

Dialogue on U.S.-Turkish Relations

Istanbul, Turkey

14 December 2010

A U.S.-Turkish Working Group convened in Istanbul on 14 December 2010, under the sponsorship of the United States Institute of Peace,¹ to identify ways to deepen bilateral relations and develop new ideas for dealing with difficult issues that have recently arisen. The group, composed of Turkish and American foreign policy figures, business leaders, media personalities and academics, held frank discussions on a wide range of concerns.

We value the long-standing relationship between Turkey and the U.S. A desire to improve the relationship between governments, as well as civil society, is what brought this group together. Unfortunately, the discourse in each country has recently become polarized and misleading. We agreed on the need to change the conversation. It is wrong to depict Turkey as choosing between East and West, as some in the United States argue. Similarly, the complexity of the debate and of foreign policy formulation—as well as the constitutional responsibilities of the executive and legislative branches in the U.S.—is not well understood in Turkey.

As democracies, our foreign policies depend on public support. Leaders in both countries should take it upon themselves to articulate to their respective publics the reasons for the deep and long-standing relationship. Civil society figures should also promote a discourse that accurately depicts the complexity and diversity of views in each country. Without leadership, it will be difficult to sustain and strengthen the relationship.

The United States should welcome Turkey's increasingly active role in regional diplomacy. Iraq is a concrete example of effective cooperation where the two allies have worked to maintain a unified and increasingly stable country.

Turkey's strengthened democratic institutions and vibrant politics; its dynamic and growing economy; and its deep commitment to peace on its borders make its wider role in the region more important. In our view, many problems in the bilateral relationship have arisen as the result of inadequate consultations. Both governments share responsibility for this.

We understand that differences between two close allies are likely, even inevitable, but do not challenge the fundamentals of the relationship. Our ties, despite

¹ The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) is an independent, nonpartisan organization, created and funded by the U.S. Congress to prevent and resolve violent international conflicts. USIP's mission is to increase the United States' capacity to manage international conflicts—to think, act, teach, and train. It uses its convening power to bring together diverse communities to devise practical approaches to peacebuilding. www.usip.org

disagreements, are deep, broad, and integral to the security of both countries. Turkey and the United States are democracies. Our relationships with other European allies create converging interests, and our governments have for decades shared a common assessment of the security environment. We share a strong attachment to the NATO Alliance and have a long history of cooperation in Afghanistan, in countering terrorism, in the Balkans, and elsewhere.

There are some divergences on critical issues that risk weakening our relationship. However, where there is no divergence is on the question of the responsibility of all signatories of the NPT, including Iran, to live up to their obligations and to allow for regular IAEA inspections.

The U.S. and Turkey share a commitment to a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace and a negotiated two-state solution to the Palestinian question. We believe that both countries can and should play a positive role in resolving this conflict.

The level of trade and investment between our two G-20 countries is not commensurate with the size of our economies and our long-standing partnership. Improved access to each other's markets and a stronger investment and regulatory climate would strengthen our relationship. We recognize the potential for greater collaboration between American and Turkish entrepreneurs, both at home and abroad.

We strongly believe discussions of this kind must continue. The members of the Working Group will consult widely on the conclusions and issues identified here. Our aim is that at the next meeting participants will report on those consultations and propose new and innovative ideas for strengthening the relationship.

Greater engagement and dialogue between civil societies is vital to our future. Government-to-government contacts are not sufficient.

END

Participants:

Co-Chairs:

Madeleine Albright, former Secretary of State

Ilter Turkmen, former Foreign Minister

Morton Abramowitz
The Century Foundation

Henri Barkey
*Carnegie Endowment for International
Peace*
Lehigh University

Mehmet Ali Birand
Journalist, *CNN, KanalD*

Ümit Boyner
Chairperson, *TÜSİAD*

Eyüp Can
Editor in Chief, *Radikal*

Üstün Ergüder
*Sabancı University, Education Reform
Initiative*

James Kolbe
former Congressman, *German Marshall
Fund*

Scott B. Lasensky
U.S. Institute of Peace

Rızanur Meral
Chairman, *TUSKON*

James O'Brien
Albright Stonebridge Group

Can Paker
Chairman, *TESEV*

Toni Verstandig
*Aspen Institute, S. Daniel Abraham Center
for Middle East Peace*

Vin Weber
former Congressman, *Clark and
Weinstock*

Volkan Vural
former Ambassador, *TÜSİAD*