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Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for inviting me to this timely and important hearing on Turkey at this crucial juncture in U.S.-Turkish relations. I will present to you a summary of my prepared remarks.

Where do U.S.-Turkish relations and Turkey’s ties with the West stand today, almost eight years after the Justice and Development Party (AKP) took power in Ankara? The AKP government recently voted against sanctions on Iran at the UN Security Council, and has established intimate links with Hamas to the detriment of the Palestinian Authority. Ties with Israel are now at an all time low, after the unfortunate flotilla incident in which the Israelis killed nine Turkish citizens—this very sad act will not be forgotten in the Turkish psyche for a long time.

At the same time, Turkey’s accession into the European Union (EU), an anchor that ties the country to the West, is stalled for reasons having to do as much with French objections to Ankara’s EU membership as with the AKP’s lack of commitment to European values. On this side of the Atlantic, opinion polls show that since 2002, the United States has become one of the most hated countries in Turkey. And in practical terms, although Ankara and Washington continue to cooperate on Iraq and Afghanistan, the AKP government and the Obama administration are at odds over key issues such as countering Iran’s nuclearization and the Arab-Israeli peace process. Finally, Turkey has yet to fully cooperate on Eurasian pipeline politics — financial interests and a model friendship between Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian leader Vladimir Putin have driven a wedge between Ankara and Washington.

After it came to power in 2002, the AKP promoted EU accession and pragmatic ties with the United States and Israel, while at the same time suggesting that Turkey had become a “center country,” a regional power. In due course, the AKP jettisoned Turkey’s traditional role as the voice of the West in the region. Turkey indeed deserves to be a regional power; it has NATO’s second largest army and is a G20 nation. But, have

AKP's policies really made Turkey a regional power, the "center country," that can talk to the West and all the Middle Eastern states at the same time? The answer is no.

Here is what happened: In 2002, just as it promoted close ties with the West, the party openly bashed the United States and other Western countries. Some dismissed such AKP rhetoric as domestic politicking, while others did not. Now, this rhetoric has shaped the minds of a majority of Turks — around 95 percent of Turks do not read or write languages other than Turkish. Many see the world as reported to them and debated by their government. In fact, anti-Western rhetoric has been the periscope of the AKP's *foreign policy vision, a vision that does not consider Turkey a member of the Transatlantic community.*

After reining in democratic checks and balances, for instance slapping politically motivated tax-fines on the media and using illegal wiretaps to intimidate its opponents, the AKP now feels comfortable in power, which is why the party's foreign policy now follows its erstwhile anti-Western rhetoric. *In other words, what happens in Ankara and Istanbul does not stay in Ankara and Istanbul.* As the AKP has become more emboldened at home, it has felt freer to follow the foreign policy it always desired.

Mr. Chairman, *anti-Western rhetoric— the periscope sticking out of the water— should have alerted us to the AKP's submerged foreign policy.* That foreign policy has now surfaced, the submarine is out of the water and *it is not taking Turkey into the EU or any closer to the U.S.*

Mr. Chairman, allow me to begin with EU accession, for I think this ought to be the most pressing issue in Turkish foreign policy and U.S.-Turkish ties. If Turkey's EU accession had been stalled in the pre-September 11 world, I would have said that was a real shame. Back then, Turkey had room to be outside the EU but still part of Europe and the West. Now, with the EU pushing its boundaries into the Balkans up to Turkey, and with Al Qaeda pursuing a war between the "Muslim world" and the West, a gray area in which Turkey can position itself no longer exists; it must become an EU member and part of the West, or else fold into the Muslim world, as per Al Qaeda's vision.

I have bad news: Turkey's EU entry is not on the horizon. Last week, President Barack Obama partly blamed the EU for supposedly driving Turkey away from the West by stalling the country's EU membership. However, *the real problem is that the Islamist AKP doesn't share the dream of a liberal, Western Turkey.* While I have always supported Ankara's membership bid, the time has come to admit that the reason Turkey will not join the EU any time soon is not because of European reservations toward a Muslim country, but because of the Turkish government's reservations toward European values.

Things looked much different when Brussels opened membership talks with Ankara in 2005. At the time, the government seemed committed to joining the EU. The AKP, whose predecessor, the Islamist Welfare Party (Refah), was banned in 1998, emerged in 2001 with an avowedly non-Islamist platform. The party jettisoned Refah's anti-European

rhetoric (Refah had dismissed the EU as a "capitalist and Christian club") and instead embraced the accession process.

Despite the AKP's recent re-branding as pro-Western, it has no strategic view of EU membership. It used the EU accession process only as a tactical ploy to shed its Islamist image, gain Western legitimacy, and curb the power of the secular military. Having thus made the AKP palatable for Brussels bureaucrats and liberal Turks alike, in 2005 the AKP dropped the EU process as soon as it was expected to implement tough reforms towards full membership. In a public demonstration of its lack of interest in Europe, the AKP declared 2005 the "Africa Year."

As a result, Turkey's reform process did not just stop, it deteriorated. As the government resorted to jailing critical journalists under the pretext that they were planning a coup, Turkey dropped 20 spots in the Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index. In last year's survey, Turkey ranked only 122 out of 175 countries, compared to 102 in 2008. Moreover, the AKP has used plot allegations — most infamously in the so-called Ergenekon case — to target its political opponents in the media, military and academia.

The AKP has specifically targeted independent media. After Milliyet, a paper owned by Dogan Media, an independent media group, reported alleged AKP links to an Islamist charity in Germany, the government slapped Dogan with a record \$3.3 billion tax fine last year, a sum that exceeds the company's worth. *Under the AKP, Turkey is becoming more like Russia than Europe in terms of government-media relations.*

Given these shortcomings, skeptics of Turkey's EU membership, such as French President Nicolas Sarkozy, cannot be simply discarded as prejudiced. The AKP could have responded by adopting a strategic view of EU accession; swift reforms could have embarrassed Mr. Sarkozy into dropping his objections, lest France be seen as an anti-Muslim country. Instead, the AKP dredged out complaints about Europe's anti-Turkish resentments.

Allow me Mr. Chairman, now to *turn to the Middle East*. At the same time that the AKP dropped the EU process, it engrossed itself in regional conflicts in the Middle East. Herein lies the problem with the AKP's foreign policy. There is an incongruity between the AKP's get-involved-in-all-conflicts foreign policy in the Middle East and the party's alleged commitment to EU accession: *When everything is a priority, nothing is, and no country has ever gotten into the EU without making membership a top domestic and foreign policy priority.*

The AKP has made a *180 degree turn in Turkey's Middle East policy*, moving closer to Iran and its proxies, Syria and Sudan, while cooling off towards Israel. What motivates this policy are not religious sympathies, as some people suggest, but rather an *ideological view of the world*. *Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his government believe that Samuel Huntington was right, that there is a clash of civilizations. Only they are on the side of the Islamists, not the West.*

The AKP believes that "Turkey's traditionally strong ties with the West represent a process of alienation." The executive summary of the party's foreign policy is as follows: "Since the end of the Ottoman Empire, Muslims have gotten the short end of the stick, and the AKP is here to correct all that."

The AKP won't correct all wrongs against Muslims, though. This is because Islamism--a political ideology that sees Muslims in perpetual conflict with the West and with "non-believers"--and not Islam, guides the AKP's foreign policy. The party will therefore favor other Islamists over Muslims that don't share their Manichean worldview. Thus, the AKP will forgive and even defend the ills of Islamist regimes against fellow Muslims, such as the Sudanese genocide of Darfuris or Tehran's suppression of its own population. Likewise, it will support Islamist Hamas and its violent goals, but not the secular Palestinian Authority or peaceful Palestinian movements.

This selective solidarity also applies to ills committed against Muslims by non-Muslims, as long as those non-Muslims are anti-American or anti-European. That's because political Islam has made the strategic decision that the enemy of its enemy is its friend. Hence, Russia will get a pass regardless of how many Chechens it kills. Turkish-Russian ties are hence flourishing.

Since 2002, *the AKP has routinely taken foreign policy steps conflicting with U.S. policy*: the party has invited Hamas to Ankara, and sponsored fundraisers for terrorist groups — in the last three years alone, at least seven AKP-backed Hamas conferences and fundraisers were held in Istanbul. In addition, the AKP has pursued rapprochement with Syria, and even defended Tehran's nuclear ambitions while simultaneously whitewashing the Sudanese genocide in Darfur. The party has also bashed Israel in international forums, canceled joint-military exercises with Israel while conducting new exercises with Syria, and has promoted and fanned anti-Semitism at home. Finally, the AKP has surrendered Turkey's EU accession, and has given firm commitments to Russia for pipeline development programs, jettisoning a potential partnership with the United States. In other words, *the AKP has damaged all the anchors that tie Turkey to the West*, acts against U.S. interests, and chooses instead to build close ties with anti-Western regimes.

Mr. Chairman, there is perhaps *little Washington can do to change the AKP's foreign policy outlook*. In fact, thus far, some of Washington's policies have, perhaps unwittingly, helped empower this development in the first place. Believing that the supposedly reformed Islamist AKP could be a bridge-builder between Western and Muslim countries, some have promoted the AKP as a special mediator in the region, while shielding it from those critics who worried early on about the AKP's worldview. In 2002, many people *celebrated the idea that the AKP was the tribune of the West to the Muslim world*; now it appears that *the AKP is the tribune of a politically charged "Muslim world" to the West*.

Allowing such an Islamist catalyst into the Middle East's conflicts produced and will continue to produce devastating results. *Because the AKP sees a clash of civilizations everywhere it looks, it cannot be an impartial mediator*. For example, when the AKP

was allowed to interject itself between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, or the United States and Iran, it quickly became an ombudsman for the Islamist side, rising in their defense. After eight years of increasingly authoritarian AKP rule at home, many Turks now also see the world through the Islamists' eyes of a civilizational clash.

Here is the conclusion, Mr. Chairman: the AKP's foreign policy vision has failed. Turkey has moved away from Europe, and in doing this, it has not become a regional power for after eight years of AKP rule, Turkey has not become trusted mediator in Middle East issues. Much to the chagrin of those who want to see a powerful Turkey, Turkey has not become the "center country" which bridges the East and the West, can talk to both Israelis and Palestinians, and garners the trust of both Iran and the West. Washington needs to face the reality that, despite the country's NATO membership, Turkey can no longer be considered a Western ally under the AKP. In order to contain the AKP's Islamist influence, not just in Turkey but also in the region, the West must first deny the Erdogan government the influence and prestige that comes with being promoted as a regional mediator.

Until the Gaza flotilla incident, U.S. administrations mostly ignored Turkey's drift away from the West for a variety of reasons, ranging from denial to hopes of gaining Turkish assistance in Iraq. Washington can no longer afford an ambiguous stance towards Turkey. If Washington does not confront the emboldened AKP, *the party's nuisance value to U.S. interests, such as on Arab-Israeli peace and Iran's nuclearization, will exceed its added value.*

Mr. Chairman, there is a way forward: Turkey remains a multi-party democracy, and only one-third of Turkey's population supports the AKP. Since the opposition Republican Peoples Party (CHP) elected a new, charismatic social democrat leader, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the AKP has been sliding in polls. As a result, since the Gaza flotilla incident, the AKP has been employing vehement anti-Western rhetoric, using hysteria to boost its popularity. The AKP will continue to use populist, anti-Western foreign policy to boost its popularity in the run up to next year's elections.

This suggests that the U.S. must develop a nuanced policy towards Turkey, which would involve scaling back the AKP and developing a real defense against its policies. The alternative, a policy that targets the whole of Turkey, such as passing the Armenian resolution or blocking military sales, would only push the Turks into the Islamists' arms, fulfilling the AKP's objective. In fact, what to do with Turkey first begs the question of what not to do with Turkey. In light of the AKP's campaign of rallying Turkish public opinion behind its anti-Western foreign policy, the cardinal rule of the new era is simple: do not offend the Turks, or the Turkish republic, in other words, do no harm to Turkey.

Then, it is time to signal to the AKP that its anti-Western policies have a cost. To this end, Washington should deny the AKP political access —this will cost the party prestige that matters greatly in Turkish politics. So far, the AKP has been invited to Washington even as it transgresses U.S. policy in multiple areas, creating the impression that either Washington approves of its policies or considers the party indispensable to U.S. foreign

policy. One component of U.S. power is in granting meetings and face-time to representatives of foreign states and institutions. This can be leveraged by denying the AKP access while maintaining bureaucratic contacts. At the very least this policy might expose the AKP's anti-Western orientation, should the party continue on its current trajectory, while encouraging those Turks in the opposition.

Mr. Chairman, *a final part of this new U.S. policy is engaging the Turks* while tackling the AKP's policies. This can be done through initiatives that target the media, NGOs, political parties and business lobbies. This requires close contact between U.S. officials and these various institutions. The policy should also build around a major charm offensive by the U.S. government in hopes of winning over the hearts and minds of the individual Turk. Anti-Americanism in Turkey is becoming a structural problem, and if the U.S. does not win the battle of public opinion, the populace will only grow in support for the AKP's anti-Western foreign policy. In order to win over the individual Turk, Washington should consider launching massive exchange programs for journalists, scholars, rising politicians, opinion-makers, and students, as well as increase its public diplomacy presence in Turkey, all while confronting the AKP's policies and using rhetoric to ensure liberal democracy in Turkey. This can be done by focusing on press and internet freedoms and continued gender equality, *sine qua nons* of the future of Turkish democracy.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, for giving me the opportunity to testify in front of the Committee.