

## **RICHARD HOLBROOKE**

So here we are at another decisive moment in Turkish history. As Professor Philliou just said, history does matter. It really does. And this country, Turkey, has faced many such moments in the last 85 years. While the historical record is mixed, the general trend has been unmistakable since Atatürk's extraordinary odyssey that set Turkey on its current path. Almost no one in the last century anywhere in the world fused political skills and vision so brilliantly and left such a lasting impact as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

In creating the modern nation-state of Turkey he laid the foundations for a vibrant secular democracy and he succeeded. In the words of the lead article in this week's *Economist*, "Turkey is a remarkable place. As a mainly Muslim country that practices full secular democracy, it is a working repudiation of the widespread belief that Islam and democracy are incompatible. Still --" the *Economist* went on to say, "-- over the years, Turkish democracy has shown itself to be vibrant yet at the same time fragile."

Since I speak today at what must be called a fragile moment in the history of Turkey, it is important that I not interfere in your internal political issues. I will therefore refrain from any comments specifically on the elections now scheduled for July 22, anything that might be viewed as constituting a position or a preference. But I do believe deeply in the future and the destiny of Turkey as a vital integral part of the Western world, its alliances and institutions including most definitely eventually membership in the European Union. But it is entirely up to the people of Turkey acting democratically to decide how to proceed both internally and with respect to the dangerous neighborhood in which Turkey lives. As an American, I feel especially constrained offering advice about elections since we held a national election 6 years ago in this country which was decided by a single vote in the American Supreme Court.

If one reduces Atatürk's vision of the Turkey he sought to build to a simple animating idea, it was that the new republic should be Western. Everything else flowed from that. Being Western today obviously means something different from what it did in the dark days after World War I when Atatürk was founding the republic. Later as he set in motion the process of democratization in Turkey, Atatürk with typical brilliance and foresight anticipated the direction which the West and Turkey should evolve, toward each other. Through its membership in NATO and as the reforms of the late President Turgut Özal made clear, Turkey became a more open society. Its Western identity put down firm roots. And with the European Union's confirmation in 2004 that Turkey's progress toward meeting the Copenhagen Criteria justified the start of negotiations on membership, those roots bore fruit. That fruit will ripen in due course but only if Turkey keeps its face turned firmly Westward.

As one who I think has amply demonstrated that I care deeply about Turkey and its relationship to the West, it seems to me that this is really what is at stake in the political crisis that overtook Turkey in the last few weeks. As I already said, I do not think it would be wise or useful for me to go into a lot of detail here, but I would say two more things. First, I continue to have confidence that Turkish democracy is up to the task of getting through this crisis. While all parties may have to one degree or another overplayed their hand during the past month or so, there is now a path forward. Elections have been scheduled for July 22. The Turkish people will have a chance to express clearly who they want to form the next government and who they want to lead the process of picking Turkey's next President. There is absolutely no reason to expect the general election campaign and the subsequent

negotiations on the presidency to be anything but grueling and partisan. In other words, it will look like the politics of other Western democracies including our own.

Secondly, as this process grinds forward, it will be important that it do so in a way that demonstrates conclusively that Turkey is a country in which the rule of law is paramount. Or to put it another way, that Turkey is truly a Western country. I think there is no concept that goes more deeply to the core of what it means to be Western than respect for the rule of law. Like it or not, that is the yardstick by which the rest of the world will judge the process by which the Turks pick their next government and the person who will next occupy Atatürk's old chair. Like it or not, this will be the best test of the extent to which those in Turkey who participate in or seek to effect this process can claim to be Atatürk's legitimate heirs. For my country, the United States, to go through such an electoral test was a huge trauma in 2000. For Turkey in 2007 given the country's history, geography, and events in the surrounding neighborhood, it will prove to be I am sure at least as dramatic.

On every side Turkey faces challenges of enormous proportions. What a neighborhood to live in. To the east, Armenia with the burden history still places upon that ancient relationship. To the southwest, Cyprus, still divided and troubled, the north isolated by an E.U. demand linked to Turkey's quest for European Union membership. To the south and southeast, neighbors called Iran and Iraq, one a dangerous destabilizing religious dictatorship, the other a civil war raging out of control. I shall return to the war in Iraq in a moment. And last but not least, a European Union some of whose leaders and many of whose citizens fail to see the strategic and historic necessity for negotiating Turkey's accession into the European Union.

It is not surprising of course that many people living in European nations with significant Muslim minorities would be fearful of allowing the consequences of allowing a predominant Muslim nation which would immediately become the European Union's largest member to join its club. These concerns have understandably increased as the result of terrorist attacks in such places as London and Madrid, although of course, and I stress this, no Turks were involved. So those of us in the United States who follow or try to follow events in Turkey, and this is not always easy because American press coverage of Turkey is extremely uneven and to my mind inadequate, those of us who have tried to follow events in Turkey and those of us who have long argued with the leaders of the European Union that they should open the door to Turkey, we well understand why the number of Turks who favor seeking E.U. membership has dropped in the last few years according to public opinion polls especially because the European Union seems to keep changing the rules. After all, who would try to crash the gates of a club that might want you as a member? This is, however, an unfortunate trend and I hope that both the E.U. and Turkey resume a more intensive effort to negotiate Turkey's membership. We all know that the road will be rocky, even more so after Sunday's election results in France, but Europe and Turkey need each other now more than ever for obvious reasons that outweigh lesser however legitimate considerations.

To the south of Turkey all is in turmoil. A Turkey anchored inside the E.U. is better for the United States and Europe as well as Turkey itself, much better than a nation drifting between two worlds with no strong security connection beyond its NATO membership. That NATO membership of course is vitally important to the United States and to every member of the E.U. including E.U. members that are not members of NATO, for example, Sweden, Iceland, Malta, Cyprus.

Why then deny Turkey the chance to meet the E.U. criteria? There are as we all know some special economic considerations involved, but over the long negotiation that is necessary, this can be hammered out. So Turks are undoubtedly asking especially now if and when Europe will regain its interest in bringing Turkey into the union. These questions are hard to answer just a few days after the victory of Nicolas Sarkozy in France and as Tony Blair heads for the door in Great Britain. The fact is that the generation of leaders who viewed E.U. membership for Turkey as more an opportunity than a problem are departing the scene. Their successors have come to political maturity in a very different strategic and domestic political environment.

It will take time for the Europeans to figure out precisely what they want the E.U. to become. It will take time for them to come to terms with the growing and largely negative awareness of their own Muslim populations. That is one of the great challenges Europe will face and it will take time for the new generation of European leaders to acquire the geostrategic wisdom and sense of statecraft that ultimately led their predecessors with prodding from the United States under President Clinton to open the door to Turkish membership in the E.U.

Meanwhile, one senior European official, in fact, the one in charge of European Union enlargement Olli Rehn did do his best in the last few days to try to calm things down. He said, "We should ensure that we stick to our commitment and react fairly and firmly with Turkey by maintaining the accession process and moving forward." I am still convinced this will happen and when it comes it will be critical that European find in Turkey as did Turkey's interlocutors in 1999, 2004, and 2005, a country as committed to and comfortable with its Western identity as was its founder.

This tour of Turkey and its issues brief as it is must conclude with a discussion of the region to Turkey's immediate south that is consuming the United States. I speak of course of Iraq. Iraq already presents us with the worst situation internationally in modern American history, worse even than Vietnam where I spent 3-1/2 years of my career as a Foreign Service officer and 7 years of my career working on it in Saigon and the Mekong Delta, Paris, and Washington. I never thought I would say anything was worse than Vietnam, but Iraq, my friends, is worse than Vietnam.

We all hope here in the United States, Democrats and Republicans, people who oppose the war and people who supported it, we all hope as to most Turks with whom I have talked that the current American offensive under the leadership of General David Petraeus will succeed, but we must recognize that chances for success as defined by the administration are not high.

If it does not succeed, then the United States will face an even more difficult set of essentially four choices. One, send more troops; two, try to hold on with the current force levels; three, look for a way to disengage from the battle of Baghdad while fighting al-Qaeda in other parts of the country; or four, just get out. You can assume safely that the current administration will reject the last option, just getting out, and look for ways to salvage something from the wreckage of its own misguided policies. But if this is the case, and I think it is likely, it is certain that President Bush will pass the war in Iraq on to his successor, and I might add, also pass the war in Afghanistan on to his successor, and of course also pass a major confrontation with Iran on to his successor.

We must assume therefore both in Washington, Ankara, and Istanbul that the next president will inherit the most difficult foreign policy challenges ever to land in the Oval Office on day one, even more difficult than those that faced Harry Truman on April 12, 1945. Of course,

none of us know who will become our 44th President, but whoever it is, the odds are very high that disengagement from Iraq unless the war is clearly being won will be a very high priority. Any withdrawal in my view should not be done precipitously of course, but no one can predict now what the next president will actually confront 21 months from now.

What concerns me and this audience at the Sabanci Lecture today should be the implications of this situation for Turkey. Everyone here knows that Iraq's north region contains millions of Kurds and that this area includes a terrorist organization known as the PKK that conducts cross-border raids. In 1995 when I was Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, Turkish troops in large numbers entered the mountains of northern Iraq to eliminate the PKK. Under intense pressure from Congress to oppose the Turkish action, President Clinton and the State Department resisted the congressional pressure and after intense discussions with the Turkish government accepted the government's pledge that the operation would be limited in scope and duration and held back the pressure from Congress. The operation was limited in scope and duration and there was no lasting effect on U.S.-Turkish relations which were then 12 years ago in much better shape than they are today.

But those were different times. Saddam was in power and the forces of the Kurdish leader Masood Bersani were cooperating with the Turkish Army in that offensive. Today things are far more complicated. An excellent American Special Envoy General Joe Ralston is seeking to deal with the PKK problem without recourse to military action in those remote and high mountains along the Turkish-Iraqi border.

The additional problem of the status of Kirkuk vastly complicates the situation. When I visited Irbil in northern Iraq 2 months ago, I was struck by several things, Kurdish determination to move Kirkuk into the region known as Iraqi Kurdistan, the widespread presence of over 300 Turkish companies in northern Iraq doing most of the business, most of the construction, and getting along extremely well with the Kurds in northern Iraq, and the absolutely clear sense and those region had more in common with Turkey than it had with the rest of war-torn Iraq. No Iraqi flags, only the Kurdish flag, a different currency, tight internal border controls, tight at the time, but yesterday of course somebody breached them and did manage to get a suicide bomber inside Irbil, the first time, and a peaceful security situation until that event yesterday.

When I wrote about this trip to northern Iraq and about my talks with the leaders in Turkey in "The Washington Post" in February, some Turkish journalists and politicians misunderstood or misrepresented my views, so let me make them clear one more time. I am not advocating independence for Iraqi Kurdistan, although we must recognize that well over 90 percent of the people there want it. Turkey's long-term strategic interests lie in finding ways to work with the Kurdish leadership in northern Iraq in order to ensure that if Iraq disintegrates, the chaos does not spread into the north, an event that would cause enormous additional problems for Turkey and dwarf the PKK problem.

For their part, the Iraqi Kurds must agree to joint efforts to stop the PKK from using Iraqi terrorist as a base from which to attack inside Turkey. They must not stir up tensions inside Turkey between Turks and Kurds. And they must show a readiness to work for regional stability with the government of Turkey. As for the United States, in my view the U.S. should be prepared to support such arrangements in whatever means is mutually agreed to if both sides wish it.

I well know how controversial and emotional this issue is in Turkey, but friends should speak freely to each other, and we are friends. The deterioration in U.S.-Turkish relations since 2003 is deeply distressing to all of us, all of you, who have worked so hard to strengthen that friendship. We still have common interests, we still have common threats. The lecture series like the one that Sabanci is sponsoring is an example of the ties that should be deepened and strengthened in the face of the growing gulf between the two nations. To me, Turkey remains the indispensable front-line state for the Western alliance for the Western world in the fight against extremism. We in the United States and in the European Union must never forget that. Thank you very much.