

**'THE JDP GOVERNMENT'S POLICY GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:  
AN INSIDE PERSPECTIVE' (BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE APRIL 6, 2006  
MEETING)**

On April 6, 2006, the CSIS Turkey Project hosted two leading members of the ruling Justice and Development Party (JDP), Saban Disli, Vice Chairman for Foreign Relations, and Cuneyd Zapsu, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, for a review of the JDP Government's goals and achievements.

Disli identified the main pillars of the JDP's foreign policy as "zero problems with Turkey's neighbors," "a win-win approach," and "synchronization of Turkish foreign policy with both the United States and the EU." Although Disli acknowledged the serious difficulties Turkey would encounter in the negotiation process, he stressed that there would be "no deviation from the ultimate goal of joining the EU" and that there would be "dialogue even if there are problems."

According to Disli, the continuing support of the United States is crucial in Turkey's efforts to achieve EU membership. "Without US support, we would not have been able to go one step further from the point where we left off at the 2002 Copenhagen Summit" he said. Disli added that "every single member of the JDP is rational enough to understand the importance of our relations with the United States."

In response to a question on the recent meeting in Ankara with Hamas leaders from a State Department official who asked whether "the JDP could be taken seriously on terrorism after the visit," Disli responded by saying that he could "not understand why this issue was still alive in Washington" and "why the JDP's intentions were still doubted." Disli claimed that Turkey, the United States and Israel shared the same objectives and the only aim in meeting with Hamas was to try to persuade them to renounce violence and thus to open the way to peace negotiations. He added that everyone would gain from this visit if Turkey had successfully conveyed the right message to Hamas.

Regarding the Cyprus issue, which continues to be a major obstacle in the EU negotiation process, Disli said that his government pursued from the very beginning the policy of "no solution is not a solution" and always tried to be "one step ahead" in its policies and actions. Blaming the Greek Cypriot leader Tassos Papadopoulos for the current impasse, Disli confirmed that Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan had asked UN Secretary General Kofi Annan "to resume negotiations on five separate occasions."

With respect to the economy, Disli underlined the JDP government's continuing commitment to the IMF program and maintaining fiscal discipline. "For the first time, an IMF program in Turkey was fully completed," Disli said, adding that the

JDP government would “not run an election economy for the sake of political gains.”

Cuneyd Zapsu emphasized the JDP government’s efforts at reform with reference to the eight harmonization packages comprising 984 laws that were approved and cited them as evidence that “the JDP is the most reformist and revolutionary party since Ataturk.” Underlining the endeavor to improve Turkey’s human rights, Zapsu acknowledged the difficulties in implementation by saying “It is not possible to eliminate all violations in a short period of time.”

Zapsu said that the JDP was “not good at public relations” and had “a problem in explaining itself.” Claiming that there were “ongoing efforts and propaganda by civil elitist circles in Turkey to damage the JDP government” Zapsu said that the JDP had “left the field free to elite groups using foreign contacts against us.” However, their influence has been weakened because of the JDP’s continuing achievements.

Regarding the rising anti-Americanism in Turkey, Zapsu said that this was directly related to the Iraq war and the unwillingness of the United States to take action against the PKK bases in the northern Iraq which are seen by the Turks as the root cause of the recent upsurge in terrorist activities in the southeast. “The United States made many promises in the meetings that I also attended but nothing has been done so far,” Zapsu noted.

Acknowledging that Turkey’s “regional approach may come into conflict with the US, in particular in its relations with neighbors such as Syria and Iran” Zapsu argued that it was “not Islamism but a real sense of kinship with other Muslims in the world” that provoked the Turkish people’s reactions against what was taking place in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In response to a question by Bulent Aliriza, Director of the CSIS Turkey Project, who recalled the emphasis placed on transparency by Prime Minister Erdogan in his speech at CSIS in January 2002 before referring to recent corruption allegations in Turkey, both Disli and Zapsu emphasized the Prime Minister’s strong commitment to monitor any corruption allegations even if they only appear as rumors in the media and to take the necessary action.