

**WHERE IS TURKEY HEADED? GEZI PARK, TAKSIM
SQUARE, AND THE FUTURE OF THE TURKISH
MODEL**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
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WEDNESDAY, JULY 31, 2013

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:08 p.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Christopher Murphy (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Senators Murphy, Shaheen, Johnson, and Risch.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER MURPHY,
U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT**

Senator MURPHY. Good afternoon, everyone. We will have this hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Europe and Eurasian Affairs come to order.

I would like to welcome everyone to this hearing on the topic of United States/Turkish relations in the wake of the widespread antigovernment protests in Turkey. I would especially like to welcome our witnesses today: The Honorable Kurt Volker, The Honorable James Jeffrey, The Honorable Robert Wexler, and Dr. Jenny White. Thank you, all four, for being here today. We look forward to your testimony.

For the United States, it does not get much more important than the United States/Turkey relationship. Over the last 8 years, I have traveled to Turkey three times, and I have had the chance to watch with awe as Prime Minister Erdogan and the AKP Party have led Turkey to the global forefront as an economic and political powerhouse in the region; in part, thanks to years of engagement with Europe and the United States.

At the same time, the ruling party has used its narrow majority to pass controversial legislation and, at times, to suppress journalistic and, recently, political freedom. We are here today to assess the current state of political affairs in Turkey, because the direction that Turkey takes, particularly on the question of the quality of its democracy, matters greatly to the United States and our interests in Turkey's neighborhood.

Turkey offers inspiration to emerging democracies and aspiring democrats, and it is crucial to the United States that the light of this example grows brighter instead of dimming.

For people throughout the region, Turkey's economic achievement and the relative freedoms enjoyed by its citizens have proven very attractive, enabling Turkey to generate a significant amount of influence with their neighbors in the Middle East, in the Balkans, in the Caucasus. These countries have, for the most part, actively pursued increased engagement with Turkey, and they hope to benefit from Turkey's role as a relatively wealthy regional power broker. The deterioration of the Turkey/Israeli relationship threaten one of the most important pillars of stability in the Middle East, and we are now hopeful that recent rapprochement will deepen ties between these two important United States allies.

The regional dynamic has undoubtedly changed since the events of the Arab Spring, and not, frankly, in Turkey's favor. Some of the governments with whom Turkey was holding high-level meetings and signing trade agreements have fallen, with uncertainty taking the place of much more stable relationships that Prime Minister Erdogan had worked very hard to solidify. The region, and therefore much of Turkey's foreign policy, is now in a period of transition.

And, much like their foreign policy, Turkey's internal political situation has now become more fluid, as well. Erdogan's moderate Muslim political party brought in many people to the political system who had not been part of that process before, and he has created a very effective political bloc that continues to win elections. But, his government's response to the protest movement appeared more in line with the response of a defensive dictator than the popular democratically elected leader that he actually is. The continued arrests and harsh treatment of protesters, and lashing out at Twitter and Facebook, and the subtle, and, frankly, not so subtle, accusations against the Jewish diaspora and Western governments—well, it has confounded Turkey's friends as well as its critics.

Turkey faces a challenge now of how to balance their secular traditions and religious freedoms, between pursuing their interests in the region while also standing for democratic Turkish values. How Turkey manages this balancing act is of great interest to the United States. And, in the wake of recent political developments there, we look forward to hearing from our panel as we examine answers to these questions.

I will now recognize Senator Johnson for opening remarks.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RON JOHNSON,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WISCONSIN**

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think you have really laid out a pretty good summary of the situation. Obviously, Turkey is—you know, from its position, strategically, as well as location, is incredibly important for us and for NATO.

I certainly want to welcome the witnesses. I want to thank them for coming.

And, really, I would—let us hop into the testimony and then get into our questions.

Senator MURPHY. Great.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you.

Senator MURPHY. Let me introduce our guests. I will give quick introductions, all at once, and then we will go down the line, starting with you, Dr. White, to Mr. Volker.

So, first, our witness, Jenny White, is a professor of anthropology at Boston University and is an expert on Turkey. She has authored numerous books and articles on topics ranging from political Islam in civil society to ethnic identity and gender issues.

Dr. White, we are very pleased to have you with us today.

We are also very pleased to have Ambassador James Jeffrey, the Philip Solodz Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Ambassador Jeffrey is a former U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, Deputy National Security Advisor, and former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq and Albania, among many other positions that he has held during a career in the Foreign Service. Earlier in his life, Ambassador Jeffrey was a U.S. Army infantry officer, serving in Germany and Vietnam, and we thank you for that service, as well.

Particularly like to welcome my former colleague and friend, Robert Wexler, who is the president of the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace. Representative Wexler served in the House of Representatives for 14 years, where he was one of the leaders on the issues related to U.S. policy in the Middle East and Europe. As chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe, Representative Wexler worked to strengthen the transatlantic alliance, as well as our relationship with Turkey.

And it is great to have you here, as well.

And then, finally, Kurt Volker, who is currently the executive director of the McCain Institute for International Leadership and a senior advisor to the Atlanta Council and a Fellow with the Center for Transatlantic Relations at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Ambassador Volker served as our U.S. Ambassador to NATO, a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, and Acting Senior Director for European Affairs at the National Security Council, in addition, as well, to many other positions that he has held in a lifetime of work on national security and foreign policy issues.

We welcome you all, and we now invite Dr. White to begin your testimony. Your full statements will be submitted for the record. We ask you to keep your verbal remarks to about 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF JENNY B. WHITE, PROFESSOR,
BOSTON UNIVERSITY, BOSTON, MA**

Dr. WHITE. Thank you, Senator Murphy.

I just want to start with making the point that I do not think the protests in Turkey are about Islam or about secularism. I think that Gezi Park is emblematic of a much broader discontent with the ruling party and with issues that actually cross religious and secular lines.

The AKP government, like those before it, has a majoritarian understanding of democracy. Democracy means whichever party gets the most votes has won the right to impose the values of its community on society. This has been the case whether the government in power banned the headscarf or banned alcohol. And, not coincidentally, this view is widely accepted by the Turkish public.

The AKP sees the public will as a mandate to make unilateral decisions without input by citizens, experts, or sometimes even Parliament. The judiciary and other key institutions are often also blatantly partisan. So, laws protecting the environment and requiring consultation have been weakened, grandiose development schemes are despoiling the environment and erasing entire historic neighborhoods and displacing populations. These projects have provoked accusations of corruption, that the networks around AKP are reaping profit from private development of public land.

And just as pious Turks once were incensed by restrictions by previous secular governments on Islamic expression, Turks today are enraged by government intrusions into their private lives—what they should wear, what they should drink, what they should do with their bodies—and the increasing arrogance of AKP supporters on the street demanding that only their norms be represented in society—so, confronting men and women kissing in public, for instance. Statistics show an increase in violence against women, yet the government has shut down women’s shelters.

Another issue that crosses pious/secular lines is anger at the AKP government for supporting al-Nusra and other jihadis who are allowed to enter Turkey and cross into Syria at will. Their presence has begun to polarize Turkey, as well, turning Sunni Turks against their fellow Alevi citizens. And Prime Minister Erdogan has helped, with some of his statements about the Alevi, to polarize the issue.

Furthermore, the Prime Minister is attempting to change the constitution to give the Presidency much greater power and that would, in essence, remove the checks and balances on that power. The press has been bought off—and also, it is clear that the Prime Minister, himself, would like to occupy that position—the press has been bought off or intimidated by the government. Since May 59 journalists have been fired, most for covering the protests. Turkey now has more journalists in jail than any other country in the world, as well as a large variety and number of people behind bars for offenses that, in most countries, would be considered freedom-of-speech issues.

The paradox is that the AKP received more than half the vote in the last election. One reason is the party’s success in improving the country’s economy and infrastructure and increasing economic and political stability and visibility abroad. The AKP revived and largely reinvented Turkey’s past as a former world empire, which gave it national pride and the ability to deal with the world without always looking over its shoulder. Throughout the 20th century, Turkey saw itself as a potential victim of outside powers aiming to undermine it. Turkey’s non-Muslim minorities were treated with suspicion as potential cat’s paws of those outside powers. Kurds and other nonconforming groups were banned, and worse. The military had no compunction about staging coups to remove elected governments that it saw as representing dissonant views.

When AKP was first elected, in 2002, it attracted voters from across the political spectrum who believed that the party would blend the country’s widespread conservatism with liberal changes and improved rights. And indeed, AKP reinvigorated the EU accession process, it passed a new penal code that improved women’s rights. As a result of new EU-aligned laws, the government

stripped the military of the power to interfere in politics. AKP also reached out to non-Muslim minorities and Kurds, returning confiscated properties, restoring Kurdish place names.

But, like a rubberband, after several years of liberal opening, AKP has snapped back to exhibiting the Turkish status quo of strongman autocracy, authoritarianism, patriarchy, and intolerance. A recent poll puts AKP support at 44 percent now, down 6 percent, but still enough to win local elections.

So, what is the result of Gezi? The most important outcome of the protests is that a sizable new constituency has emerged. It is the first time in Turkish history that such masses of people have come together without any ideological or party organization. They cross class boundaries, they bridge left/right, conservative/liberal, pious and secular. And, despite government claims that there is an international cabal steering them, the protesters do not desire to overthrow the government. Their central demand is that an elected government must also protect the rights of the people who did not vote for them, and protect the rights of minorities, although, actually, a lot of protesters were AKP voters, as well.

However, youth and women have little to say in Turkey's political life. Taking to the streets was really the only venue available to make themselves heard. To change the institutions that reproduced this flawed system, they will need to find a way to get into the system, perhaps as a new party, although that is difficult, given Turkey's restrictive election rules.

So, this is a pivotal moment in Turkey. I see two possible outcomes.

One is that the Prime Minister makes real concessions. But, he seems to be unable to move out of the 20th-century definition of statesman as singlehanded ruler of his people to statesman as skillful manager of diverse interests and lifestyles.

The second possibility is that he further polarizes society. And even though the Turkish system is quite stable, there is always an undercurrent of violence, and the fear is that he implicitly encourages his followers to enforce his rule with street violence. And there have been some incidents of that.

So, the United States has an opportunity right now to put its thumb on the scale by acknowledging this new constituency and by making the repression more costly.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. White follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. JENNY WHITE

The good news: Turkey's GDP growth and banks are solid; it has the 16th-largest economy in the world. As a result of the European Union accession process, Turkey has changed hundreds of its laws and institutions to align them with Europe. Parliament is writing a new constitution to replace the one written under military oversight after the 1980 coup, and many hope it will enshrine liberal individual rights. The government has initiated a peace deal with the PKK to end decades of war.

So why have tens of thousands of Turks across the country risen up and taken to the streets? The protest was ignited by the uprooting of sycamore trees in Gezi Park, the only remaining green space in Istanbul's central Taksim area, to make room for yet another mall. Polls showed that the majority of protesters that flooded the streets in dozens of cities across the country were initially motivated by the brutality of the police who shot teargas canisters and rubber bullets directly at peaceful protesters, causing severe injuries and deaths. Hundreds of protesters have been arrested and will likely be arraigned under draconian terrorism statutes. This was

not the first incidence of police brutality, but the country had come to a tipping point.

The protest is not about Islam versus secularism; the issues cross those lines. Gezi Park has become emblematic of a much larger malaise and discontent with the increasing autocracy and authoritarianism of the ruling party, and its disregard for the wishes of the population on many issues. The AKP government, like those before it, has a majoritarian understanding of democracy that polls show is shared by many citizens—that democracy means that whichever party gets the most votes has won the right to impose the values of its community on society. This has been the case whether the government in power banned the headscarf or banned alcohol. The AKP sees “the public will” as a mandate to make unilateral decisions without input by citizens, experts, or sometimes even Parliament.

Laws protecting the environment and requiring consultation have been weakened. Grandiose urban development schemes are despoiling the environment and erasing entire historic neighborhoods, often ethnically and religiously mixed, replacing them with middle-class housing for the Muslim bourgeoisie. Government schemes include building the world’s largest mosque and airport, a third Bosphorus bridge, and a canal between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara that will dissect the European half of Istanbul. Such construction projects have provoked accusations of corruption, that the networks around AKP are reaping profit from private development of public land.

Just as pious Turks once were incensed by restrictions by previous secular governments on Islamic expression and wearing of headscarves in certain public places, Turks today are enraged by government intrusions into their private lives, what they should wear, what they should drink (restrictions on alcohol), and what they should do with their bodies (for instance, the government urging that women should have three children and stay at home, attempts to restrict abortions and Caesarian section) and the increasing arrogance of AKP supporters in demanding that only their norms be represented in society (confronting men and women kissing in public or strolling in a park together). Statistics show an increase in violence against women, which is higher in Turkey than in the EU or the U.S., yet the government has shut down women’s shelters and shown little interest in dealing with the problem. These are issues that concern both pious and secular citizens.

Another issue that crosses pious/secular lines is anger at the AKP government for supporting Qaeda-linked and other radical jihadis who are allowed to enter Turkey and cross into Syria at will. Their presence has begun to polarize Turkey as well, turning Sunni Turks against their fellow Alevi citizens, although Alevis differ from Syria’s Alawites and have nothing to do with the Syrian conflict. Even Turkish Sunnis on the border are afraid of the armed strangers in their midst.

Furthermore, Prime Minister Erdogan is attempting to change the constitution to make Turkey’s parliamentary system into one that gives the President much greater powers and that would, in essence, remove the checks and balances on that power. And it is clear that he himself, like Putin in Russia, would like to occupy that position.

The press, led by media barons bought off or intimidated by the government, has not done a good job of reporting on these issues. Since May, 59 journalists have been fired, mostly for covering the protests. Turkey now has more journalists in jail than any country in the world. Academics, authors, publishers, trade union members, speakers at Kurdish events, grandmothers and children attending protests, students demonstrating about school fees, and cartoonists are behind bars for “offenses” that in most countries would be considered freedom of speech issues.

The paradox is that the AKP received more than half the vote in the last election. One reason is the party’s spectacular success in improving the country’s economy and infrastructure (trains, buses, roads, and so on) and increasing economic and political visibility abroad. The AKP government revived (and largely reinvented) Turkey’s past as a former world empire, the Ottoman empire, which gave it national pride and the ability to deal with the world politically and economically without always looking over its shoulder. Throughout the 20th century, Turkey saw itself as a potential victim of outside powers aiming to undermine it, a repeat of WWI when Europeans dismantled the Ottoman Empire. Turkey’s non-Muslim minorities were treated with suspicion as potential cat’s paws of those outside powers. The culture, language, and presence of Kurds and other nonconforming groups and individuals were banned and worse. The military saw itself as a guarantor of a culturally and politically unitary Turkey and had no compunction about staging coups to remove elected governments that it saw as representing dissonant views.

After the AKP was first elected in 2002, it attracted voters from across the political spectrum who believed that the party would blend the country’s widespread conservatism with liberal changes and improved rights, especially freedom of religious

expression (headscarves had been banned from universities) and freedom of speech. Indeed, AKP initially reinvigorated the EU accession process and passed a new penal code long desired by pious and secular feminists that improved women's rights. As a result of new EU-aligned laws, the government stripped the military of the power to interfere in politics. AKP also reached out to non-Muslim minorities and Kurds, returning some confiscated properties and restoring changed Kurdish place names.

But like a rubber band, after several years of liberal opening, AKP has snapped back to exhibiting what has long been the Turkish status quo of strongman autocracy, authoritarianism, patriarchy, and intolerance. All of these are characteristics that polls show are reflected by the population at large and are characteristic of the still highly valued traditional family structure. PM Erdogan's projected stance as the authoritarian father punishing disobedient citizen children and protecting the national family against outsiders is familiar and laudable to many Turks.

What next? Turkey's Government has been freely elected and no one, not even the protesters, disputes that. There is no desire to overturn the system or even kick out the elected AKP. There is dissatisfaction that PM Erdogan is not acting democratically and people would like to see his party remove him as Prime Minister (although realistically no one believes this would happen, even though he has to some extent become a liability to his party). A recent poll puts AKP support at 44 percent now (down 6 percent), still enough to win local elections next March.

The most important outcome of Gezi is that a sizable new constituency has emerged, as yet with no name, no platform, no leader. It is the first time in Turkish history that such masses of people—many with contradictory or competing interests—have come together without any ideological or party organization. They cross class boundaries and bridge left/right, conservative/liberal, pious/secular. Despite government claims that there is an international cabal steering them, the protesters are out there to air a wide variety of complaints, but central is their demand that an elected government must also protect the rights of the people who did NOT vote for them, the rights of minorities, the rights of people whose ideas or lifestyle the electoral winners might not agree with.

However, youth (and women) have little say in Turkey's political life. Taking to the streets was really the only venue available to make themselves heard. To change the institutions that reproduce this flawed system, they will need to find a way to get into the system, perhaps as a new party, although that is difficult given Turkey's restrictive election rules.

Nevertheless, the protests have reframed debates in Turkey away from Islamism/Kemalism as an explanatory framework and instead put the focus on shared rights and tolerance of difference. Pushback in the street, amplified by the PM's belief that the protests mean to topple him, could lead to a more cautious approach to development (although the evidence is against this as uprooting of trees and construction continue apace). The PM's aggressive recent response to the Kurds might make them unwilling partners in rewriting the constitution for a more powerful Presidency, although their interest in signing the peace deal might win out.

PM Erdogan's approval of the brutality against peaceful protesters has galvanized a not insignificant part of the population against him and has dislodged his halo in international eyes. It is a steep fall. After his recent success in arranging a peace deal with the PKK after decades of fighting, people had been speaking about him as perhaps the greatest Turkish statesman since Ataturk. But he seems unable to move out of the 20th-century definition of statesman as single-handed ruler of his people to statesman as skillful manager of diverse interests and lifestyles. His party and some of his followers are uncomfortable with the organized chaos that is social media and they are unable to envision a society composed of freely interacting individuals. They are always looking for the leader that defines them, the person or organization or country to blame.

U.S. Response: President Obama's 2009 speech to the Muslim world promised moral leadership, but the United States as well seems to be captured by 20th-century strategies that define conflicts in crude terms of Islam versus secularism. We turn a blind eye to human rights violations in return for stability and security, while abandoning the 21st-century liberal and moderate constituencies that most resemble our own ideals (but that would include moderate Islamists as well). The youth of Tahrir Square toppled Mubarak and were then pushed aside. The Gezi constituency should at least be recognized. Appeasement is a slippery slope. The U.S. said nothing about the Turkish Government's deadly repression of peaceful protests, and now has said nothing about live bullets in Cairo. What is needed is an acupuncture-like approach, knowing exactly where to apply pressure to exact change (for instance, liberalizing Turkish election laws), rather than wholesale support of problematic regimes or, worse, silence.

Senator MURPHY. Ambassador Jeffrey.

STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES F. JEFFREY, PHILIP SOLODZ Distinguished Visiting Fellow, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington, DC

Ambassador JEFFREY. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for the invitation today. Senator Johnson. It is a delight to be here.

First of all, in terms of the situation, I would associate myself with what Dr. White has just said, and will make just two points on the internal situation before taking a look at what the United States can do and what this means for us.

First of all, I do not think that the AKP rule is in serious danger at this time. I think that it is a very powerful and very effective political force in the country. I am less certain, however, that the ambitious plans to reform the constitution into a more Presidential system, given what we have seen and what Dr. White just described as a major fissure in the society, will be easily carried out. So, that is something to look at.

The second thing is to pick up on her point about majoritarian government. The problem that you have with a government where whoever the majority is rules—and this goes back to the very roots of our own history, with Hamilton and Jefferson on opposite sides—if you ignore the minority, if the minority feels that they are not part of the society, that they are not at least listened to and that some of their key interests are not protected, you can still pass laws, and you can still sort of rule, but you are going to be in an unstable situation. That is not good for a Turkey, whose economy is very modern and integrated into the international market and financial systems of the world. And this is something also to watch.

Now, in terms of the impact on the United States, Turkey cannot, I think, any more than, let us say, China in East Asia, be instrumentalized, in a formal sense, as a model for other countries to follow. But, as you pointed out, Mr. Chairman, Turkey has demonstrated that a Muslim-majority country anchored, in part, in the broader Middle East could adopt Western political, economic, and security systems. And this does inspire other populations in the region. It does have a role throughout the Middle East.

More importantly, a Turkey confident of its internal situation and economic progress is more likely to play an active and positive role in the region, in close coordination with the United States. Although such United States-Turkish coordination has been particularly close in the Obama administration, continued unrest will make this coordination more difficult at a time when regional stability makes exactly our need for such coordination with Turkey particularly pressing.

But here, another caution. Many analysts extend the model idea to project a Turkey that is little more than a faithful follower of United States values and specific interests. Thus, when Turkey inevitably deviates in some way from our, “expectations,” incomprehension, indignation, and even anger arise on our part. This all flows, I believe, from a misunderstanding of Turkey’s role in the world and in relations with the United States.

Turkey is an independent actor in a way that many of our other allies are not. If you look at Western Europe, the other NATO

states, Japan, Korea—in those countries, there is a fundamental, almost eternal, belief that goes beyond governments—all governments—deep into the population, that a security relationship with us and wedding itself to Western values, as we see them, is inherently a final decision taken by the society. Turkey is more of an independent actor. I would compare it to India and Brazil, with several specific characteristics.

First of all, as every poll I have seen shows, America is not popular in Turkey among the population at large. Governments are able to deal with that, and it does not have a major impact on our daily policies, but it is something we have to keep in mind.

Secondly, however, Turkey is a major consumer of Western, NATO, and American security. It is a security partner. It has grown used to working closely with us throughout the world in areas such as Afghanistan and often in the Middle East. The NATO radar in Turkey, for example, is one of many signs that the Turks generally will go along with us. But, this is on a case-by-case basis, and we need to keep that in mind.

The Turks have their own mind, particularly in what they would call their “near abroad,” and they will expect the United States, in many cases, to follow them rather than the Turks following us.

So, what, in the end, should we do about this situation, which is quite significant and serious, as you have said? First of all, the United States has been restrained, all in all, in our public statements. I think that is wise, because, first of all, if we are faithful to the concept of democracy, we have to let the Turkish people decide how they want to be governed, as long as they are a democratic system. And they are one.

Secondly, public condemnation of Turkey and Prime Minister Erdogan would be strongly counterproductive, as I have seen repeatedly in past crises, at least on the part of the United States administration.

Our goal, thus, should be to do whatever is in our power, reaching out to all who will listen, privately—to some degree, publicly—to ensure that an honest debate takes place in Turkey to resolve the serious splits that we have just heard about in detail in the society in a democratic, peaceful manner. Resolution of these societal splits, again, is essential to work effectively with Turkey on the huge range of problems we face together in the broader Middle East.

These problems, ranging from Syria to Iran, are the most serious we have encountered in three decades, and regional stability, the survival of regimes, the security of the oil trade, and even the overall structure of United States-led international security are all at risk. We need Turkey by our side, and Turkey needs us. But, from America to Anatolia, we all need a stable, democratic Turkey.

Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Jeffrey follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR JAMES F. JEFFREY

When Barack Obama made his 2009 trip to Turkey, his first bilateral visit as President, he did not single out Turkey as a model per se. Rather, he made the point that Turkey “is not where East and West divide—this is where they come together.” Along with this, he stressed America’s willingness to work with Turkey and, above all, paid homage to Turkey’s status as a successful democracy. Today,

many inside and outside Turkey question whether it will remain the same successful democracy, open economy, and reliable security partner we have seen in recent decades. There is cause for concern, but there is also time for the Turks, and it is in the first instance their job to sort out the issues behind the Gezi Park demonstrations and tailor their political process as they see fit.

The demonstrations that broke out in Gezi Park and Taksim Square in Istanbul in late May represent the biggest challenge to Prime Minister Erdogan's AK Party rule in the 11 years the party has been in power. The government has survived the turmoil and is now on the offensive with a campaign of rhetorical abuse—and judicial action—against those participating in or supporting the demonstrations. I see no risk of the government falling over its handling of this whole issue. But the government, particularly Erdogan, will now face serious opposition if he attempts to put in place his ambitious program to consolidate Turkey's Presidential system through constitutional change and to have himself elected the first President under this new system. While that outcome is still possible, such an ambitious reordering of the Turkish political landscape, which would be the most momentous since Atatürk and Inönü, looks less and less certain given the supermajorities Erdogan is looking for in the 2014 Presidential elections and constitutional referendum.

Turkey, and Erdogan—were he to find a way to reverse his commitment not to run for another term as Prime Minister—can survive without problem within the current constitutional political framework. But what was shown by the demonstrations and the government's reaction to them is that Turkey is increasingly split into two quite different political groupings and that the government itself is contributing to further polarization of the society. This is the situation of greatest concern to those of us who follow Turkey closely. What in particular has troubled observers, including me, and the U.S. Government, is the attitude of some, but not all, of the government leaders. These leaders, including the Prime Minister, have generally demonized all of the demonstrators and are increasingly criminalizing peaceful protest and even free speech if supportive of the demonstrators. This calls into question the government's commitment to free speech and assembly, to the principle of proportionality, and, at bottom, to the democratic principle that minorities cannot simply be ignored. This "majoritarian" approach to democratic rule, which we have also seen elsewhere in the region, ignores a key component of democracy: that it cannot encompass just the rule of the majority, but must mobilize at least the willingness of the minority to accept that rule and to feel itself part of the larger political society. That feeling, and willingness, are in play now, and as long as that is so, Turkey's stability and chances for further political, economic, and social progress are at risk.

IMPACT ON THE UNITED STATES

How does this affect U.S. interests? Turkey cannot, any more than the United States globally, or China in East Asia, be instrumentalized as a "model" for other societies to follow. With few unique exceptions—such as the United States immediately after World War II—international relations usually does not work in so direct a fashion. Nevertheless, Turkey has demonstrated that a Muslim-majority country anchored in part in the broader Middle East could adopt Western political, economic, and security systems, prosper under all of them, and become a partner to the United States and European Union. Turkey's relative success or failure in this regard does have some effect on the populations of other countries in the region.

But, more directly, a Turkey confident of its internal situation and economic progress is more likely to play an active and positive role in the region, to the extent feasible in close coordination with the United States. Although such U.S.-Turkish coordination has been particularly close in the Obama administration, continued social unrest and resulting questions about the nature of Turkish democracy will make this coordination more difficult. A distracted Turkish Government could well ally itself further with anti-Western elements that support its hardline policies. The United States would then be obliged to speak out on violations of democratic principles, rendering cooperation and coordination even more problematic. Nonetheless, assuming that Turkey remains reasonably stable under a democratic system, continued partnership will be possible. Under the chaotic circumstances that reign in the region, this partnership will, in fact, remain essential in dealing with Syria, Iran, Iraq, and Israel's role in the region.

But here, another caution. Many analysts not only overstress the "model" concept but also project a Turkey that is little more than a faithful follower of Western, especially U.S., values and specific interests. Thus, when Turkey inevitably deviates in some way from our "expectations," incomprehension, indignation, and even anger arise on our part. This all flows from a misunderstanding of Turkey's role in the

world, and with us. In my view, Turkey is not in the same category as the EU states, Japan, South Korea, and a number of other close allies. In these countries, eternal bonds with, and security subordination to, the United States are political givens for the leaderships and populations. But this is not the case with Turkey: it is an independent international operator, similar to India or Brazil, but with extraordinarily high popular skepticism of the United States and the EU. Likewise, it generally shares the same political and economic values as the West and is integrated into various Western institutions. Unlike India or Brazil, however, Turkey has a longstanding security relationship with us, shared security interests, and strong institutional security arrangements—from NATO membership to massive U.S. arms purchases—that are central to its security and its regional role. This produces a strong tendency to consider and if possible go along with U.S. initiatives, as seen in Afghanistan. But Turkey will act independently, particularly in its “near abroad,” and expect us to back it, rather than Turkey automatically backing us. This was true before the Erdogan government, and remains true today. In this regard, we need to remember that with its huge burden of Syrian refugees and the actions of the PKK-offshoot PYD along the Turkish border, Turkey’s regional security is at stake in a way that ours is not,

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

The United States, though speaking out repeatedly about Turkey’s actions and statements being at variance from our view of democratic norms, has nonetheless been restrained in its reaction. That is a wise decision. First, if we are faithful to the concept of democracy, then we recognize that only the people of a given state, not outsiders, have the right to pass judgment on the government and the demonstrators. Second, publicly condemnation of Turkey and Erdogan would be strongly counterproductive. It would not push the Turkish Government to tailor its response, but, as I have seen repeatedly in the past, would make us the central problem, lessening any chance of a more compromising government position.

Our goal thus should be to do whatever is in our power, mainly privately and without antagonizing, to ensure that a complete and honest debate takes place in Turkey and to encourage the Turks to resolve the serious splits in their society in a democratic, peaceful manner. This is not only an end in itself for a more successful, more stable Turkey, but is also essential if we want to continue to work effectively with Turkey on the huge range of problems we face together in the broader Middle East and more widely in Eurasia. These problems are the most serious we have encountered in the Middle East in three decades, and regional stability, the survival of regimes, the security of the oil trade, and even the overall structure of U.S.-led international security are all at risk. We need Turkey by our side, and Turkey needs us. But from America to Anatolia, we all need a stable, democratic Turkey.

Senator MURPHY. Congressman Wexler.

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT WEXLER, PRESIDENT, S. DANIEL ABRAHAM CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you, Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Johnson. It is a special honor for me to testify with two of our Nation’s finest diplomats, in every which way, and an esteemed professor and academic, as well.

In 2001, I joined with Congresswoman Kay Granger and Congressman Ed Whitfield to establish the Congressional Caucus on Turkey, because we recognized the need for a deeper strategic alliance with Turkey. More than a decade later, our—meaning America—our increased engagement with Turkey has proved indispensable in advancing American interests across the globe.

While the recent protests in Turkey reflect a schism within Turkish society, no doubt, there is no reasonable comparison between these protests and the Arab Spring. Prime Minister Erdogan has won three fair-and-free elections in the past decade, each by increasing margins. The protesters’ frustration with the Prime Minister’s administration, both in terms of style and substance, bears

no relationship to the uprisings against authoritarian dictators elsewhere in the region. That there was never even a possibility of the military intervening is a testament to just how far Turkey's democracy has come.

Still, the United States must encourage Prime Minister Erdogan to choose the wisest path. Rather than restricting freedom of the press and attempting to sideline its critics, the government should point to its impressive record. In a decade, Prime Minister Erdogan's administration has fundamentally strengthened Turkish democracy. Perhaps most significantly, Prime Minister Erdogan established civilian authority over a military that previously exerted its influence in all facets of society.

Turkey's recent economic progress is nothing short of remarkable. Last month, a World Bank report described Turkey's development over the past decade as one of the success stories of the global economy. The Prime Minister's ambition for Turkey to become one of the world's 10-largest economies by 2023 is a laudable goal. Per capita income has tripled, and poverty has decreased from 28 percent in 2003 to 18 percent in 2013. And in May, Turkey finally paid off its last loan to the IMF, which prevented a near catastrophe, just a decade ago.

Additionally, Prime Minister Erdogan has taken dramatic steps toward enlarging Turkey's pluralistic democracy. After years of bloodshed, the Prime Minister has courageously signaled his intent to engage in a peace process with Turkey's Kurdish community in an open and democratic manner.

Considering these accomplishments, the Prime Minister should communicate confidence in his vision for the country. But, the government's recent statements casting the protests in terms of international conspiracies, interest-rate lobbies, and unfortunate anti-Semitic references do not reflect a Turkey commensurate with its substantial achievements and aspirations of joining the European Union. Rather than attempting to delegitimize voices of dissent, the leadership should embrace responsible calls for reform and take pride in the depth of Turkey's personal liberties and democratic institutions.

In dealing with Turkey, I would respectfully suggest that it is critical to appreciate that the country is rife with conflicting truths. Attempts to label segments of society will inevitably lead to misperceptions of the political landscape. A so-called Islamist in Turkey is markedly different from an Islamist elsewhere in the region. In my own experience, members of the Prime Minister's Justice and Development Party are often more pro-American, market-driven, and pragmatic than the so-called secular parties. Even during the recent diplomatic crisis between Turkey and Israel, for example, the commercial ties between the countries increased.

Senators Murphy and Johnson, thank you for holding this hearing. Recent developments in the Middle East demand that the United States work with Turkey toward a more stable, peaceful, and democratic region. In Syria, Iran, Egypt, Afghanistan, and Iraq, our national interests are better served through close cooperation with Turkey. And as we restart negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, it is essential that Turkey and Israel restore normal relations so that Turkey can effectively engage both sides

and fully participate in the diplomatic and economic initiatives launched by Secretary Kerry.

Prime Minister Erdogan is poised to be the most consequential Turkish leader since Ataturk. If he can, in fact, harness the protests to broaden Turkey's democratic tent, he will ensure Turkey's rise as a global power and fortify Turkey's alliance with both the United States and Europe.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wexler follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT WEXLER

Good afternoon Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Johnson, and members of the committee. It is an honor to testify at this critical moment in Turkish-American relations.

In 2001, I joined with Congresswoman Kay Granger and Congressman Ed Whitfield to establish the Congressional Caucus on Turkey because we recognized the need for a deeper strategic alliance with Turkey. More than a decade later, our increased engagement with Turkey has proved indispensable in advancing American interests across the globe.

While the recent protests in Turkey reflect a schism within Turkish society, there is no reasonable comparison between these protests and the Arab Spring. Prime Minister Erdogan has won three fair and free elections in the past decade, each by increasing margins. The protesters' frustration with the Prime Minister's administration, both in terms of style and substance, bears no relation to the uprisings against authoritarian dictators elsewhere in the region. That there was never even a possibility of the military intervening is a testament to just how far Turkey's democracy has come.

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Senators Murphy and Johnson, thank you for holding this hearing. Recent developments in the Middle East demand that the United States work with Turkey toward a more stable, peaceful, and democratic region. In Syria, Iran, Egypt, Afghanistan, and Iraq, our national interests are better served through close co-

operation with Turkey. And, as we restart direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, it is essential that Turkey and Israel restore normal relations so that Turkey can effectively engage both sides.

Prime Minister Erdogan holds the potential to be the most consequential Turkish leader since Ataturk. If he can, in fact, harness the protests to broaden Turkey's democratic tent, he will fortify Turkey's standing with both the United States and Europe, and permanently cement his legacy.

Senator MURPHY. Ambassador Volker.

**STATEMENT OF HON. KURT VOLKER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
McCAIN INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP AT
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ambassador VOLKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Senator Johnson, for the opportunity to appear here. It is really an honor and it is also, I should say, an honor to be here next to the former chairman of the House Subcommittee on Europe, who is as much expert on Turkey as anybody, along with our other distinguished panelists.

When I was at NATO, the joke, when you were waiting for 28 nations to finish speaking in turn, was that, "Well, everything's been said, but not everybody has said it." So, I could repeat a lot of what has been said here, and I will try to avoid that. Let me, instead, try to string together three aspects that I think came out.

There is the strategic environment around Turkey, which is critically important, including the war in Syria. There is Turkey's role in addressing these things. And there—including partnership with the United States, an alliance with the United States—and there are the domestic developments inside Turkey. And they have an interplay with one another that I think is tremendously important.

First, Turkey's own strategic importance. Turkey has the ability to enfranchise Islam within a vibrant democracy. In so doing, it has the ability to prosper economically and politically for its own people and as a inspiration to others in the region. And, given its geographic situation, it has the potential to play a meaningful and positive role in addressing many of these crises in the neighboring area.

And, of course, the United States is committed to the defense of Turkey as a NATO ally, and Turkey has contributed to our shared efforts in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

So, secondly, Turkey is, therefore, enormously potentially important for the United States. I emphasize "potentially," because that depends upon us knowing what we are doing. What do we want to achieve in Syria, in the escalation of violence in Iraq, in the Caucasus, in Central Asia? When we know what—with Egypt—when we know what we are trying to do, we will find that Turkey is an invaluable partner in helping us get there. But, at the moment, I think our strategic partnership is really underdeveloped with Turkey. And, as a result, our influence on events in Turkey is somewhat diminished.

The third is something that came up in all of the testimony, is that, recently, there has been a degradation in the quality of the democratic or liberal performance of the Erdogan government. We have seen two things. We have seen an insertion of Islam into public life in ways that are distressing to large segments of a more secular population. And we have seen authoritarian tendencies in

response to opposition and protests inside the country. These are things that matter a lot. They have echos in the region. The whole reason the conversation started about Turkey as a potential model or an inspiration is because the AK Party was being successful in carving out a path between military dictatorship and Islamist dictatorship. As a party with Islamic roots, but functioning well and governing well in a democratic society, they were trailblazing. For that model to be reversed in any way would be devastating for Turkey, but also send terrible signals throughout the region. That really is part of the heart of where the Syria conflict began and what we are seeing going on now in Egypt.

I think, therefore, there are two pointers for U.S. policy in this, and that you have heard them from other panelists, as well.

The first one is that U.S. engagement is critical, first off, with respect to the crises in the region. The domestic development inside Turkey are not yet a crisis, but the conflict in Syria, the escalation of violence in Iraq, the risk of that spilling over into Lebanon, the risk of destabilizing Jordan, the great uncertainty now which we see with Egypt, and our allies with Israel potentially being dramatically affected over these are all critically important. And our ability to tackle these depends upon working the strategy for dealing those together with Turkey. I think we have a lot more investment to do in that.

The second one is connected, which is the domestic developments inside Turkey. I think that—and I take the point about not condemning Prime Minister Erdogan. We should not condemn him, but we should speak up firmly on behalf of the democratic values that we believe in and that most of Turkish society wishes to see fully realized in their own society. I do not think it is a choice between strategic engagement with Turkey and discussion of democracy and values that we share. Instead, by engaging strategically, it gives us the credibility, the skin in the game, also to be able to speak up on behalf of democratic values, not in a form of condemning or supporting one side against the other, but trying to uphold those values so that Turkey emerges stable, prosperous, secure, and a partner for us in dealing with some very difficult challenges in the region.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Volker follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. KURT VOLKER

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Senator Johnson, and all the distinguished Senators here today, for the opportunity to testify about Turkey—where it is headed—as well as United States-Turkish relations and the situation in the wider Middle East around Turkey. It is an honor to be here.

Let me start with three basic observations, and then I will expand on some specific issues in more depth.

First, Turkey is of enormous strategic importance, for several reasons. Turkey has the ability to enfranchise Islam within a vibrant democratic system. In so doing, it has the ability to prosper economically and politically, delivering for its own people and serving as an inspiration to others. It is a major emerging economy. Given its critical geographic position at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, it has the potential to play a meaningful and positive role in addressing issues in its neighborhood, including Syria, Iraq, Iran, the Caucasus, and more. And, of course, the United States is committed to the defense of Turkey as a NATO ally, and Turkey has contributed to shared efforts in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

Second, Turkey is therefore a potentially invaluable strategic partner for the United States in addressing regional challenges. Unfortunately, this partnership has been largely unrealized, not least of all because the United States does not at the moment have clear goals and strategies for what it would like to achieve—in Iraq, in Syria, in the Caucasus, in Central Asia, and in the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa generally. If we knew what we wanted to achieve and were prepared to invest serious effort in getting it, Turkey could be an essential ally in doing so. As it stands, Turkey feels that the U.S. is not sufficiently engaged on key issues, such as Syria, which are of critical interest to Turkey.

Third, Turkey is facing serious challenges within its democracy—challenges that are deeply troubling. If they are not addressed squarely through Turkey’s own democratic institutions, all of the positive potential I have just described could become a negative, adding fuel to the fire of a Middle East region already in crisis, and further stressing an already stressed Europe.

Taken together, these challenges are related to a lingering question of whether Turkey still sees itself as a member of the transatlantic community with a foot in the broader Middle East, or a “post-Ottoman,” non-Atlanticist, power. From a U.S. perspective, the former is far more desirable.

All this argues for a much more proactive United States policy with respect to Turkey:

- On the one hand, to work with Turkey strategically to address challenges in the region, which are of great concern to Turkey and should be of great concern to the United States as well; and
- On the other hand, to be clear, candid, and public about our deep commitment to democratic values and institutions, and our concern that Turkey should reverse its drift away from these values, both for its own stability, as well as for its ability to play a constructive role in the region.

Some might say that these policies are in conflict—How can one work with Turkey and offer criticism at the same time? I believe the opposite is true. Our ability to be taken seriously, and for our concerns to be viewed as constructive support from a friend and ally, depends on the degree to which we indeed treat Turkey as a strategic ally, demonstrate our own reliability, and tackle challenges together.

DOMESTIC SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

So “Where is Turkey Headed?” Let me start with some context.

After decades of a strong military role in politics, enshrined in the law governing the military and enforced through a number of coups, democratically elected civilian rule has become embedded.

In the early 2000s, through its efforts to escape from financial crisis and integrate with the European Union (though that is now largely a side issue), Turkey introduced a series of key reforms and established robust trading relationships that have led to vastly improved national prosperity and a growing global economic role.

Through its role in governing Turkey successfully for many years, the Justice and Development Party (the AK Party) had demonstrated the potential for a party with Islamic roots to exercise power responsibly and tolerantly within a democratic system.

This growing Turkish strength has helped give Turkey the confidence to address a number of regional issues. For example, despite the history of PKK terrorism, the current Turkish Government has said it is open to a peace process for the PKK. It has developed a constructive relationship with the Kurdish Regional Government of Iraq, and Turkish businesses play a leading role in that region’s economic development. Turkey had forged a strong partnership with Israel which—while interrupted because of the loss of life on the ill-fated direct aid shipments to Palestinian territory—may gradually be rebuilt.

In the past 10 years, Turkey has emerged as a major growing economy and a respected actor in key regions: the Middle East, Southeast Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Iraq, and North Africa.

At the same time, two major domestic trends have begun to emerge in parallel with these positive accomplishments.

First, under AK Party leadership, there has been a growing effort to push Islam into public life in ways that are distressing to the more secular segments of Turkey’s population—everything from the government’s attitudes toward women to restricting sales of alcohol to proposing construction of a massive mosque on Camlica Hill and another at Taksim square.

Second, as a governing style, we have repeatedly seen heavy-handed tactics applied by the government—for example, in its own rhetoric, in its extraordinary pressure on the media, in the use of tax authorities to pressure businesses, includ-

ing mediaowners, and in extended detentions without trial of senior military officers based on allegations of coup-plotting, or failure to block coup-plotters. The Prime Minister's interest in increasing the powers of the President, and then running for President himself, only exacerbate the concerns felt more widely. This all has a Putin-esque ring to it.

In this context, the recent protests that sprang up over the government's plan to uproot trees and build an edifice at Gezi Park reflected far more deep-rooted public concern than just over the park itself. The government-dictated plan—and then the harsh government crackdown on peaceful protests—reinforced in large segments of the population their worst fears about creeping authoritarianism under Prime Minister Erdogan's leadership. The initial rejection of protester complaints, and call for mass demonstrations to support the government, stoked fears of demagoguery and a "tyranny of the majority."

In recent weeks, the situation has cooled somewhat. But the protests and the government crackdown highlight the fact that a new risk to stability in Turkey that has opened up.

The AK Party's legitimacy comes not from its expression of Islam in public life, but from its obtaining power and then governing through democratic means. As fears of over-reach have grown, the government urgently needs to reassure the public by reinforcing its commitment to using democratic means and instruments to govern. It needs to show greater respect for opposition and for those who have different political views, rather than simply attempting to overwhelm and defeat them.

CRITICAL TO A WIDER REGION—EGYPT, SYRIA, AND THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST

The democratic performance of the AK Party is vital not only to Turkey's future and that party's continued leadership of Turkey. It is also vital in a wider regional context.

We have seen in Egypt how a Muslim Brotherhood government over-reached in imposing its will on the population by nondemocratic means, only to be overthrown in an increasingly troubling military coup. This has caused the Muslim Brotherhood to take more extreme measures, and has given rise to growing violence and political instability in Egypt, with the military now responsible for dozens upon dozens of deaths. There needs to be a democratic middle ground between Islamist and military dictatorships.

The very notion of Turkey as a model or inspiration for the region rose from the need to identify such a middle ground. Now, if the most successful case of a governing party with Islamic roots, the AK Party, were also to succumb to overreach in imposing its will on the entire population through undemocratic means, it would give fuel to the argument that political Islam itself is fundamentally undemocratic.

This would be a tragedy for millions of Muslims throughout the broader Middle East, who deserve democratically elected governments that are generally reflective of society's religious values, while at the same time are democratic in the way they govern, ensuring that individual rights, fairness, justice, tolerance and pluralism are protected.

Syria is even more critical. The war in Syria has left over 100,000 people dead, and created over 1.6 million refugees, and over 4 million internally displaced persons. Outside forces have intervened, including Iran, Hezbollah, Russia, al-Qaeda, and other Sunni extremists. The Assad regime has made clear it intends to fight its way back to control of the country, likely producing millions more refugees and tens of thousands of further deaths. Attacks have already spilled across the border into Turkey on a number of occasions. The conflict has also stoked increased violence in Iraq, has threatened stability in Jordan, and is placing enormous pressure on Lebanon, where one in six adults is now a Syrian refugee.

In this environment, the lack of engagement by responsible members of the international community, including the United States, has enabled radical elements to increase their influence among the Syrian rebels, caused Syrian Kurds, including some who are anti-Turkish, to consider establishing an autonomous zone (perhaps partially modeled on the Kurdish region in Iraq), and created conditions where the further escalation of the conflict is likely. All of this can jeopardize Turkish security interests and possibly drag Turkey directly in the conflict.

A Turkey that is democratically stable, prosperous, and closely aligning its policies with the United States and Europe can best weather these challenges. But a Turkey that is internally divided, while perceiving itself to be isolated and under threat from abroad, could end up getting dragged into the conflict in Syria as the least bad of a series of undesirable choices.

How Turkey handles its internal democratic struggles can have a major impact on the way the crises in the broader region play out. Turkey can be a capable

regional player and a force for solutions if it is producing solutions at home. But a distracted, less stable Turkey divided along religious and democratic lines will be less effective abroad and could even reinforce the predilections of warring parties. Indeed, such a Turkey would be in danger of drifting from its two-generations-old Atlanticist orientation to something quite different.

U.S. LEADERSHIP REQUIRED

U.S. leadership is absolutely critical—in seeking to stop the killing in Syria, in seeking to prevent the continued expansion of that conflict throughout the region, in promoting the creation of a middle ground between military and Islamist dictators in Egypt and the Middle East more broadly, and in encouraging a strong Turkey, as a strategic ally, to remain faithful to its own remarkable accomplishments as a democracy and an emerging global economy.

Turkey's own orientation—as a NATO ally, as a European nation, and as a vital part of a transatlantic community—is at stake. Does Turkey remain part of this transatlantic community, or does it seek to go it alone as a power broker in a broader Middle East region, unhinged from Western political structures?

It is tempting to think that the United States can let others handle these challenges, while we tackle our own financial and economic challenges at home. It is tempting to steer clear of foreign conflicts and bring our soldiers home. The reality, however, is that when the United States does not lead, no one else can—and instead, other nefarious forces fill the vacuum we leave in our wake.

The crises in Syria and Egypt and the deteriorating stability in Iraq were not caused by the United States; but lack of U.S. strategic engagement has arguably created conditions that have enabled them to become much worse.

Turkey's future trajectory still looks positive, but the pressures both internally and externally are mounting. A more active U.S. role in addressing challenges in the region together with Turkey as a strategic ally—while urging it to live up to its democratic traditions—would help make sure that these challenges do not grow to such an extent that Turkey itself is at risk.

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, that concludes my statement. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this hearing.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Ambassador Volker.

We will now go to a round of 7-minute questions, followed by a second round.

Let me start with you, Dr. White. Everyone spent time talking about what our response should be. And you referenced the fact that we should put our finger on the scale, here. Can you talk a little bit more specifically about what you think our response should be? Are you speaking about something more than just some rather gentle admonitions, which has, so far, been our policy with respect to the political uprisings and the response from the AKP?

Dr. WHITE. In fact, I very much agree with Mr. Volker, that we do have to do something. I mean, the option of doing nothing because it is to our strategic advantage, it may be—it may not be to our strategic advantage. Depending on which of those two paths Turkey goes down, the solution may no longer lie with the AKP; you know, the solution of an actual liberal democracy may no longer come out of the AKP camp. It may come out of this new constituency that has emerged, but which we seem to have kind of ignored. You know, they are just young people, sort of like occupy Wall Street, you know, the—gone in a flash. But, in Turkey, it is actually a very revolutionary thing. I think it is a pivot point and that we do not want to miss that by just glossing over it and saying, “Well, you know, they have all these other good qualities. We should just, you know, gloss over this.” Because this is the generation that will then move into positions of power later—

Senator MURPHY. So, then, what are you recommending?

Dr. WHITE. Well, I think—

Senator MURPHY. If it is something more than just general admonition—

Dr. WHITE. There are—

Senator MURPHY [continuing]. What is it?

Dr. WHITE. Specific things that I think can be done, specific areas that the government can be pressured on. One of them, for instance, is the law that does not allow political parties to be funded. So, you can go and register a political party, but you cannot, then, go and find funding for it. So, that, in itself, is a blockage in the democratic system. Parties that can get over the 10-percent hurdle and get into Parliament get state funding. You can start a party by taking a bit of another party and running with it, which is what the AKP did. But, if you are a constituency like the Gezi protesters, you do not have a chance to start a political party to represent your interests.

And the worst part of that is, when I go around talking to people about this and asking about it, everyone knows about this, but nobody thinks it is a problem, because, as several CEOs told me, “We give lots of money to political parties all the time. We know it is illegal, but they just put it in a different drawer.” You know, it is a semantic game. So, basically, what is happening in Turkey is that, yes, it is free elections, but the whole thing is rigged in a way that allows special interests to determine who gets to stay in Parliament, who gets to stay in power.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you.

Ambassador Jeffrey, you cannot solve a problem that you do not understand, so I might ask that you talk a little bit about the motivations that may underlie the recent downward trend in treatment of civil society, but specifically the response to the protests, whether or not this was just a total misread on Erdogan’s part as to the strength of the protesters, whether, as some suggest, it was just part of his personality which took offense to the fact that people were rising up and objecting to decisions he was making. We cannot really condition a response unless we really understand why we have seen this slide.

Ambassador JEFFREY. I would refer back to something that Dr. White said when she was talking very eloquently about majoritarian rule. And I tried to pick up on it a little bit. She said that this attitude has a lot of supporters, adherents, in Turkey. That is part of the problem. Certainly, Prime Minister Erdogan, another democratically elected friend of mine, Prime Minister Maliki, in Iraq, both, I believe, ironically, in a majoritarian attitude. It is not uncommon in Turkey or throughout the region. And the idea is that if the people vote and they put you in power, you basically decide on everything from the customs and role of religion in society to whether a park can be turned into a shopping mall or a artillery museum. And if you challenge that, this is seen as not a public protest, but as a threat to the claim the regime has to direct Turkey in a direction that, for most Turks, has been a huge improvement over what they went through even under a democratic system from the 1980s forward. And so, I think that there is a reaction of betrayal.

Again, it is the wrong reaction. It is going to get this country into trouble, because, as I said, you cannot have a stable—you cannot

have an effective actor in the region and a strong economy in the long run if you have a majority that feels themselves abused and is not part of the system. So, it is important that we recognize it.

A majoritarian attitude toward democracy means a democracy in some danger. But, a democracy in danger is not a democracy dead. So, at the end of the day, the Turkish people are looking at this thing, and I think that, for the moment, we have to trust them. They have taken good decisions in the past. All in all, as my friend, Congressman Wexler, pointed out, Erdogan has been good for Turkey. Turgot Ozal, who was also elected against the views of the military in 1983, was good for the country for a decade.

And so, for the moment, I think that the Turkish people need a chance to decide how they are going to react to this. We have our positions, and we should talk to people privately about them, and state them publicly. But, when we ask—when we are asked, “Well, what do we do about it?”—to me, as an operator, “do about it” means, “What do we put on the table? What do we stop doing what they want, or what do we start doing that they do not want?” And I am not there yet, sir.

Senator MURPHY. OK.

We will have time for a second round. But, Congressman Wexler, you referenced Erdogan’s relationship with the military. That is, of course, a subject of great consternation in Turkey today; in part, because of the sledge hammer trials. And when you visit there, you cannot help but hear stories of great demoralization within the military. It strikes me that we, sort of, always walk a fine line when trying to talk about the state of the Turkish military. We do not want it to be strong enough that it can essentially pull the strings of the political infrastructure, but, frankly, because we rely on the Turkish military to lend some regional stability, in partnership with the United States, we want it to be strong enough to be able to respond to threats. And right now, there are some people who think that the pendulum has swung a little bit too far away from a military that’s strong enough to do what it needs to do.

Can you talk a little bit about that concern?

Mr. WEXLER. Yes. And I think it is a very important point. And that is, I think we would all agree that our advice to Prime Minister Erdogan essentially would be, “Mr. Prime Minister, most democratically elected heads of state would give their right arm to have your economic record. They would give their right arm to have the achievements in office that you have had. So, think big, be confident, do not be small, do not actually revert to a type of leadership that not only diminishes you but also jeopardizes the progress in your country.”

Now let me flip that to us. We have to be careful—we have to be very careful, particularly in light of some of the apparent—not necessarily disagreements, but different points of view between us and the Turks. And you raise one. We run our country with civilian control of the military. And just because the military has been a great pro-American group of patriots for many decades does not mean that civilian control in Turkey is not as good for the Turks as it is for us here in America.

So, yes, we should pay enormous respect to the incredible allegiance and alliance and friendship between Turkey and its mili-

tary, and our military in our countries. But, we should 100 percent support the efforts to make certain that there is civilian control over the military in Turkey.

And we run this kind of discrepancy on a number of issues. I support our administration's policy in Egypt 110 percent. I think what we have done is the right thing. But, if you read Prime Minister Erdogan's statement regarding Egypt, or his first two statements, they are great statements of Jeffersonian democracy.

So, while, yes, I agree with our position, and I think we are right, it does not—we have to be careful, I think, in terms of how we distinguish our principled position versus their principled position. And they may have different interests and, more importantly, a different history.

He is afraid of a coup, he has spent time—Prime Minister Erdogan—in prison. We need to understand those things.

Senator MURPHY. No, and, listen, I do not think—I am certainly not questioning the civilian control of the military. It is more a question of the quality of the civilian control of the military.

Senator Johnson.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to try and reconcile a couple of statements.

Congressman Wexler, you mentioned that Erdogan has strengthened democracy. Dr. White, you mentioned that he has increased women's rights. But, then we are seeing the reaction of the population. Congressman Wexler, you said he is afraid of a coup. So, if democracy is strengthening, if women's rights are also strengthened, what has happened? I mean, can anybody explain that difference?

We will start with you, Dr. White.

Dr. WHITE. Well, you have to understand that Turkey can only be understood as “two steps forward, one step back.” So, for all the steps forward that have happened, in terms of the penal code and so on, there have been steps backward, as well: attempts to roll back abortion, the disinterest in dealing with the increasing violence against women, the whole notion of the—well, I will just give you a silly example, but it captures it. Just a few days ago, a speaker on the government television station said that women in the late stages of pregnancy should stay at home, because they are obscene and unaesthetic.

So, you know, Prime Minister Erdogan saying women should all have three children and stay at home—so, at the same time that this discourse is going on, you also have an increase in the number of girls going to school. And, in fact, there was a government program to pay mothers—because if you pay the fathers, they just spend the money, but if you pay mothers, they actually get their girls into school, and keep them there.

So, all these things are going on at the same time. It is just that the tendency has reversed, now, so that there is more and more pressure on individuals. And when I say “pressure on individuals,” and particularly women, I do not mean just secular urban women. One of the things that has come up, here, that I want to disagree with is that there is a split between more religious and less religious people in Turkey. In fact, if you look at those populations, they are—this is the way it is usually talked about, that the popu-

lations are very similar; in part, because the pious population has become wealthy, it has become educated, it has become globalized. And so, they live very similar lifestyles and they have very similar desires for upward mobility and so on, especially the young people. And so, I have met a lot of very pious conservative young people, some of them in the Naksibendi order, who are some of the more liberal people that I have met, even though they live conservative lifestyles. So, they are also not happy with being told that they have to have three children and stay at home. Right? So, this is not something that just affects the secular part of the population.

Senator JOHNSON. But, again, the conflict that I am seeing is, I am hearing “strengthening democracy,” and it looks like the problem—the reaction is a limitation of minority rights. You know, Ambassador Jeffrey, you talked about, really, more of a majoritarian-rule society. So, which is it? I mean, did they start out strengthening democracy, and now they are actually limiting minority rights over time? I mean, what exactly is happening?

Ambassador JEFFREY My take—but, everybody here knows the situation pretty well from one or another standpoint—is that they have done all of the above. It is not a happy or simple answer, but it is the one that, from my experience in 9 years in Turkey, that I have seen. This is a country that is moving, I believe, generally toward its own understanding of democracy. It will differ, in some ways, from ours, as do European parliamentary systems. In other ways, it will disagree considerably with ours—again, the greater tolerance for a majoritarian system.

But, at the end of the day, as long as it is a democracy, the final arbiter of how the Turkish people think about what Prime Minister Erdogan has done and what the Gezi Park demonstrations mean for the country will be in the next elections. And I would be cautious about us doing anything before we see how the people react to this.

Senator JOHNSON. I mean, it seems to me that Prime Minister Erdogan has been consolidating his power, but yet he is concerned about a coup? I mean, Ambassador Volker, can you explain that?

Ambassador VOLKER Sure, thank you. Let me try to put it in a slightly different way than the other panelists did.

I think that, for a long period of time, you could say that the glass was more than half full, that Turkey was progressing with civilian leadership, democratically elected, ending military dominance of politics, performing economically, protecting rights of citizens. It was a positive trajectory. I think, lately, you have to say it has gone the other way, that there has been an effort to put more imposition of Islam into public life rather than letting expression of Islam. There’s a difference. And I think you have seen authoritarian reactions and tendencies in the Prime Minister.

And just to give you one example, the pressure on the media in Turkey right now is extraordinary. As Dr. White said, you have more journalists in jail in Turkey than any other country. They have the tax authorities camped out at some of these media outlets, or the owners are so afraid of publishing things, there is an enormous amount of self-censorship. This is a bad tendency that has grown over the past few years.

I think that the demonstrations that we saw over the Gezi Park protests—the original protests were small, but the demonstrations, after the government cracked down, were enormous. And this has a lot to do with the growing perceptions in the society itself that the government is now overreaching and going too far. And that is where I think we now stand.

Senator JOHNSON. Congressman Wexler, you had an interesting comment. You said, “A Turkish Islamist is different from other Islamists.” Are they becoming a little more similar over time?

Mr. WEXLER. No, I do not think so.

Senator JOHNSON. Can you describe exactly what you mean, then?

Mr. WEXLER. Yes. I think the best example might be Prime Minister Erdogan’s trip to Egypt when President Morsi was first elected. And here it was, everybody perceived that Prime Minister Erdogan, in effect, was going to go to Egypt and congratulate the Muslim Brotherhood on their extraordinary electoral achievement. And what was his message? His message to the Muslim Brotherhood was, “Remember, you can be a pious Muslim, but be a patriot and a democrat, with a small D. You can be a pious Muslim and enhance democracy and equality and women’s rights and things of that nature in your country.” He came as a hero, and, if I understand it correctly, the Muslim Brotherhood could not wait until he left the country.

Now, this is the dichotomy that we are often presented with. On the one hand, Prime Minister Erdogan utters things at times toward the Israelis that are utterly offensive, historically inaccurate. And yet, at the other hand, when there was a bombing in Istanbul, some years ago, that, in part, focused on the Jewish community, his reaction about the Jewish community in Turkey was perfect, basically saying, “You attack our Jewish community in Turkey, you attack all of us.” So, it is a conflict, which is what you started with. And that is Turkey.

The challenge for us is to use that conflict in a way that furthers our interests, to the degree possible. And I think Ambassador Jeffrey was perfectly accurate when he said, “Public confrontation, as enticing as it might seem, gets us very little.”

Senator JOHNSON. OK.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I am going to have to go to another meeting.

But, I really want to thank the witnesses’ very interesting, very thoughtful testimony, and answers to our questions. Thank you.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Senator Johnson.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you all for being here. I am sorry I missed your opening remarks.

I had the opportunity to visit Turkey for the first time last fall, and I was very impressed with the economic prosperity in the country, with the openness that I heard from the people that I spoke with. But, one of the things that I found very interesting—I had a roundtable discussion at a university in Istanbul, and one of the things that a number of the academics there were talking about was concern about what was happening with the crackdown on the

media and the press, concern, as you all have pointed out, about the increasing role of religion and what they viewed as one of the hallmarks of the country, as secularism. And, you know, to what extent have those elements fueled the recent demonstrations and rioting in Turkey? And to what extent do you see Erdogan responding to what are very real concerns that are being expressed by certain elements of the population?

And I do not know who wants to start first.

Mr. WEXLER. I am happy to try.

I think we all in agreement that there is no excuse for rolling back any freedoms of the press. And there have been unfortunate examples, most recently, where that has occurred and Prime Minister Erdogan and his administration would be wise to change course and to reverse course.

As to the aspect of religion, I think, here again, we need to be very careful, because what appears to be so in Turkey is not always exactly so. And I will try to say this, I hope, eloquently enough not to get myself in trouble. But, for instance, one of the historic debates in Turkey has been the use of headscarves by women in public bodies. Now, that is cast in Turkey as a religious debate. In our own country, I think most of us would be deeply offended if our government had a rule that said a woman could or could not wear a headscarf at a university, or could or could not wear a headscarf anywhere.

So, Prime Minister Erdogan, I believe, has the position that that rule should be relaxed. That is cast as a religious position. And, no doubt, I suspect, it is based, in part, on a religious position. But, the inclination in our country, given the region, is that we then assume that this type of religious advocacy results in some type of extremism. And I think we need to be very careful about that, because clearly in our own set of dynamics, advocating for a woman's right to wear a headscarf, or not, would probably be cast in terms of privacy or freedom.

Senator SHAHEEN. I do not disagree with that. I guess I was trying to relay what I heard from people that I met with in Turkey about what their concerns were, rather than what my concerns were.

Ambassador JEFFREY. In that sense, Senator, there is a—I would say, a divide in Turkey. I am not so sure it is the divide that we see in Gezi Square, for all the reasons that Dr. White has explained, that I agree with. But, there is a strong minority in Turkey that are very, very prominent in the circles that we have the most contact with in the major cities, among the better educated, that takes almost a French view of laicite, a very dominant state role in, basically, pushing religion, in any way, shape, or form, out of the public view. And the bulk of the population—there I agree with a comment that Congressman Wexler made earlier, that Turks have—and I hate the word, but there is no other way to express it—a somewhat moderate view of religion, and there is a fair amount of tolerance that, in living in other countries that I do not want to name, I have not found among the population who are practicing Muslims. That is a good thing, and it is something we need to preserve. We do not want to accentuate this split in society.

But, I think you are on to something very accurately when you talk about putting journalists in jail, because these journalists come from the left, they come from the right, and there is an authoritarian aura that the country had before the Prime Minister—it has, independent of him, today—but he has not done enough to pull it apart, and it needs to be pulled apart.

Senator SHAHEEN. And so, what extent do you think he has responded to the demonstrations? And is there anything positive that is coming out from that experience, in terms of Prime Minister Erdogan's response?

Ambassador Volker and then Dr. White.

Ambassador VOLKER Thank you, Senator. Nice to see you.

Two thoughts. One of them is that, on your direct question, his initial response to the demonstrations was to call out bigger pro-government demonstrations. And that left a lot of people worried that, "OK, this is really about majoritarianism and imposing a view rather than about listening to different voices."

Since then, because of the counterdemonstrations and a little bit of violence that took place, he has backed off a little bit, and there has been a little bit more sense of this calming down. But, under the surface, there is still a great deal of concern about what are the tendencies of this government now?

To your point on headscarves, I agree with what Congressman Wexler said. We would view this through a freedom lens, about "this is a personal right." In the context of the region, though, you have extremist Islamist groups that do try to exercise influence through universities and do try to radicalize society. Tunisia's a great example, where salafists in university have been doing that. That is quite worrying, and I think that gets to the worry that some of the more secular-minded people in Turkey are concerned about. Allowing headscarves may seem like a small step, but, to them, it opens up the window to that kind of Islamistization of society that they would be concerned about. Does not mean that we should take a strong view, one way or the other. I think individual freedom is important, but that is where the concern is coming from.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Dr. White, did you want to add to that?

Dr. WHITE. Yes, thank you.

I do not think it is at all wrong to talk about Islam and Turkey as "moderate." I know it has sort of political overtones nowadays, but, in fact, Turkish Islam is quite different from Islam in the rest of the region, because it has no central luma, it has no central school, other than, you know, this government office that, you know, runs the mosques and the prayer—the imam schools. But, it has a Sufi background, which tends to be more tolerant, to begin with. So, it does—it is not centralized, like Islam in other societies.

And also, there is a real tendency to dislike outsiders who are not Turks. And so, that comes in handy. And also that you do not speak Arabic. So, when—unless things are translated, you do not really have access to them.

So, they are kind of insulated, or they were until recently, insulated from a lot of the transnational Islamic movements that were going on. They had total control over the school system, for instance—no madrases bringing up—but, having said that, I think

it is not a good idea to see any of these issues in Turkey in terms of secular and Islamic, because—I mean, depending on which part of the population you talk to, you will get that rhetoric, but that rhetoric is that—the rhetoric that defines the “in” group as opposed to the “other” group—those who are against us and those who are with us. And they will use language, like “Islamists”—“those Islamists” versus, you know, “us, the white Turks,” as they call themselves.

But, that does not mean, as Ambassador Wexler said—but, that is really what is going on—right?—that that is just the way people talk about it to, you know, position themselves.

And I do think that one of the things that came out of Gezi that is very important that can easily be overlooked if you keep focusing on Islam, headscarves, secularism, and think of it in those terms, is the fact that that huge mass of people that came out defied those categories. And that represents, to me, where Turkey has gone. It is almost like the AKP has created its own monster. You know, I mean, the middle class has tripled, the economy has taken off, all those—you know, they are all over the globe now. So, this is a new generation. And there are also quite a few people who are older, some of whom voted for AKP—who are out there, who just feel like they do not want ideological Islam, they do not want ideological secularism anymore. They want to move democracy forward. And that’s where that impetus is going to come from.

And so, I think that that is a very, very good and important thing. And this is the first time that such a constituency has come forward in Turkey.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

I will take my second round and give Senator Risch a chance to catch his breath.

Ambassador Jeffrey, you talked a little bit about constitutional reform. There is a very important conversation happening right now in Turkey about change to the constitution, which could perhaps create a strong Presidency that could perhaps be a landing spot for Erdogan. And I guess my simple question is, How much should we care about the issue of constitutional reform from a perspective of United States interests?

Ambassador JEFFREY The decision of which kind of a country to have, or which kind of a democracy, is something that has to be left up to the population. A good example is France, after many years of a weak and ineffective parliamentary system, did go to a Presidential system in the Fifth Republic, under Charles de Gaulle, and has been considerably more successful in most of the 50 years since then.

But, in the case of Turkey, this—I mean, from the standpoint of a friend of Turkey’s, first of all, you approach any suggestions with trepidation, because the Turks are sensitive to outsiders, particularly Americans, giving them advice. On the other hand, we have a lot at stake in Turkey; we are close friends; and the important thing would be to take a look at what those constitutional changes might, in fact, be, and our views on whether this would be good for Turkey and for Turkey’s democratic development, or not. They are

only opinions, but there is nothing wrong with us giving them. Again, we would have to see what they are going to be.

It is a very dynamic process, the changing of the constitution in Turkey. The population has a big role, because there are plebiscites, and they get a chance to choose various things.

And so, I think that there is a lot of opportunity for us to make suggestions—quietly to make suggestions, if we feel strongly, publicly. In the end, they will decide. But, as friends, we can certainly give them our views.

Senator MURPHY. Congressman Wexler.

Mr. WEXLER. May I just quickly—

Senator MURPHY. Sure.

Mr. WEXLER [continuing]. Just add one thing to that?

If I were to make one recommendation to our Turkish friends, in the context of their constitution, I would respectfully suggest to them that the separation of powers that has been implemented in our country has served our Nation very well over a period of time, and particularly given the history of Turkey, both far away and present, that it would be prudent for them to adopt a system that incorporated into their constitution separation of powers in an institutional way.

Senator MURPHY. Ambassador Volker, I will ask this to you, but anybody is welcome to answer. You have talked a lot about the just really unbelievable economic growth in Turkey under Erdogan, something that he is rightfully proud of, and could be a fulcrum point with which to influence some of the decisions that he may be making on the treatment of political opposition, journalists, and generals. Has there been any evidence, so far, that foreign investment, for instance, has been affected by the response to the protests, or are we too close, at this moment, to know whether that is ultimately going to be any lever with which to further conversations with Erdogan and his government?

Ambassador VOLKER. OK, I will certainly say maybe some of my colleagues around the panel even have more depth on that than I would, but the thing I would say about that is: If you are looking at foreign investment, you are going to be looking at the numbers in Turkey, which have been quite good, and you are going to be looking at the stability of the government, which still looks quite good—

Senator MURPHY. Right.

Ambassador VOLKER [continuing]. Because of the popularity. So, even though we have had these demonstrations and pushback, I think, as an investment perspective, Turkey's going to look pretty good.

The incentive for Erdogan, really, is his own interests. I just think it is a matter of our being willing to contribute to the communication of how we see things. He is going to have a more stable Turkey, and he is going to have a longer run of rule in Turkey, to the degree that he seems responsive to the needs of all the population.

Senator MURPHY. Any other thoughts on, sort of, the direction of the economy and how it may affect his decisionmaking?

Ambassador JEFFREY. We have seen a whole series of negative economic reports out of Turkey in the last couple of months. Some

of them are based upon the reaction to the Federal Reserve's decision to stop its actions in support of the American economy, which, of course, reverberates around the entire globe. But, some of them may have been a reaction to Gezi Park. Inflation is up. There was a significant drop in the exchange markets in—trade is also down somewhat. They are a little bit worried about that, their current account basis. But, basically, it was the stock market that took the sharpest hit and leading to another round of accusations that somebody is behind this. Well, what is behind it is people, again, look not only at the democracy in Turkey, which is quite strong, and the economic underpinnings of the society, which are also quite strong, but, rather, Will the place stay stable? And to stay stable, you need to pull in everybody. As we have seen in societies that have opened the door for women in the workplace, this strengthens the society, not only with more productive workers, but it makes the social contract better and more widely accepted. It is the same thing in Turkey. These people who are protesting are Turks. They are productive members of the society. They can contribute a lot. They are not going to contribute to their potential if they are treated the way they are being treated.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you.

All right. One final question. Our understanding in relationship with Turkey has certainly been defined by Erdogan, a strong political figure who has transformed that country in so many different ways. If there is not a constitutional change that allows him to stay in power fairly soon, we will be dealing with post-Erdogan Turkey. And an open-ended question, What does that look like? What are the political forces that are likely to take his place or occupy some partial vacuum that is going to be created by an incredibly strong, incredibly charismatic, incredibly powerful leader perhaps stepping aside? I will, maybe, ask that to the two former Ambassadors first. So, maybe start with you, Ambassador Jeffrey, and then ask Ambassador Volker.

Ambassador JEFFREY The Prime Minister has said that he will not run for another term as Prime Minister. He could always decide that, after a term being out, he would come back. He can also be the head of the party and not be the Prime Minister. There are various scenarios that he could see for himself.

I think that the AKP, while it is associated with him, has many other very strong leaders. Deputy Prime Minister Arinc and President Gul are only two of the many. They have a very effective economic team. They have roots throughout the society. So, I think that party is going to be a real contender for a long time.

Again, you could see the President—or, rather, the Presidency going to Erdogan without a change to a Presidential system. The President in Turkey has teeth, constitutionally, in ways that most Presidencies in Western Europe do not have. It is not like the French Fifth Republic, but it is also not like, say, Italy. The President has considerable power and a great deal of prestige, and Prime Minister Erdogan could use that as a bully pulpit, as well.

So, there are various scenarios there, but I think most of the scenarios, in my mind, begin with the AKP holding a decisive role in Turkish society in the future.

Senator MURPHY. Ambassador Volker.

Ambassador VOLKER Very quickly. I agree with all that.

First off, the AK Party, no doubt, will remain the dominant party for some time. Without Erdogan as its titular leader, I think maybe some of the authoritarian tendencies that we have seen lately may dissipate. I do not know that those are reflected as much in the party.

I think Prime Minister Erdogan's first choice would be to enhance the powers of the President and become the President. If that does not work out, I think that we would see a phenomenon of an extremely powerful person with a great deal of influence in Turkey, through businesses and through the AK Party, outside of political power. And that would be a very different phenomenon. We would have to figure out what that really means.

Senator MURPHY. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

One of the other meetings I had a chance to do last fall when I was in Turkey was to visit with the ecumenical patriarch of the Orthodox Church, His All Holiness Bartholomew. And we discussed some of the concerns that he and the church have had in opening up the Halki Seminary in Turkey. And His All Holiness pointed out that he continues to talk with the Turkish Government about how to reopen that theological school; and certainly, the return of some of the land around it has been a very good sign.

But, can any of you comment on what the current status of that issue is?

Dr. WHITE. As far as I understand, the opening of the seminary has been balked by the question of the curriculum and whose authority the curriculum would be under, because the Turkish Government expects it to be, basically, like any other school in Turkey, that the curriculum would be under its authority and that is a base of contention.

But, there are also other issues, of course. You know, as I said before, it is two steps forward, one step back. Properties have been returned, but not all of it. There have been corrupt practices, where the state has held back some of the property or some of the money. So, there are lots of wheelings and dealings around these that are not always visible.

I would like to add that I am one of the people who expect the AK Party to split once Erdogan is—assuming the Prime Minister is no longer Prime Minister. So, I think that—I know, privately, that there is a lot of dissatisfaction, within the party, with the Prime Minister's policies. Some of those, I mentioned before, primarily the Syria policy, which has disturbed a lot of Sunnis, as well, not just the Alevis. And I think that there are people who would like to just move away. And that might be a good thing, because that might be a home for this next step in completing the democratization process that I think Turkey has embarked on.

Senator SHAHEEN. Ambassador Wexler—Congressman Wexler.

Mr. WEXLER. May I just add? In my experience, there is maybe nothing more important, quite frankly, than Senators and Representatives advocating on behalf of the Greek Church there. We are not ignored, you are not ignored. And my understanding is, while we are way, way, far away from being successful, that progress is potentially in order, but that the role of very interested people, like

yourself, is essential. And the fact that you did that, and I would say, respectfully, as you deem fit to follow up, it is a very legitimate issue that would serve Turkey's interests to open up.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I did have the opportunity to raise the issue with President Gul and also with the Foreign Minister while I was there, and I agree, it is something that is important for them to hear, that this is an issue that we and many in the world are watching very carefully and hope that it can get resolved.

Dr. White, since you raised the issue of Syria—and you all may have addressed this before I got here, so forgive me if I raise it again—but, to what extent is Turkey's role in what is happening in Syria—the number of refugees that are now in the country—how is that affecting internal politics in Turkey?

Dr. WHITE. It is absolutely crucial to internal politics, in myriad ways. One of them is just this increasing polarization that is fanned, for reasons that remain obscure to me, by Prime Minister Erdogan, who recently named a bridge after—he was going to name the Third Bridge after Sultan Selim, who is famous for massacring Alevis. So, why he would do that, in this present context, is beyond me.

The presence of al-Nusra and the jihadis, at the invitation of the Erdogan government—you know, the presence of these people on the Turkish side of the border, where they are basically living and then going back and forth to Syria, is destabilizing. In addition to the destabilization caused by the refugees and the munitions coming over the border, there are these jihadis living there who are frightening the local Sunni villagers and causing friction between Sunnis and Alevis, who really—the Turkish Alevis really have not that much to do with what is going on in Syria, but that is spilling over, and they are fleeing the border—I heard this from an MP—a CHP MP from Hatti—who goes back and forth, and from several other people who were there. But, it is an enormous problem. And, you know, that is spilling over into Turkish society.

It is a puzzle, because Prime Minister Erdogan, several years ago, was very conciliatory toward the Alevis. You know, so, again, what—in the last 2 years, something has happened, and that is the million-dollar question; nobody really knows what has happened to cause him to backtrack to such an extent that he is undermining his own positions of—that he has—like, for instance, there is—again, with Syria, there is the Kurdish issue. Right? So, the PKK and Prime Minister Erdogan have settled on a cease-fire that may actually lead to an end to this decades-old war between the PKK and the Turkish military. And this is what led lots of people to say, “Well, maybe he is such a great statesman.” But, in the meantime, after the Gezi protest began, he then called his interlocutor in this peace deal a terrorist. He then said, in public, “Well, we're not going to do X, Y, and Z,” which was part of the agreement. And so, why would he do that?

And so, after these statements, the Kurds, who had not participated in the protest initially, because they were, you know, afraid of doing damage to the peace deal, they joined the protesters. It is like this snowball, getting bigger and bigger, rolling downhill.

But, why would he do that? I do not understand—I do not think anyone does—what exactly is going on there. That is sort of, like I said, the million-dollar question.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Congressman Wexler.

Mr. WEXLER. May I just offer, maybe, a little bit different perspective? And not disagreeing with any of the facts that Dr. White presented—and surely I would not condone the naming of infrastructure, and things like that, after nefarious people—but, what is the basis of Prime Minister Erdogan's policy? The basis of his policy was objecting to the humanitarian treatment of President Assad to his people.

So, I think it is important for us, again, to contextualize what is occurring. Prime Minister Erdogan, in Turkey, hosted the original opposition to President Assad. Now, we can agree or disagree, debate our own policy, but Prime Minister Erdogan's initial policy in Syria was in contrast to what he thought was the improper violence being imposed by President Assad on his own people. I do not think we would ever criticize that.

Now, his policy may have gotten a bit distorted as things have gotten much muddier in Syria, but I think, as Americans, quite frankly, we should be very careful before we start criticizing other world leaders who have taken a fairly principled position in opposition to a whole lot of killing that's occurring in Syria. I just think we need to be careful.

Senator SHAHEEN. Is it your belief that there has been a lot of criticism of Prime Minister Erdogan because of his being willing to accept the refugees into Turkey and to be critical of what is happening in Syria?

Mr. WEXLER. Well, I think it is evident, from my understanding, that it is a controversial position that Prime Minister Erdogan has taken within his own Turkish nation regarding the policy toward Syria. Some will view his policy as being confrontational, some will view his policy as having, in essence, enticed the Syrian Government to create violence in Turkey and then causing death and destruction on the Turkish border, and maybe even exasperating the number of refugees that are now there.

I would not dare make a judgment whether it is right or wrong. Surely, I think we probably would all agree it is controversial. But, I also think we would be mistaken not to understand the somewhat admirable position, principally, that Prime Minister Erdogan took from the inception.

Ambassador JEFFREY I would like to defend Erdogan on that point, as well. There is a general consensus, everywhere but Moscow, Tehran, and Hezbollah land in southern Lebanon, that Assad should go, but there is absolutely no consensus on how the hell to do that. And the result is, everybody is sort of pointing fingers at each other. Those of you who can remember the 1990s, in Bosnia we had a very similar situation until the United States actually took a very firm, very courageous leading position, and then everybody sort of fell into line.

Prime Minister Erdogan, I believe, would be a very effective interlocutor and partner if we had a policy that we could clarify to him and he could believe in.

Senator SHAHEEN. Just to be clear, I was not being critical of the Prime Minister.

Dr. WHITE. May I just add something there? That I do not think that I was being critical of the Prime Minister in that regard. He has spoken up against the Syrian regime's depravities, despite the fact that his population is against any kind of activity—you know, Turkish activity in the region. So, he has taken a principled stand, but I do not think that is quite the same as his statements about Alevis within his own country. And I think that we need to separate those.

The Kurds are also important, because they are now—the PKK is now operating together, or joining together, with the Kurds in Syria to—it appears that they are about to declare an independent entity, or a semi-independent entity, at least join together with them. And so, it is in their interest right now to have a peace deal with Turkey, because they cannot be bothered with that distraction, at the moment, when all these good things are happening for them across the border.

And Erdogan also has a very good reason for wanting peace, because that region on the Iraqi border, that part of Turkey is very important for future economic development. The oil is going to come out through there, and so on.

So, everybody has everything to gain from this peace deal. So, again, the question is why he would be undermining it at this moment.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen.

Thank you very much to our witnesses. We could, frankly, spend about 2 days—we have only touched on all of the topics that are of importance to this relationship.

I thank Senator Shaheen, in particular, for bringing up the issue of Syria. During my last trip to Turkey, which was just a few months ago, I actually got the chance to go down and visit the refugee camp in Kilis province, visit with the governor. And you understand very quickly, when you spend a little bit of time down along the border, what sacrifice Turkey is making. We certainly have put up some of the money to build these camps, but the Turks are doing this at great risk and at great expense. It is something that we should be very, very thankful for.

And just another reminder of how important this relationship is. I spoke to Ambassador Tan several times about this hearing, and what I tried to convey to him, who is a great friend of mine and of this committee, is that with the success of the Turkish model comes high expectations. We would, frankly, wish for the problems we have in Turkey on Syria or Egypt or Iraq. This is a problem, at some level, that we welcome, because we see the potential of a trend line toward a more democratic and more inclusive Turkey.

To that end, the Ambassador has asked that we place into the record a statement that he has provided the committee from Professor Kanat at Penn State University, which, without objection, we will happily do.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, again, to our panel for being here today.

And, with that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:30 p.m. the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KILIC BUĞRA KANAT, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, PENN STATE, ERIE AND RESEARCH FELLOW AT THE SETA FOUNDATION, WASHINGTON, DC

WHERE IS TURKEY HEADED? GEZI PARK, TAKSİM SQUARE,
AND THE FUTURE OF THE TURKISH MODEL

For the last 2 months, Turkey has received increased attention due to the protests that took place in Gezi Park at Taksim Square. The protests, with their origins, duration, and forms are unprecedented in Turkish political history. They created a paradoxical situation in the sense that the original Gezi Park protesters were mostly middle-class citizens who grew in number and were empowered during the AK Party decade, due to a stable and high economic growth rate that this party has achieved in the last 10 years. The demonstrations also took place with the help of democratic reforms and the opportunities that these reforms provided during the same years. The Turkish Government—which for many analysts had an impressive record of political and legal reforms, including eliminating the practice of torture, achieving active civilian control of the military, and being in the process of solving the most significant problem of Turkish democracy, the Kurdish question—was seriously tested by these protests. It was difficult for the Turkish Government to control the events because the protesters were not a homogenous group of people with a specific set of goals and the rapid development of events in a short period of time made the protests difficult to contain and manage. More importantly, these protests represented a new form of participatory political citizenship that has exhibited itself not only in Turkey but in other countries like Brazil. This new street politics can pave the way for a more inclusive and participatory form of democracy. However, it will only succeed in doing so if the government can handle the aftermath of these protests by successfully distinguishing those who have some legitimate demands from the political opportunists, and addressing and accommodating some of these demands within the framework of a deliberative democracy.

Gezi Park Protests

The Gezi Park protests started in late May as a result of the reaction of some local groups and environmental activists to the relocation of trees in one of the central squares of Istanbul. The protests attracted widespread international attention and have been debated among the policy and scholarly circles for the last 2 months. However, in order to understand the true nature of the events, its origins and its motives, one needs to focus on how the events unfolded and how they evolved throughout June. This evolution will show different layers of protesters with different motivations and a transformation from a local environmental protest, to full-scale antigovernment demonstrations.

The project that led to the protests was part of the Taksim urban development plan that entailed the reorganization of traffic in this heavily jammed square of Istanbul, as well as the reconstruction of several historical buildings, which were destroyed in the 1940s. When it was first announced, this project in its entirety, gained popular support. However, the fact that the rebuilding of Topçu Kışlası, an Ottoman era military barracks, necessitated the relocation of some of the trees in Gezi Park, created dissatisfaction among different local groups.

Days before the relocation of the trees in Gezi Park, a small crowd of environmentalists and local residents of the Taksim neighborhood started a protest campaign by organizing sit-ins and camping in the park. The construction activity stopped due to the occupation of the park by protesters. Early in the morning on May 30, police launched a raid in order to empty the park of the protesters. The heavy handed reaction by police toward the protesters, in particular the use of pepper spray, excessive use of force, and the burning of the tents in the camp created a huge public reaction. A call by online activists to support the protesters at Gezi Park turned out to be effective and brought large crowds to Gezi Park in a short period of time.

During the next 2 days, the number of protesters coming to Taksim Square grew exponentially. Neither police nor protesters were expecting such a vast turnout at Taksim Square. The use of water cannons and excessive amount of tear gas by a limited number of police officers added to the anger of demonstrators. As some of the media outlets started to ignore the events in their broadcasts, online activists

took the stage. Although some of these online activists provided information from the field, they also contributed to the increasing level of misinformation. For example, in several instances, online activists claimed misleading information about the casualties and police brutality; this increased the level of anger and caused more people to take to the streets.

As the number of protestors grew, the message and the motivation of the protests began to differ. The core group of protestors, whose main goal was the protection of trees in Gezi Park, began to lose their voice within the greater number of protestors. This original group of Gezi Park protestors was made up of mostly middle-upper class, well-educated urbanites who were predominantly in their youth—the majority of the protesters were university students. After launching their protests, the initial small group of people was endorsed and joined by another group who had similar grievances. The main concerns of this first group of protestors were some policies that the Justice and Development Party (JDP) enacted, such as the regulation of alcohol sales and the government's policies of urban development. In conversations with the participants of the protests it became clear that most of these individuals wanted to be included in the decisionmaking process regarding urban development projects. The creative nature of their protests and the use of popular culture and humor in their messages helped them gain more support from different segments of society. Their ability to use social media effectively spread their message around the world and got the attention of the international media.

When Gezi Park was emptied, the members of this group launched a new form of protest although for a shorter period of time. However, this did not help them to develop a coherent strategy. In the absence of a clear message and strategy, international media attention created a sense of triumph for the protestors. This attention led to tactical and operational victories to shape the strategy of the Gezi Park protesters. This lack of unifying message was obvious from the slogans of protesters; the most prominent of these slogans was “Kahrolsun Bagzi Seyler” (Damn to Certain Things). Excitement, which came as a result of the empowerment the protesters felt and confusion regarding an overall message, caused these groups not to realize when they had gained a limited victory by making the Prime Minister of the country meet with protesters, listen to their demands and offer a referendum for a solution to the problem. Instead of enjoying their achievement, they continued an endless political confrontation with the government.

Later, some other groups with similar characteristics joined the protests within the ranks of this first group. For example, groups which suffered from excessive use of police force in separate occasions began to demonstrate solidarity with the Gezi Park protesters. In particular, soccer fans of the Beşiktaş Sports Club, which had clashed with the police forces a month ago, also joined the demonstrations. The support of these additional groups also served to expand the location of the protests and extended the protests from Taksim towards Beşiktaş. Because this first group lacked organization, leadership and thus a nonviolent discipline, there were some violent incidents in the first few days of protests such as damage to public property and burning down public busses.

The second group of protestors, was made up of members and sympathizers of the Republican Peoples' Party (RPP), the main opposition party in the country. In addition, some other ultrasecular and ultranationalist groups who were increasingly disenchanted by the political system joined the demonstrations in the next few days. In particular, the RPP decided to cancel a previously planned political rally in Istanbul, encouraging their followers to support the Gezi Park demonstrations, resulting in a transformation in the makeup of protesters. In terms of numbers, these groups started to dominate the demonstrations not only in Istanbul but also helped to spread it to different cities around Turkey through their local organizations and branches. The impact that a small number of protestors in Gezi Park provided an opportunity for the RPP, who has been paralyzed by internal divisions and ideological clashes in the last few years, to gain visibility in the public sphere.

The main motivations of this second group of demonstrators were twofold. Some of these demonstrators had grievances related to democratic reforms of the government in recent years. These reforms caused some old guards of the state establishment to lose their privilege, power, and status. Especially the end of military tutelage made some members of these groups disenchanted. In addition, some of these ultranationalist groups were against recent attempts by the Turkish Government to resolve the Kurdish question through reconciliation. Secondly, there was an increasing amount of despair and hopelessness among the members of the RPP and other opposition groups. In the last five elections, the ruling Justice and Development Party (JDP) won landslide victories, and public opinion polls demonstrated the continuation of this trend in the coming local and general elections. In the absence of any hope to defeat the ruling party at the ballot box, some members of this second

group started to shift their attention to the streets rather than the democratic process as a way of gaining supporters and creating mobilization at the grassroots level.

With the involvement of these groups, the sheer number of demonstrators in the RPP and ultrasecular groups transformed the nature of demonstrations. A more heterogeneous group of demonstrators emerged and the nature of the protests evolved from environmentalism and protesting urban development plans to antigovernment rallies. The creative opposition of the first group of Gezi Park protesters was soon hijacked by this second group of ultrasecular and ultranationalists groups. The size and organizational strength of the second group overshadowed the earlier, more inclusive nature of the original protesters. This situation also led to some discontent among the first group of protesters and even some skirmishes among different groups emerged during the protests. For instance, when ultrasecular groups and the members of the RPP chanted slogans such as, "We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal," the first group protested and ridiculed the militaristic and ultrasecular slogans by chanting, "We are the soldiers of Mustafa Keser," a well-known folk music singer.

In addition to difference in ideology, the first two groups of protesters were in direct confrontation regarding their attitude toward others. For example, the anti-Western and Euro-skeptic attitude of the RPP and ultrasecularists were in contradiction with the more globalized groups in Gezi Park whose most important source of legitimacy was the universality of their message and demands. Later, during conversations with some members that supported Gezi Park's original protesters, they expressed anger toward the infiltration by ultrasecular and ultranationalist groups to their movement. After the addition of these groups to the protesters, the government's reaction became more severe. While the messages of the first group were lost in translation, the communication between the government and the first group was interrupted by the addition of the second group. With no formal organization, no leadership and no spokesperson to express the limited goals that the members of the first group endorsed, the messages and protests of Gezi Park started to be represented and even owned by the main opposition party.

During this period the government started to handle the crisis by responding to the RPP, which further mobilized members and supporters of the RPP and created further anger among the original Gezi Park protesters. This situation created a trilateral tension in which, the JDP reflected its reaction to RPP, whereas the RPP was channeling the political dynamism from the first group to criticize the JDP. Meanwhile, Gezi Park protesters reacted both to the JDP government for dismissing their demands and the RPP for trying to own the movement. This created lack of dialogue between the ruling party and protesters for the first few days of the demonstration during which it could have been contained. In fact, although at the beginning, the lack of formal organization and leadership in the first group was depicted as the strength of the movement, in a short period of time with the inclusion of the RPP, the absence of any organizational skills and enterprise turned out to be a weakness of the movement.

The most destructive groups among this heterogeneous group of protesters were the third group of marginal leftists who tried to use the movement and protests for their own narrow and radical goals. These groups were mostly responsible for the destruction and looting of some of the stores around Taksim and Beşiktaş. They not only started to throw rocks at the police but also attempted to break in Dolmabahçe Palace, the location of the Prime Minister's Istanbul office. The members of these groups who were seasoned in clashes with police and manipulating the crowds, started to occupy Taksim Square adjacent to Gezi Park. In most of the instances these marginal leftist groups used peaceful protesters as human shields, making them difficult to locate. As the level of violence and provocation of these groups increased, the police reaction. Especially during the last days of the demonstrations, while Gezi Park was still occupied, these groups started to use rocks, knives, and Molotov cocktails in their clashes with police.

After the initial mishandling of the crisis, the Turkish Government tried to make a distinction between these groups, promising to listen to legitimate demands about Gezi Park. However, in most instances it was difficult to distinguish these groups from the Gezi Park protesters. These groups also added to the already existing disruption of communication between the Turkish Government and the first group of protesters. The obvious goal of these groups was to overthrow the democratically elected government through illegal means and violence. Although there was not a unifying ideology or goal among these groups, and although there were sporadic clashes among different cliques, the belief for a possibility to overthrow the government unified them at Taksim Square. These individuals had different motivations than the first two groups of protesters. They were upset with the government mostly for ideological reasons, blaming the Turkish Government to be a puppet of the

United States and imperialist forces. Around Taksim square it was possible to see the posters of Mao Zedong, Stalin, and Lenin. Some of these groups were also reactive to Turkish policy toward Syria since the beginning of the uprising in this country. They were critical of the Turkish Government for taking a position against Bashar al-Assad's brutal crackdown of the opposition alongside the United States. They were also angered by the increasing strength of the market economy in Turkey and in their slogans and flags it was possible to see their praises for socialism and communism.

The spread of the movement to multiple cities and the emergence of different layers of groups made it difficult for the Turkish Government to diagnose the events. The rapid development of events, its unexpected nature, and the short timeframe created every condition for having problems managing a crisis situation. After the initial analysis of the events, the Turkish Government attempted to distinguish these groups by trying to communicate with the first group of protesters. President Abdullah Gül and Vice Prime Minister Bülent Arınç both stated that the demands and messages of the demonstrators have been heard and would be considered. There was even an apology to the Gezi Park protesters by Vice Prime Minister Arınç, who met representatives of the first group of protesters. Later, when he returned from his trip to Northern Africa, Prime Minister Erdoğan also met with the protesters in person for a 4.5-hour-long meeting. However, this did not help the resolution of the problem and repair the damage of relations between the government and the first group of protesters.

After one of these meetings, Prime Minister Erdoğan announced that the government would respect the court injunction blocking the redevelopment project. If the court decided to remove the injunction, the government promised that it would hold a plebiscite, which proved insufficient to allay the concerns of the protesters. Dissatisfied, protesters announced that they would continue to occupy the park and hold demonstrations, which resulted in further police action to clear the park and Taksim Square.

The Political Consequences of the Protests

The protests demonstrate several issues regarding the state of Turkish democracy and politics. First of all, the most significant lesson of these events for Turkish democracy was the necessity of a viable opposition for a functioning democratic system within a country. While this has long been a topic of debate in Turkey, the Gezi Park incidents demonstrated the dramatic consequences of the lack of a strong opposition party. During the Gezi Park events, especially within the first group of demonstrators, the main reason behind going out into the streets was not only their anger toward the ruling party, but also their frustration with the incapability of the opposition parties to represent them and voice their concern through democratic channels. Since the rise of the JDP, there has been a debate in the political spectrum regarding the absence of an alternative to the JDP. The economic and political success of the party, combined with the failure of the opposition parties to become a viable alternative for the ruling party, created a hopelessness and sense of frustration among some segments of the Turkish society. Under these circumstances, the crowds went to the streets to express their political demands and grievances. However, if not contained and managed successfully, these events could be the precedent to a problematic situation for democratic institutions in countries, such as Turkey. The belief that taking to the streets can be an alternative to the electoral ballot can result in dire consequences for the functioning of democracy in a country as well as for social relations among members of different factions.

Secondly, the protests demonstrated the emergence of a new form of political citizenship that demands a more participatory political structure. Part of this demand comes from lack of trust and confidence in political parties that are supposed to represent the political views of these citizens. Just like the Occupy Wall Street movements, some segments of the society were increasingly disenchanted with the political process and political parties. However, the other more important cause is the development of social media and increased opportunity for individuals to politically express themselves. The spread of demand for a more direct form of participatory democracy is becoming more universal. The increase of street politics in different countries as well as transnational movements will be significant drives in the politics of democratic countries in the coming decades. This situation has demonstrated itself in street protests in Brazil and Turkey in recent days.

While both are examples of protest in the name of democratic representation, it is imperative to draw a distinction between this push toward a more participatory citizenship from the people's movements in more authoritarian countries, such as the Arab revolutions that have taken place since 2011. Unlike the Arab revolutions, these demonstrations took place in democratic countries against the ruling parties

who are democratically elected and have democratic legitimacy. Whereas the Arab revolutions stood against authoritarian regimes with no popular mandate, the first group of Gezi Park protesters advocated a qualitative transformation in the nature of democracy, from a majoritarian one to a pluralist democracy. The street protests and this new type of political citizenship will likely broaden its scope in the coming years. The universal language, transnational networks and the contagious nature of these protests demonstrate that other democracies may also face similar movements in the future. Governments in power need to be responsive to the demands of these groups and adjust to this new language of politics.

Thirdly, the protests also demonstrated a sociological reality in the context of Turkey. Gezi Park showed that the most significant force behind the protests is the rise of a new middle class in Turkey. Significant economic growth in the last 10 years contributed to the empowerment of a new middle class and an increase in their numbers and stature among different segments of the society. This phenomenon is especially apparent among the youth which had grown up within these middle-class families; they have proved to be more educated, economically better off, and increasingly globalized. Because of the lack of political organizations, these groups are having difficulty finding representation in the mainstream political framework. This middle-class mobilization will be almost inevitable in countries with stable and high economic growth in the coming years.

Finally, regarding the democratization in Turkey, the events demonstrated that democratization is a moving target and the increasing demands and expectations of the people make a new set of adjustments and recalibrations in democratic reforms necessary. The Gezi Park events launched a new wave of debates among policymakers and scholars regarding state-society relations and a more participatory form of democracy. Gezi Park was unique in Turkish political history in regards to its causes, development, and will also be unique in terms of its consequences. The debates during its aftermath will contribute to the advancement of the level of democracy in Turkey and will be taken into consideration during the creation of a new constitution.

The Impact of Gezi Park for the "Turkish Model"

Before deliberating on the impact of Gezi Park on what we call the "Turkish model," it is imperative to discuss the origin of the model debates. Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic, Turkey has often been presented as a model for Islamic countries around the world. The last batch of this model debate took place when the Central Asian Republics declared their independence. Many scholars in the United States and European countries depicted Turkey as a model for these countries. In these discussions, the concept of being a model was composed of Turkey's democratic system, secular character, and pro-Western orientation.

The model state debate was revived after the start of the people's movements in the Middle East in December 2010. Although it was never pronounced by the Turkish state, the debate on the Turkish model was developed by Western scholars during the Arab revolutions. The democratization experience in Turkey can be a source of inspiration, and if needed, a motivation for the democratic movements of Middle Eastern countries. Otherwise, every country should have their own democratization experience and needs to develop its own unique path toward that goal by considering different variables related to politics, culture, economy, and society.

This debate on the Turkish model fails to account for several nuances between the Turkish case and revolutions in the Arab countries. First of all, the proponents of this model indicated several pillars of the Turkish model, including the development in the field of democratization, stable economic growth, and independent foreign policy in the last 10 years of the Justice and Development Party. However, Turkish democracy reached this level after 50 years of experience with parliamentary democracy which had been interrupted every decade by the military at least once. The last one of these military interventions, though indirectly, took place in 2007 when the Turkish military declared an ultimatum in regards to the Presidential elections. It would be unfair to compare the first years of the democratization of Middle Eastern countries with the latest years of the 60-year-long democratization experience of Turkey.

Secondly, the argument itself has a problem due to the state of Turkish democracy. The active civilian control of the military was achieved in Turkey only a few years ago. Several coup plans that have been unearthed in recent years show that until recently, some segments of the Turkish military were planning another coup against the democratically elected Government of Turkey. Moreover, the ruling party of Turkey was about to be closed down by the Constitutional Court in 2009, and actually failed to do so because of a single vote. If this decision was taken, the party would be closed down and the prominent leaders of the JDP would be banned

from running for public office. Furthermore, there are some serious issues of human rights and liberties that need to be addressed, including the ban for women with headscarves to become government employees and the restrictions that antiterrorism laws and regulations brought, which have become important impediments of the freedom of expression and the press in Turkey.

However, these problems do not mean that Turkey is, or is becoming, an authoritarian country; rather it is on the path toward a more advanced level of democratization. The solution of the Kurdish problem through reconciliation and a new civilian constitution would contribute to this advancement. By taking into consideration some legitimate demands of the Gezi Park protests, the government would move toward a better place in terms of basic rights and liberties. This would not only create a better democracy in Turkey, but also make Turkey a better source of inspiration for countries in the Middle East. In particular, for countries such as Egypt, which has been experiencing a reverse wave of democratization in the last month, the Turkish experience provides a lot of important lessons on how to deal with a tutelage system. In the future, all of the new and mature democracies in the region need to learn a sense of respect for democratic institutions and processes, and for more inclusive forms of democracy. In return, the Gezi Park protesters and those who are disenchanted from the political parties in Turkey have to find a way to express themselves within the legitimate channels of democratic processes. The streets are not an alternative to the ballot box and power transitions are only meaningful and peaceful when they occur through democratic means. If Turkey can handle this crisis by reaching a more advanced level of democratization, it will be an example of how other countries can handle the problems of this new street politics.

