.

In the 1990s, we adapted and enlarged our alliance to prepare for the new dangers of the post Cold War world.

We cooperated to contain Saddam Hussein, and were able to

work together on the no-fly zones.

During my years in government, our leaders helped to halt violence in Bosnia and Kosovo, and worked to transform the Balkans from a source of strife into a partner in the new Europe.

Along the way, we learned the habits of security cooperation in every dimension, including energy security, and I was proud to be Secretary when the legal framework for the Baku-Ceyhan Pipeline was finalized.

The project is good for Turkey, good for Central

Asia, good for Europe, and good for the world.

Just as Turkey has played a key role in the past, it is certain to do so in the future. This is not simply because of where Turkey is located, although its strategic position has been recognized for centuries. It's the result of what Turkey is, a country of democratic values, committed to preserving liberty and maintaining peace.

Turkey has earned the world's respect, and so its voice should be heard with respect, especially on matters that directly affect Turkish interests, such as the future of Iraq.

It's no secret that President Bush's decision to invade that country was unpopular in Turkey and that the parliament in Ankara prevented the invasion from being launched from Turkish soil; and this led to criticism by some in the White House, Congress, and the media. And there were even those who equated opposition to the war in Iraq

with complacency toward Al Qaeda and the forces of international terror.

This is simply nonsense. Osama bin-Laden and Al Qaeda were not given sanctuary in Iraq. They were given sanctuary in Afghanistan. And one of the first countries to lead the international stabilization force in Afghanistan was Turkey. It is ridiculous to suggest that Turkey is indifferent to extremist violence.

After all, Americans are not the only ones who've been victimized by terror. We were reminded of that in the fall of 2003, when a series of bombings rocked Istanbul.

It's not the purpose of this speech to debate the merits of invading Iraq. Let us simply agree that President Bush made that decision for better or worse and part of the worse has been the damage done to relations between Turkey and the United States.

Today in Turkey, a best-selling book imagines an American invasion of that country. A recent survey found that four in 10 Turkish citizens consider America their greatest enemy.

On this side of the Atlantic, there's a lack of appreciation for Turkey's contributions to stability and freedom. And on American TV, a popular action program features a massive terrorist plot involving a person of Turkish descent.

Now, those of us who care about the relationship

between our two countries have some important work to do.

We cannot allow more than five decades of partnership to unravel, pulled apart by stereotypes and suspicion. It's important for Americans to understand that it's wrong to make decisions affecting Turkey without taking Turkish views and interests fully into account.

And it's important for people in Turkey to understand that what happened in Iraq is not a precedent for anything. The United States has neither the resources nor the will, nor the intention, nor the grounds to do to any other country what the Bush Administration felt compelled to do in Iraq, or at least I hope that's the case.

I also hope very much that Prime Minister Erdogan's upcoming visit to Washington will help to clear the air and put relations on a sounder footing.

Governments in both capitals must work together constructively for the common good.

In Iraq, that means supporting the forces of peace against the insurgents who are trying to prevent the new government from getting off the ground, and it means supporting Iraq's territorial integrity so that it becomes a stable and unified country where minority rights are protected and terrorist of all descriptions have no place.

It means establishing the principle of human rights so that Iraqis are judged by the actions they take, not by the ethnic and religious groups to which they belong.

And it means ensuring that hard issues, such as

the future of Kirkuk are settled fairly, and with respect for the interests and security of all.

And it means enabling Iraqi women to fully participate in shaping the future of their country.

In the words of Ataturk, "you cannot catch up with the modern world by modernizing only half the population."

People ask me all the time what I think will happen in Iraq. It's a good question, because the stakes couldn't be higher.

An Iraq that is stable, democratic, and prosperous could help transform the entire region. An Iraq that is unstable and violent could conceivably trigger a region-wide war.

The outlook at the moment is something in between. The elections in January seemed at the time to be a very important breakthrough. It was inspiring to watch so many Iraqis defy terrorist threats, and a pleasure to see the voters smiling and showing off their fingers dipped in purple ink. For the first time in history, we hoped Iraq would have a legitimate government. But now, more than three months later, we have to ask whether the elections were really a turning point or just another bend in a very crooked and dangerous road.

The elections haven't done much to slow the insurgency. They haven't simplified the hard political job of drafting a constitution acceptable to all major factions. And they haven't clarified when it might be possible to begin the withdrawal of American troops.

In the best case, the formation of a new Iraq government, which I understand is being voted on right now, will put an end to the squabbling we have seen these past few months.

Sunni leaders who boycotted the elections will decide they made a mistake and be allowed to join in writing a constitution. The insurgents will lose support. More Iraqi security forces will be trained, and the conditions for a gradual U.S. withdrawal will begin to materialize.

And that's a scenario we all have reason to support, whether we thought the war was a good idea or not.

The main reason for hope is that our adversaries have nothing to offer the Iraqi people except destruction and death, and we offer democracy and the chance for a better life. In the end, they make all the difference. And so let us persevere, because although going to war in Iraq was a choice, not a necessity, winning the peace is a necessity and not a choice.

In the months preceding the Iraq War, Bush Administration officials talked much about their plan for transforming the entire Middle East, and their idea was that a stable and democratic Iraq would become a model for the rest of the Arab world. They predicted that dictators, impressed by our resolve, would abandon plans to develop nuclear weapons. Terrorists would retreat or go into hiding, and prospects for negotiating an Arab-Israeli peace would dramatically improve. This was a very bold vision, and I hope it comes true.

But I think it's fair to say that we have not yet reached the point where most Arabs look at Iraq and think to themselves, I wish my country would look just like that.

I, nevertheless, support President Bush's call for greater democracy in the Arab world. I know that some people say Arab countries aren't ready for democracy, and my reply is that I don't know of any country that has ever truly been ready for anything else. I'm a strong supporter

of political freedom, and I believe it's especially

important that democratic countries work together as closely as possible, and that's one reason why I would like to see Turkey admitted to the European Union.

Of course, it's not my place to tell Europe what is good for Europe or to tell the people of Turkey what is best for them. I respect both and speak only of my hope. But I believe Turkey belongs inside the major economic and political institutions of the West. Turkey can both strengthen those organizations and be strengthened by them. And that's been true of Turkey and NATO, and it would be true of Turkey and the EU as well.

I was pleased in 1999 when the EU finally declared Turkey to be an official candidate, and I am pleased that formal negotiations will get underway this fall.

As we all know, there remains some complicated

technical issues that must be resolved: the so-called Copenhagen criteria must be met. But this requirement is only part of the political debate within Europe.

There is the economic issue. Turkey is big, and compared to much of Europe relatively poor. And there's also a matter of culture. The rest of Europe is primarily

Indo-European and historically Christian. Turkey is Turkish and has long been a leader in the Muslim world.

As negotiations proceed, and along with it political debate, it seems to me several principles should be borne in mind.

First, the EU and Turkey already have an

understanding. If Turkey continues its rapid progress toward European norms, it has a right to expect European leaders to endorse its membership. That's the whole rationale behind the negotiating process.

Second, Turkey's European identity should not be questioned. Although the Ottoman Empire was, at times, more than a European power, it was never less than a European power. And since Atatürk, there can be no question that Turkey's orientation is toward the West.

Third, Turkey's religious identity is not relevant

to its application to join the EU. That may seem basic, but it's by no means clearly understood. Both Europe and Turkey have secular governments. Both Turkey and Europe are home to millions of Muslims. And Europe, like the United States, has evolved into a multi-denominational society.

Just as important, the EU is organized around the fundamental norms of Western democracy, at the heart of which is religious liberty.

And it would be contrary to Europe's own values to exclude a country on religious grounds.

Finally, it's not possible to argue that Turkish membership would disrupt the cultural homogeneity of Europe. That line of thinking might have made sense in the days of a six-country common market, but an EU with 25 members is a cultural kaleidoscope. Adding Turkey will not change that.

The fundamental question is whether Turkey fully shares the democratic values of Europe, and that is the real test, a test I'm confident Turkey will continue to pass.

And the current members of the EU cannot move the goal posts, as Turkey moves toward living up to the criteria.

We have learned much over the past 15 years about the value of democratic integration. During the 1990s, the prospect of joining NATO provided a huge incentive for democratic reform within the newly free countries of Central and Eastern Europe. And instead of resuming historic rivalries, they focused on democratic goals, such as respect for the rule of law, human rights, free enterprise, and civilian control over the military.

NATO provided a magnet for positive change, a

place where one time rivals could work together on behalf of peace. I have had the pleasure in the last weeks of being with former President Havel of the Czech Republic, and he

has spoken very movingly about the influence of potential NATO and EU membership has had on his country, and he does favor that Turkey become a part of the EU.

But I think that all of that will only happen if the EU keeps its doors open to new and qualified applicants, and its mind open about judging those who apply.

While in government, I was proud of the warm relations that existed between the United States and Europe.

We didn't agree about everything, but there was little question that we agreed about the big things.

Since leaving office, I have to tell you I've been worried. We have seen gaps develop between the U.S. and some European governments, as well as significant portions of the public.

And it's absolutely vital that we work on both sides of the Atlantic to repair the damage. It's in America's interest to have a united Europe as the strongest possible partner, not a Europe divided by U.S. pressure and unilateralism.

And it's in Europe's interest to work side by side with America, not to pretend that the purpose of its own unity is to counter balance the United States.

According to the poem by William Butler Yeats, it is when the best lack all conviction and the worst are full of passionate intensity that things fall apart. The center cannot hold, and anarchy is loosed upon the world.

That doesn't describe our times, or at least not yet. But certainly the worst among us are full of passionate intensity.

The question is whether the best have the courage of their convictions so that things will not fall apart and the center will hold.

To me, the answer to that question during the next

few years will be found in the relationship between the United States and Europe, including Turkey, because for all the changes that have taken place, the Transatlantic partnership remains the center of the international system. And I admit that on this subject, I am far from neutral.

As an infant, I experienced the turbulence of

Europe divided by fascism and crippled by appeasement. And as a child, I saw evil defeated by a mighty war-time coalition that stretched across the ocean. As an adult, I saw a powerful alliance bring prosperity to the West, and joined with dissidents to bring down the Berlin Wall on both sides. And as Secretary of State, I saw NATO confront and defeat the evil of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans.

Europe and America are natural leaders, not simply because of what we possess, but also because of what we believe. The New Europe stands as a rebuttal to the hundreds of years of human history in which wars were fought over the symbols of national identity, in which national borders were constructed out of barbed wire and concrete walls, in which past grievances continually fueled new conflicts, and in which citizens were taught to focus on how they differed from their neighbors and not on what they had in common.

Europe has much to teach the world about the benefits of democracy, the lesson of history, and the value of collective action, and the costs of war.

Within Europe, there is Turkey, a country with its own lessons to teach. Turkey as much as any other nation in the world today is a shattering of stereotypes. It's living proof that those who believe Islam is incompatible with liberty are wrong. It provides a model of how a great empire can transform itself into a great democracy, and it shows how a proud nation can work with historic rivals in pursuit of shared goals.

The United States, too, has much to teach the world. Last year, it chose its president by a free and democratic vote for the 55th time. America is a country composed of people who trace their heritage to almost every other country, but who are bound together by the values of liberty and by an unyielding sense of confidence about the future.

It is because of these separate strengths that Europe and America are such an extraordinary team when we are a team. Together, there is nothing we cannot do, but apart there is little we can hope to accomplish.

Perhaps the cliché is valid that Americans are from Mars and Europeans from Venus, but we should remember that according to mythology, Mars and Venus actually got along pretty well.

[Laughter.]

Together, they produced a number of children, including Harmonia, the goddess of concord.

It's not a myth that binds America, Turkey, and the rest of Europe together, nor some pieces of paper, nor decades of toasts and pretty words. The bonds that link us go deeper than that to the fundamental values we share--a love of peace, a commitment to the rule of law, and respect for the inherent dignity and worth of every human being.

We may live on different sides of the ocean, but wherever the principles of freedom are on trial, we belong on the same side, the right side, and thereby ensuring, through our unity, that liberty is the winning side as well.

Thank you all very much, and I now look forward to taking questions.
[Applause.]