



Remarks at the American-Turkish Council Luncheon

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

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Thank you very much. Thank you very much to Eli Alharal. Thank you for that wonderful introduction. I'd also like to thank my great friend and mentor, General Brent Scowcroft. I hear he was telling you stories about when I was younger. I hope he didn't tell you too many. I could tell you a few about him, too. (Laughter.) But Brent, thank you for your work with this great organization, but also for your continuing leadership and your great public service.

I'd like to thank the Turkish Minister of State for Trade, Mr. Kursat Tuzmen, whom I had a chance to meet just recently. The Minister of Defense is here, Mr. Vecdi Gonul and also I see that the Ambassador to the United States from Turkey is here and the American Ambassador to Turkey is here. So we have a very distinguished group of people, all of whom are dedicated and devoted to furthering this extremely important relationship, a relationship that has only grown in importance over the recent years in the complicated environment in which we find ourselves in the world. It's wonderful to see so many other friends here from the Diplomatic Corps.

Turkey is a vital and strategic partner of the United States, and so it's fitting that this year's conference theme is: "Regional Allies and Global Partners." I did indeed visit Turkey, first as Secretary of State, in my very first trip in 2005 because the centrality of this relationship is very clear to me and has been for a number of years. But a year later, my then counterpart, Foreign Minister Gul, now President Gul, and I decided to create a strategic vision statement for U.S.-Turkish relations, because we wanted to show that the relationship between Turkey and the United States was evolving and was moving toward the challenges of the 21st century. That it, of course, was a relationship that had important elements as military allies and NATO. But it was much more than that. It was a relationship of growing economic ties. It was a relationship of growing diplomatic responsibility for the challenges in the world. And perhaps, most importantly, it was a growing relationship between our peoples. I am always very much mindful that, while the relationship between governments is important, the relationship between peoples is what really brings a firm foundation to a relationship between nations.

Now, as NATO allies over many decades, our cooperation today is closer and more necessary than ever – in fighting terrorism, in promoting freedom and democracy, and in ensuring that all people within the region can live safely and securely without fear. Our commitment to these goals also leads us beyond the region, to cooperate on a global basis for the advancement of peace and prosperity and freedom. The United States views our great democratic ally, Turkey, as an active shaper of positive global trends, and it is a mission that is uniting us more and more in the 21st century.

It was Turkey's founder, Kemal Ataturk, who famously described the new Republic's vision as, "Peace at home, peace in the world." He recognized back then the importance of promoting peace as a key policy objective of the Turkish Republic – just as our own founder Thomas Jefferson did for the United States when he said, "Peace and friendship with all mankind is our wisest policy." Our mutual cooperation is helping to ensure a region and a world that are freer, more at peace, and more secure.

Turkey and the United States in pursuing that vision share a commitment to a united Iraq that is secure, stable, prosperous, at peace with its neighbors, and free from all forms of terrorism. Let me be very clear: the United States recognizes the PKK as a common enemy of Turkey, Iraq, and the United States. Our nations, together with our European partners, are pursuing a comprehensive strategy to eliminate the PKK's safe haven in Northern Iraq and to cut off its criminal and financial networks in Europe. At the same time, we are working for positive change in Iraq to ensure the stability of Iraq through the neighbors process. Turkey hosted the last expanded Iraq neighbors ministerial in November in Istanbul. And we will meet later this month in Kuwait to address the challenges that we face and the progress that has been made in Iraq.

Turkey and the United States are also working side-by-side in Afghanistan. I was just with my Turkish colleagues, including President Gul and Foreign Minister Babacan in Bucharest this week – last week with our NATO allies to reaffirm our long-term commitment to Afghanistan's success. Turkey has been integral to NATO's success in supporting the Karzai government, in limiting the Taliban's influence, and in providing humanitarian and reconstruction assistance for the Afghan people. Together we recognize that sustainable democratic development in Afghanistan is the key to sustainable peace.

Turkey and the United States will continue to work together to defend and promote freedom and opportunity for the people of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo. As President Bush has said, "Freedom can be resisted, and freedom can be delayed, but freedom cannot be denied." Turkey's own long legacy of advancing modern and democratic reforms as a Muslim majority society can inspire those throughout the broader Middle East and beyond who seek to meet their own national challenges democratically.

Governments that are democratic and free must also strive to ensure that their citizens are prosperous. Turkey and the United States have been promoting economic freedom, open markets, and increased trade, not only with each other but also with our partners around the world. Our dialog on these issues is very deep, it's frequent, and it's wide-ranging. In fact, this Thursday, as we hold our annual Economic Partnership Commission, this will be in full view. This meeting addresses the central economic issues that tie Turkey and the United States ever closer together in an ever more mature economic relationship – including investment, trade, innovation, cooperation in building prosperity in states that neighbor, states like Pakistan and Afghanistan. And of course, there is a significant portion of our work that is devoted to reliable energy.

We fully understand that the growth of both our economies increasingly depends on new, more efficient, and more environmentally friendly sources of energy. Currently, Turkey occupies a strategic location in the region's energy supply chain. Eight percent of the world's oil transits Turkey each day, and its position becomes increasingly more important with the construction of each new pipeline on Turkish soil. Turkey and the United States are now building on the success of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, and we are developing a new generation of natural gas infrastructure that will help Europe secure its energy supplies at prices set by markets, not by monopolists. The Turkey-Greece-Italy and Nabucco pipelines are emerging as a new Southern Corridor connecting gas supplies in Azerbaijan and the Caspian Basin, as well as Iraq, with Turkey and other European markets.

The United States and Turkey will from time to time disagree on how best to pursue our goals on all the issues I have mentioned today. It happens among friends. But we will also -- always do so, remaining firmly united by our shared democratic values, like tolerance and respect for human dignity and human rights. Throughout history, both Turkey and the United States have struggled to be true to these values. And while we have each made many advances, many struggles lie ahead.

The United States was founded on great principles, but our founding documents did not recognize equal rights for my ancestors or for women. In fact, when our Founding Fathers said "We the People," they didn't actually mean me. It took the Great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln, to overcome the compromise in our Constitution that made the founding of the United States of America possible, but that made my ancestors three-fifths of a man and enslaved them for another hundred years. Many courageous individuals fought for many years to improve American democracy, and to ensure that it is truly representative of all American citizens and that process continues even today. Thus, when we see the process of building and perfecting democracy in a friend like Turkey, we know that the road is not easy; it is, indeed, hard.

In the 84 years since the founding of the Turkish Republic, Turkish citizens have continually built on Ataturk's commitment to democracy and secularism. As with all

countries, it is a work in progress. We have seen Turkey strive to improve and transform its democracy and to modernize its economy in its bid to join the European Union. We continue strongly to support Turkey's EU candidacy. It will be good for Turkey and it will be good for Europe. Ankara's openness to renewed efforts on the divided island of Cyprus to reach an agreement on bizonal, bicomunal federation is also a key part of the process of Europe's construction.

In 2007, we witnessed the maturity and vibrancy of Turkey's democracy as it weathered and came out stronger. It was a challenging political year that included a delay in the presidential election, and then the carrying out of both parliamentary and presidential elections. You may know that the struggles continue. But Turkish – the Turkish people, the Turkish voters, will resolve the difficulties before them within their secular democratic context and their secular democratic principles. All that can be asked of a democratic society is to stay true to those principles as it goes through difficult times.

Indeed, as Winston Churchill once said, "democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." Still, both we and Turkey know that democracy is the best system we have to ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms are ensured for all. On that note, we commend Prime Minister Erdogan for stating recently that parliament will amend Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, which criminalizes insulting "Turkishness." We encourage this. Expressing one's beliefs is not an insult to the state; it is one of the highest forms of citizenship.

Democracy is also the best way to protect peoples' right to practice religion freely. We appreciate the support that Turkey has given to the people across the broader Middle East and North Africa – impatient patriots in those places who are working to strengthen civil society and build democratic institutions as the guarantee for their freedom of conscience. These freedoms are essential to defeating extremism and terror. We have worked together, too, in the Middle East to try and promote a process through the Annapolis process, that would give the Palestinian people also an alternative to extremism and terror in their own state. And I want to thank the Turkish Government for the – its presence at Annapolis and its continuing support to that process.

Both of our nations want to be the best champions of these values that we can within the region, and therefore we must continue to strengthen these values at home in our own democracies. We continue to encourage Turkey to recognize and protect civil rights of all religious and ethnic groups, such as by reopening the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Halki Seminary as a vocational school.

The United States and Turkey will continue to support freedom, democracy and prosperity in the broader Middle East and well beyond because we know from hard experience that it is the best way for diverse peoples to live together, and to share power, and to resolve their differences in peace without oppression of anyone, or exclusion, or worse. These values are the foundation of everything we do together. And they are why I believe Lord Palmerston got it wrong when he said that "nations have no permanent allies." The United States does have permanent allies and those are nations with which we share values and we have, therefore, a permanent friend and ally in Turkey.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MODERATOR: Secretary Rice has graciously agreed to take some questions, and I'll assist. The lights are bright, so we'll do our best to see hands, but we've got -- let's see, what have we got?

SECRETARY RICE: I see somebody over there, yes.

MODERATOR: Ümit, we've got a microphone right here. All right, we're going to go for a non-journalist first. (Laughter.) Here's one right here. Please.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, the United States had supported when the Annan plan vote was proceeding that it will support the ending of the isolation of the northern Cypriot people, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. As an incentive to the new momentum that is building up on the island, is there any opening toward that? Thank you, ma'am.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. Yes, there is a new momentum building on the island, and we very much support efforts to use this new momentum to perhaps finally come to a solution. We were disappointed, frankly, a couple of years ago when the efforts of Kofi Annan, we thought, were very close to producing a result and, frankly, should have produced a result. And we made it known that we felt the Turkish Government had supported that solution, and we therefore acted to make some small steps to help to end the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. I received, for instance, members of that government.

It's a more hopeful period and a more hopeful sign now. But ultimately, some difficult choices are going to have to be made. People are going to have to overcome political differences and, really, political resistance from both sides. And so we will be very supportive of the UN process there. We will be active in the diplomacy, as we were the last time. I can tell you, for instance, when the referendum was up, the President personally made phone calls to try and carry it across. And so we're going to do everything we can to encourage the parties, but there is a different spirit now and we should build on that momentum.

QUESTION: Thank you, Madame Secretary, thank you very much. It was a great speech. Perhaps you could share with us, since you were in Bucharest here not too long ago, since we have two great NATO allies here, maybe you could share with us a little bit of your sensing of how did the summit go and what were some of the great takeaways that came, particularly like in Afghanistan. Could you share that with us, please?

SECRETARY RICE: Absolutely. It was a terrific summit. It was, in particular, a terrific summit because it was rather unscripted and people didn't read from their note cards. They actually worked at the summit. And it was a summit that I think will be remembered for four very important achievements.

The first actually has to do with Afghanistan. The alliance issued a vision statement on Afghanistan that clearly commits the alliance for the long term in Afghanistan. And I don't mean military forces. Hopefully, the time will come in the relatively near future where Afghans can largely carry out security on their own. But we have to remain committed to that country because, of course, the Taliban is a tough enemy. It's an enemy, by the way, that isn't winning on the battlefield, so it's decided to do what terrorists do; it's decided to kill innocent people instead. And that's why you have the car bombs and the suicide bombs and those techniques, and the kidnappings. That's a sign, to my mind, that they don't want to take on NATO in military formations; they want to -- they want instead to kill innocent civilians.

And so it's a hard problem. It's a counterinsurgency strategy that has to be met by clearing these areas, by giving security, building police forces, and then reconstruction and development. And a lot of the discussion was about how to get a better reconstruction and development civilian component to the counterinsurgency. But the allies did talk about troops levels. We received new forces from France. The United States made some commitments. And I'm confident that NATO is going to take that mission and carry it to its successful conclusion.

Secondly, we had very great successes on missile defense. The truth is that this is not, of course, missile defense as we conceived it in the 1980s when it was meant to be a kind of shield against the mutually assured destruction of facing thousands and thousands of Soviet warheads. Rather, this recognizes that the region, including, by the way, the region in which Turkey lives, faces the emerging threat of small missile threats from the region, and that countries ought to be able to defend themselves. And so NATO has agreed on a program of cooperation on missile defense, and we then went on to Sochi to talk to the Russians, where I think there was general agreement that we, with Europe and Russia, should pursue the possibilities of missile defense.

Third, I think it will be remembered as a summit where new members were admitted: Albania and Croatia. I know that the enlargement of NATO is controversial in some quarters, but I can tell you that when I sit in this alliance where now, 12 of the 26 members are former captive nations, it is an alliance that is reborn by the fact that it has members who have recent experience with tyranny. They are the people who remind us what NATO really was about, which was an umbrella for security among democracies.

And when you sit with Poles and Czechs and Hungarians and Latvians and other Balts, you know what NATO is and why it has been so important to peace and security

in the world. And so, the admission of Albania and Croatia was great. It was unfortunate that Macedonia could not be admitted. And as soon as that name issue is resolved, it will be admitted, and that came through very closely – very clearly.

Finally, it was – it was a summit that I think will be remembered for having said that NATO's lines will not stop at Ukraine, that in fact, Ukraine and Georgia should eventually have membership in NATO when they meet the criteria. And while there was lots of reporting about the membership action plan, this or that, I would just point people to one of the first sentences of that statement, which literally said that they will be members of NATO. And that's an important signal, because there is a struggle, still, in much of this part of the world for whether or not these are going to be countries that are going to be immersed in transatlantic values and transatlantic institutions. And this was a strong signal.

Turkey was a good partner in all of those. I, myself, believe that the European construction, which has been really very rapidly moving along in the last few years since the end of the Cold War, will not really be complete until Turkey is in the European Union. But this was another opportunity to show that transatlantic institutions have tremendous power to transform nations and peoples in accordance with the values that won the Cold War.

MODERATOR: The Secretary knows that the hand waving frantically in the background is a Turkish journalist and she says that's fine. (Laughter.) Ümit?

QUESTION: Thank you, Madame Secretary. One thing, there is a legal closure case against Turkey's ruling party. What's your take on that? Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes. We are following very closely this case, of course, and it is a matter, obviously, for Turks to decide. We believe and hope that this will be decided within Turkey's secular democratic context and by its secular democratic principles. But I think it is in everybody's interest that it be done in this way, that the voters will be heard. Turkey has democratic institutions, and it is our great hope that it will be resolved in that context.

MODERATOR: One more question. I saw another hand back here a minute ago. Right here. Cengiz.

QUESTION: Thank you, Madame Secretary. As a dual citizen of Turkey and U.S., I'm going to ask a tough question if you'll allow me. When the Soviet Union was dissolved, then-Secretary of State Baker sent a letter to each republic as a precondition of democratic relation – diplomatic relations. There were four conditions, one of which was no change in prevailing borders with use of arms. Subsequently, 20 percent of Azerbaijan was occupied by Armenia. And United States initiated sanctions against Azerbaijan. And 20 percent of Azerbaijan continues to be occupied at the moment. How are we going to solve that problem for the benefit of all the people, including the Armenians?

SECRETARY RICE: Yes. Well, I am very much of the view that the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is one that could be resolved, and actually, with just a little bit of will, could be resolved relatively quickly. We have been close several times within the Minsk process, where we have the cooperation of several countries including Russia, the European Union, the United States. It is just going to take taking a couple of difficult decisions and getting an agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia on Nagorno-Karabakh.

It needs to be done. I have made the case to both the Armenian Government and to the Azeri Government that they are falling behind the rest of the region because they will not resolve this conflict between them. And frankly, there is plenty of, if you wish to use the word blame, to go around on both sides. This could be done if there's political will and it ought to – it ought to be done.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Madame Secretary. Please remain at your seats. The Secretary will say hello to our head table and we want to thank her very much for a wonderful speech and for being with us this afternoon.

SECRETARY RICE: Thanks, Jim. Thank you. (Applause.)

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