



**Testimony before the  
International Relations Committee,  
Subcommittee On Europe  
United States House of Representatives**

**“TURKEY’S FUTURE DIRECTION AND  
U.S.–TURKEY RELATIONS”**

**October 1, 2003**

**A Statement by**

**Bulent Aliriza  
Director, Turkey Project, CSIS**

MR. CHAIRMAN, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO TALK ABOUT TURKEY AND US-TURKISH RELATIONS.

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO COMMEND YOU AND THE SUBCOMMITTEE FOR FOCUSING ON THIS IMPORTANT SUBJECT AT THIS CRITICAL JUNCTURE.

MR. CHAIRMAN, THE OLD ADAGE THAT TURKEY IS AN EASTERN COUNTRY IF YOU COME TO IT FROM THE WEST AND A WESTERN COUNTRY IF YOU COME FROM THE EAST HAS NEVER BEEN MORE APT.

LITERALLY STRADDLING THE ASIAN AND EUROPEAN CONTINENTS, TURKEY HAS BEEN COMMITTED, PARTICULARLY SINCE KEMAL ATATURK CREATED THE MODERN TURKISH REPUBLIC OUT OF THE ASHES OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE 80 YEARS AGO, TO SYNTHESIZING ITS CULTURE, TRADITIONS AND RELIGION, WHICH ORIGINATE IN THE EAST, WITH A COMMITMENT TO JOIN THE WESTERN COMMUNITY OF NATIONS.

AS A SECULAR, FREE MARKET DEMOCRACY, MEMBER OF NATO AND ASPIRANT FOR EUROPEAN UNION MEMBERSHIP, WITH A MOSLEM POPULATION, TURKEY WOULD APPEAR TO BE THE IDEAL LINK OR BRIDGE BETWEEN THE WESTERN AND THE ISLAMIC WORLDS.

HOWEVER, PARTICULARLY SINCE SEPTEMBER 11, RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY'S TWO WORLDS HAVE BECOME EVEN MORE STRAINED, MAKING TURKEY'S POSITION ON THE FAULT LINE BETWEEN CIVILIZATIONS MORE IMPORTANT BUT ALSO MORE COMPLICATED.

MR. CHAIRMAN, PERHAPS THE BEST EXAMPLE OF THE COMPLEXITY OF THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FOR TURKEY WAS THE VOTE IN THE TURKISH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON MARCH 1.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WITH ANY DEGREE OF ACCURACY HOW MUCH THE TURKISH PUBLIC AND TURKISH PARLIAMENTARIANS, PARTICULARLY THOSE FROM THE RULING JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY (JDP), WHICH HAS ITS ANCESTRY IN THE ISLAMIST POLITICAL MOVEMENT, WERE AFFECTED BY THE NEW GLOBAL STRAINS, BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY FAILED TO MUSTER THE REQUIRED NUMBER OF VOTES TO ALLOW THE US TO OPEN A NORTHERN FRONT IN THE WAR AGAINST IRAQ.

HOWEVER, IN LINE WITH THE REST OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD, OPINION POLLS IN TURKEY PRIOR TO THE VOTE CONSISTENTLY INDICATED STRONG OPPOSITION TO SUPPORTING THE US IN THE IMMINENT CONFLICT WITH IRAQ.

THE VOTE WAS A MAJOR REVERSAL FOR THE JDP GOVERNMENT WHICH HAD RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE IMMINENT CONFLICT, BUT FORWARDED THE MOTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OVERRIDING NEED FOR COOPERATION WITH TURKEY'S MOST IMPORTANT ALLY.

THE JDP HAD EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY IT ENJOYED IN THE ASSEMBLY WOULD ENSURE PASSAGE.

HOWEVER, IT HAD COME INTO OFFICE ONLY A FEW MONTHS EARLIER AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY, RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN, HAD STILL NOT TAKEN OVER THE PREMIERSHIP.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE POWERFUL TURKISH MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT REFRAINED FROM GIVING AN UNAMBIGUOUSLY CLEAR RECOMMENDATION IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION, WHILE THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND THE MAIN OPPOSITION IN THE ASSEMBLY, THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY, WERE OPENLY AGAINST THE MOTION.

HOWEVER, THE REALITY IS THAT ULTIMATELY THE VOTE WENT DOWN BECAUSE OF JDP DEFECTIONS.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE VOTE WAS A SHOCK TO THE US ADMINISTRATION, WHICH HAD INCLUDED ACCESS FOR US GROUND FORCES THROUGH TURKEY IN ITS WAR PLANS.

TURKEY SUBSEQUENTLY ALLOWED THE USE OF ITS AIR SPACE AND PROVIDED IMPORTANT HELP THROUGH OTHER MEANS AS ERDOGAN AND FOREIGN MINISTER GUL, WHO VISITED WASHINGTON IN JULY, HAVE REPEATEDLY STRESSED.

HOWEVER, WHILE THE VISIT OF SECRETARY OF STATE COLIN POWELL TO ANKARA BACK IN APRIL, ALONG WITH THE INCLUSION OF A \$1 BILLION GRANT FOR TURKEY IN THE SUPPLEMENTAL REQUEST, UNDERLINED CONTINUING US INTEREST IN TURKEY, THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP IS NOT FULLY BACK ON TRACK.

SEVEN MONTHS AFTER THE VOTE, THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT IS ONCE AGAIN MOVING CAUTIOUSLY TOWARDS ANOTHER MAJOR DECISION WITH SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS FOR US-TURKISH RELATIONS.

HOWEVER, SENDING TURKISH TROOPS TO SUPPORT THE US IN STABILIZING POST-WAR IRAQ IS NOT BACKED BY THE MAJORITY OF TURKISH VOTERS, THE PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION OR THE PRESIDENT, AND THE JDP'S HANDLING OF THIS ISSUE WILL HAVE INEVITABLE DOMESTIC AS WELL AS EXTERNAL REVERBERATIONS. I WILL LOOK AT THE EXTERNAL DIMENSION MORE CLOSELY LATER BUT LET US LOOK FIRST AT THE TURKISH DOMESTIC PICTURE.

MR. CHAIRMAN, PARALLEL TO THE MAJOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THERE HAS ALSO BEEN IMPORTANT DOMESTIC CHANGE IN TURKEY.

THE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF NOVEMBER 2002, WHICH CAN BE CHARACTERIZED AS A POLITICAL EARTHQUAKE, CRUSHED THE THREE POLITICAL PARTIES, WHICH HAD GONE TO THE POLLS IN COALITION GOVERNMENT, ALONG WITH THE MAIN OPPOSITION PARTY. NONE OF THESE PARTIES, WHICH HAD DOMINATED TURKISH POLITICS FOR DECADES, WERE ABLE TO GAIN PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION.

THE JDP, WHICH HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED ONLY IN AUGUST 2001, SWEEPED INTO OFFICE AS TURKEY'S FIRST SINGLE PARTY GOVERNMENT IN OVER A DECADE ON THE BACK OF A MASSIVE BACKLASH AGAINST THE CHRONIC MISMANAGEMENT OF THE ECONOMY, CRONYISM AND CORRUPTION BY GAINING ALMOST 2/3 OF THE SEATS IN THE ASSEMBLY.

MOST OF THE LEADERS OF THE JDP WERE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY AND THE WELFARE PARTY WHICH SERVED IN PREVIOUS COALITION GOVERNMENTS BUT WERE SUBSEQUENTLY BANNED FOR ISLAMIST ACTIVITIES.

IN FACT, PRIOR TO ITS DISSOLUTION, THE WELFARE PARTY WAS OUSTED FROM GOVERNMENT IN 1997 FOLLOWING PRESSURE FROM THE TURKISH MILITARY. COMMITTED TO THE PRESERVATION OF TURKISH SECULARISM, TURKEY'S ARMED FORCES HAVE CARRIED OUT FOUR INTERVENTIONS AS PART OF THEIR BROADLY DEFINED MISSION TO DEFEND THE REPUBLIC.

UNDERSTANDABLY, THE JDP GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN STRESSING ITS BREAK WITH THE ISLAMIST MOVEMENT AND SPECIFICALLY REJECTS THE ISLAMIC LABEL.

ITS LEADERS INSTEAD DEFINE THE JDP AS A CONSERVATIVE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND AS THE HEIR TO THE DEMOCRAT PARTY - WHICH CAME TO POWER IN 1950 WITH TURKEY'S ENTRY INTO THE ERA OF GENUINE MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY AND SERVED FOR A DECADE BEFORE THE MILITARY COUP OF 1960 - AND TURGUT OZAL'S MOTHERLAND PARTY - WHICH CAME INTO OFFICE IN THE FIRST ELECTIONS AFTER THE 1980 COUP.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE JDP HAS BEEN AVOIDING THE INFLAMMATORY STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS, WHICH CHARACTERIZED THE TURKISH ISLAMIST PARTIES IN GOVERNMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, ALTHOUGH THE WIVES OF MOST OF THE JDP LEADERS WEAR ISLAMIC HEADSCARVES, THE JDP HAS NOT MADE ANY MOVES TO EASE THE EXISTING RESTRICTIONS.

HOWEVER, AS WE MOVE TOWARDS THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF ITS ELECTION VICTORY, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE JDP HAS TRANSFORMED THE TURKISH POLITICAL LANDSCAPE IN A LASTING MANNER. THIS WILL DEPEND TO A GREAT EXTENT ON THE SUCCESS OF THE ONGOING SUBJECTIVE REDEFINITION BY ERDOGAN AND HIS COLLEAGUES WHICH IS DIRECTED AT THE MAJORITY OF THE ELECTORATE WHO DID NOT VOTE FOR THEM AND RETAIN LINGERING SUSPICIONS ABOUT THE ULTIMATE AIMS OF THE JDP.

RECENT OPINION POLLS SUGGEST THAT THE JDP HAS BEEN ABLE TO BROADEN ITS APPEAL. HOWEVER, THIS MAY BE MORE A REFLECTION OF THE CONTINUING DISARRAY IN OPPOSITION RANKS AND THEIR FAILURE TO FASHION AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY TO CONFRONT THE JDP THAN OF THE SUCCESS OF THE JDP.

IN ANY CASE, NONE OF THE OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES ARE IN A POSITION TO CHALLENGE THE JDP, AS THE LOCAL ELECTIONS SCHEDULED IN THE SPRING OF 2004 ARE LIKELY TO CONFIRM, PARTICULARLY IF THE TROUBLED TURKISH ECONOMY CONTINUES ITS CURRENT RECOVERY.

MR. CHAIRMAN, THE MOST IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF THE JDP'S STRATEGY IN GOVERNMENT IS THE PURSUIT OF THE LINKED GOALS OF TURKISH ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU) AND POLITICAL REFORMS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COPENHAGEN CRITERIA FOR EU MEMBERSHIP.

IN MARKED CONTRAST TO THE WELFARE PARTY-LED GOVERNMENT UNDER NECMETTIN ERBAKAN, WHO GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HIS MAIN GOAL IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS WAS TO STRENGTHEN LINKS WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD, THE JDP GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN STRESSING EU MEMBERSHIP AS ITS PRIMARY OBJECTIVE.

UNLIKE ERBAKAN, ERDOGAN HAS POINTEDLY CHOSEN TO MAKE MOST OF HIS FOREIGN TRIPS TO EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE JDP HAS BEEN ACCELERATING THE PROCESS OF REFORMS IT INHERITED. BEFORE ITS SUMMER BREAK, THE ASSEMBLY ADOPTED A LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE DIRECTED MAINLY AT KURDISH-SPEAKING CITIZENS, WHICH SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED THE SCOPE OF THE ANTI TERROR LAWS.

THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY A BILL TO GRANT CONDITIONAL AMNESTY FOR INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN KURDISH SEPARATIST ACTIVITIES.

EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, THE JDP THEN PUSHED THROUGH A PACKAGE EFFECTIVELY REVERSING THE EXPANSION OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE TURKISH ARMED FORCES, PARTICULARLY THROUGH THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL (NSC).

DURING THE PAST TWENTY YEARS OF ITS FOUR-DECADE EXISTENCE, THE NSC, WHICH BROUGHT TOGETHER IN ITS MONTHLY MEETINGS TURKEY'S CIVILIAN AND MILITARY LEADERSHIP, HAD EXPANDED ITS POWERS FAR BEYOND ITS ORIGINAL ADVISORY ROLE. THE NSC SECRETARY GENERAL, A FOUR STAR GENERAL, ACCUMULATED AND WIELDED VIRTUALLY UNSUPERVISED POWER IN A VERY WIDE SPHERE OF TURKISH LIFE.

THE NEW LEGISLATION CURBED THE POWERS OF THE NSC, AUTHORIZED THE NOMINATION OF A CIVILIAN AS NSC SECRETARY GENERAL AND GAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MONITORING

AND COORDINATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NSC RECOMMENDATIONS TO A DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER.

ALTHOUGH ERDOGAN APPARENTLY AGREED AT THE LAST MINUTE TO REFRAIN FROM PROCEEDING IMMEDIATELY TO THE APPOINTMENT OF A CIVILIAN AS NSC SECRETARY GENERAL, THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF THE CHANGES ON THE TURKISH POLITICAL SYSTEM ARE LIKELY TO BE SIGNIFICANT.

MR. CHAIRMAN, DESPITE ITS PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY AND PUBLIC SUPPORT, THE JDP WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PROCEED SMOOTHLY TO THE RESTRUCTURING OF CIVILIAN-MILITARY RELATIONS TO CONFORM TO EU NORMS WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF THE CURRENT MILITARY LEADERSHIP, AND, IN PARTICULAR, CHIEF OF STAFF HILMI OZKOK.

AS THE INHERITOR AND DEFENDER OF THE KEMALIST COMMITMENT TO WESTERNIZATION, THE TURKISH MILITARY HAS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT ACCESSION TO THE EU WOULD PERMIT TURKEY TO FINALLY PROCEED TO FULL MEMBERSHIP OF THE WESTERN COMMUNITY. ACCORDINGLY, OZKOK HAS SIGNALLED THAT THE TURKISH ARMED FORCES WOULD NOT BE AN IMPEDIMENT TO THIS IMPORTANT PROCESS.

NEVERTHELESS, DISSENTING VOICES HAVE BEEN RAISED WITHIN THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT RELATING TO THE ADVISABILITY OF THE REFORMS WITHOUT THE ASSURANCE OF EU MEMBERSHIP AND THE PERCEIVED THREAT POSED BY THE JDP TO SECULARISM. WHILE A NUMBER OF THE MOST POWERFUL VOCAL CRITICS RETIRED FROM THE MILITARY IN AUGUST, THEIR SCEPTICAL VIEWS HAVE SINCE BEEN ECHOED BY SOME OF THEIR FELLOW GENERALS WHO CONTINUE TO SERVE.

HOWEVER, EACH OF THE FOUR MILITARY INTERVENTIONS FOLLOWED MAJOR DOMESTIC FERMENT, HIGHLIGHTED BY THE INFLUENTIAL MEDIA. THAT IS SIMPLY NOT THE CASE TODAY AND THE TURKISH BUSINESS COMMUNITY, WHICH CONTROLS MOST OF THE MEDIA, ALONG WITH THE MAJORITY OF TURKISH VOTERS, APPARENTLY WANT THE UNINTERRUPTED CONTINUATION OF THE EU PROCESS AND THE REFORMS WHICH HAVE HELPED TO BOOST THE ECONOMY.

MR. CHAIRMAN, DESPITE THE RECENT STEPS, IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR WHETHER THE EU WILL ULTIMATELY PROCEED TO ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS WITH TURKEY WHEN IT FORMALLY REVIEWS THE ISSUE IN DECEMBER 2004.

IN FACT, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT TURKEY'S LONG EU JOURNEY COULD BE BROUGHT TO A HALT BY THE CYPRUS PROBLEM. ALTHOUGH THE SOLUTION OF THIS LONG-RUNNING DISPUTE IS NOT A SPECIFIED CONDITION FOR TURKISH ENTRY, THE ADMISSION OF THE ISLAND INTO THE EU IN MAY 2004 WITH OR WITHOUT A SETTLEMENT IS CERTAIN TO COMPLICATE TURKEY'S OWN ACCESSION PLANS.

THE LOGICAL WAY OUT OF THE PREDICAMENT IS A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION BY MAY 2004 UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE UNITED NATIONS, AS THE EU AND THE US HAVE BEEN ADVOCATING.

FOR ITS PART, THE JDP GOVERNMENT HAS STATED THAT DESPITE ITS FLAWS THE CURRENT UN PLAN COULD PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR A SETTLEMENT. IT APPARENTLY RECOGNIZES THAT WHILE ACTIVE DIPLOMACY TO PROMOTE A SOLUTION BRINGS DOMESTIC DANGERS IN A CONFRONTATION WITH ITS OPPONENTS AND TURKISH EUROSCEPTICS WHO REJECT THE UN PLAN, THESE ARE OUTWEIGHED BY THE DIPLOMATIC DANGERS OF ALLOWING THE CURRENT STALEMATE TO CONTINUE BEYOND MAY 2004.

BEYOND CYPRUS, THE JDP GOVERNMENT ALSO RECOGNIZES THAT ULTIMATE EU MEMBERSHIP WILL REQUIRE ADDITIONAL AND CONSIDERABLE IMPROVEMENT OF THE

TURKISH ECONOMY IN ORDER TO SATISFY THE MAASTRICHT ECONOMIC CRITERIA OF THE EU.

AFTER ALL, A COUNTRY OF OVER 70 MILLION WITH A PER CAPITA INCOME BELOW \$3,000 IS NOT A VIABLE CANDIDATE.

THE CURRENT RECOVERY IS DUE IN NO SMALL MEASURE TO THE \$ 39.5 BILLION IN LOANS PROVIDED BY THE IMF AS PART OF ITS CURRENT STANDBY AGREEMENTS AS WELL AS THE \$1 BILLION GRANT TO BE PROVIDED BY THE US, WHICH CAN BE CONVERTED INTO \$8.5 BILLION IN DEBT RELIEF.

WHILE THE LARGE FOREIGN DEBT APPEARS TO BE MANAGEABLE, THE ALARMINGLY HIGH LEVELS OF DOMESTIC DEBT WITH HIGH INTEREST, WHICH SUCCESSIVE TURKISH GOVERNMENTS HAVE USED TO SUSTAIN BAD ECONOMIC POLICIES, IS A MATTER OF IMMEDIATE CONCERN. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE IS THE EVER-PRESENT DANGER POSED BY POPULIST PRESSURES FROM ITS LOWER INCOME SUPPORTERS THAT COULD FORCE THE JDP TO RELAX FISCAL AND FINANCIAL DISCIPLINE WITH SERIOUS NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST, THERE IS THE THORNY QUESTION OF RELIGION AND CULTURE THAT THE EU AND TURKEY ULTIMATELY HAVE TO TACKLE. FOR THE MOMENT, THE ISSUE OF WHETHER A PREDOMINANTLY MOSLEM COUNTRY WITH VERY DIFFERENT TRADITIONS CAN BE INTEGRATED IN THE EU HAS BEEN PUT ON THE BACKBURNER IN THE EU-TURKISH DIALOGUE.

IN THE MEANWHILE, JDP LEADERS CONTINUE TO UNDERLINE TURKEY'S DIVERSITY AND ROLE AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN RELIGIONS AND CULTURES IN THEIR EU CAMPAIGN. HAVING PREVIOUSLY OPPOSED THE EU AS A CHRISTIAN CLUB FROM WITHIN THE TURKISH ISLAMIST MOVEMENT, THIS REPRESENTS A MAJOR CHANGE OF HEART FOR THE JDP LEADERS. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE EU WILL RECIPROCATE THEIR GESTURE.

MR. CHAIRMAN, ERDOGAN MADE THE CASE FOR TURKEY'S POTENTIAL IN HELPING TO AVOID A CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS TO PRESIDENT BUSH WHEN HE VISITED WASHINGTON IN DECEMBER 2002.

AS I SAID AT THE OUTSET, PLAYING SUCH A ROLE IS DIFFICULT IN THE MIDST OF THE CURRENT GLOBAL FERMENT AND THE US-LED EFFORT TO ROOT OUT INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM, PARTICULARLY IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD.

HOWEVER, IT IS ALSO DIFFICULT TO OVEREMPHASIZE THE CONTRIBUTION TURKEY COULD MAKE IN COMPLEMENTING THE CURRENT MILITARY CAMPAIGN WITH ITS OWN UNIQUE EXAMPLE AS A COUNTRY THAT BELONGS TO BOTH THE ISLAMIC AND WESTERN WORLDS.

THIS IS NOT TO DOWNPLAY THE CONTRIBUTION TURKEY COULD MAKE IN THE MILITARY SPHERE. HAVING PREVIOUSLY INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO SEND SOLDIERS TO IRAQ, TURKEY HAS BEEN NEGOTIATING WITH THE US THE DETAILS OF SUCH POSSIBLE SUPPORT.

THE ISSUE WAS CONSIDERED AT THE NSC MEETING IN ANKARA ON SEPTEMBER 19, AND WITH THE BACKING OF THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, WHICH SHARES THE DESIRE OF TURKEY'S CIVILIAN LEADERS TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE DONE TO US-TURKISH RELATIONS BY THE MARCH VOTE, THE GOVERNMENT MAY SEEK PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORIZATION THIS MONTH.

HOWEVER, THIS WILL BE A DIFFICULT DECISION FRAUGHT WITH GRAVE CONSEQUENCES. TO BEGIN WITH, TURKISH SOLDIERS WOULD BE EXCLUDED FROM NORTHERN IRAQ, WHERE TURKEY HAS A STATED INTEREST IN CONFRONTING THE TWIN THREATS IT PERCEIVES FROM

SEPARATIST TURKISH KURDS BASED THERE AND THE EXPANSION OF IRAQI KURDISH INFLUENCE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE TURKMENS.

THEY WOULD INSTEAD GO INTO THE DANGEROUS SO-CALLED SUNNI TRIANGLE NEAR BAGHDAD. CONSEQUENTLY, EVEN IF THE JDP GOVERNMENT SUCCEEDS IN PERSUADING ITS OWN PARLIAMENTARIANS TO SET ASIDE THEIR VERY REAL RESERVATIONS TO PERMIT THE DISPATCH OF TROOPS, SUBSEQUENT TURKISH CASUALTIES WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

THE TROOP DEPLOYMENT WOULD BE JUSTIFIED BY THE GOVERNMENT AS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF TURKEY'S RESPONSIBILITY AS A REGIONAL POWER TOWARDS A TROUBLED NEIGHBOR. ANOTHER MAJOR ASPECT OF THE POLICY THAT WOULD BE STRESSED IS TURKEY'S ABILITY AND DESIRE TO PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION OF IRAQ.

HOWEVER, THE TROOP ISSUE IS INEVITABLY AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE CURRENT DEBATE AND DECISIONMAKERS AT BOTH ENDS OF THE US-TURKISH RELATIONSHIP NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE UNDERLYING PROBLEMS WHICH WERE REVEALED AND ACCENTUATED BY THE MARCH VOTE CANNOT BE ERADICATED SIMPLY BY SENDING TURKISH TROOPS TO IRAQ.

MR. CHAIRMAN, AS I ARGUED IN A JUNE 2003 CSIS TURKEY UPDATE I HAVE SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD, THERE IS AN URGENT NEED FOR A REDEFINITION OF THE US-TURKISH ALLIANCE.

THE RELATIONSHIP WAS A PRODUCT OF VITAL MUTUAL NEEDS DURING THE COLD WAR ERA AND CONTINUED WITH AD HOC ADJUSTMENTS – PARTICULARLY IN COOPERATION OVER IRAQ - EVEN AFTER THE COMMON FOE, THE SOVIET UNION, DISAPPEARED OVER A DECADE AGO.

WHILE THE AVOIDANCE OF THE HUGE TASK OF RESTRUCTURING A MAJOR RELATIONSHIP STRETCHING BACK THROUGH FIFTY YEARS IS UNDERSTANDABLE, IT IS A LUXURY THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES CAN NO LONGER AFFORD.

WASHINGTON AND ANKARA HAVE TO DETERMINE EXACTLY WHAT EACH COULD EXPECT FROM THE OTHER IN THE NEW GEOSTRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT.

THE REDEFINITION OF THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WILL ALSO NEED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT TURKEY'S EVOLVING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EU, AS WELL AS ITS LINKS WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD.

THE US-TURKISH ALLIANCE THAT WILL EMERGE AT THE END OF THIS PROCESS WILL SURELY BE DIFFERENT BUT PERHAPS NO LESS VITAL.