
ROUNDTABLE PRESENTATION

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“Ahmet Davutoglu: A New Era in Turkey’s Foreign Policy? A Perspective from Cyprus”

Dear friends,

When Chris Pelagias asked me a month ago to choose a subject for presentation at the next roundtable of ERPIC, I immediately responded that I would like to speak on Ahmet Davutoglu’s foreign policy approach and agenda, as it emerges from his theory of “strategic depth” and from the policies pursued by the Justice and Development Party since it came to power nearly seven years ago. This is because in recent months I have been studying more thoroughly Turkey’s foreign policy and especially the main theorist and architect of Turkey’s evolving foreign priorities, Ahmet Davutoglu, the current foreign minister of Turkey. It has always been my firm conviction that studying your adversary’s policies and objectives, a country may be in a better position to analyze and evaluate all the dimensions of its strengths and weaknesses as well as any possible prospects for future transformation of their relations. Studying Turkey has always been fascinating, especially studying Turkey’s foreign policy and diplomacy which I consider the most successful asset of this complex and multi-dimensional country.

Before we examine Ahmet Davutoglu and his theory of “Strategic Depth”, I think it would be important to briefly go through Turkey’s foreign policy before the rise to power of the Justice and Development Party, in order to appreciate the significant impact of the changes affected.

Before doing so and in order to fully comprehend the impact of Turkey’s geographical position in its international relations I will cite one example given by William Hale the former head of the Political and International Studies department at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, in his book “Turkish foreign policy 1774-2000”:

“Turkey is the only state, apart from Russia, with territory in both Europe and Asia, and is affected by and affects international politics in both south-eastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean, in Transcaucasia and the southern regions of the former Soviet Union and in the northern part of the Middle East. Historically, Turkey’s most strategically significant asset has been its control of the straits of Dardanelles and Bosphorus, on which Russia had depended for direct maritime access to the Mediterranean and the only route through which Britain, France and later the United States could challenge Russia in the Black Sea. The fact that Turkey’s geographical position is one in which the interests of several great powers intersect has also given its foreign policy makers a

degree of flexibility not open to states which are likely to be dominated by a single great power (the case of Mexico and the United States being an obvious example)".

As Davutoglu elaborates in his article "Turkey's foreign policy Vision: An assessment of 2007" published in "Insight Turkey" in January 2008, during the Cold War Turkey was considered as a frontier country. As part of the Western Block, Turkey was a means of control in the south among the Western powers extending to the East and at the edge of the West. Turkey belonged institutionally to the West and was considered the most important country in NATO. For over 60 years Turkey had prioritized its relationship with the West as manifested by its membership in almost every Western multilateral organization and during the entire Cold War period by its role as a barrier and deterrent of Soviet Union influence and perceived threat. Both Turkey and Greece were linked with Western Europe under the Truman Doctrine, with the United States having committed itself to protecting them. All weapons and military equipment required by Turkey to play its barrier role were supplied by the United States even before the country formally joined NATO in 1952.

In addition, under the Marshall Plan Turkey was given economic assistance, along with other European countries, within the broader framework of rebuilding Europe after the WWII and creating a stronger foundation for the countries of Western Europe and repelling communism. Turkey's participation in the Korean War further consolidated her friendship with the West and especially with the U.S.

According to Davutoglu, Turkey was a country of priorities in its foreign policy orientation during the Cold War era. Foreign policy makers at the time followed a certain hierarchy of priorities which were static in nature. Becoming NATO's Southern bulwark against the Soviet Union and defending the so-called free world from communism remained the highest priority for Turkey's foreign policy throughout the Cold War, while other regional issues, especially those in the Middle East, were not among Turkey's priorities, to the point that Turkey's approach towards the Middle East was described by a number of analysts as one of "benign neglect". This approach was inherent in the Kemalist ideology and in particular in the conservative secularist approach followed by Turkish governments, especially after the WWII that prioritized relations with the West and Western policies and interests, to the detriment of Turkey's relations with its Middle East Arab and Muslim neighbors. This policy was more manifest during the 1950's and 1960's when Turkey became the first Muslim state to recognize Israel, voted in favor of France during the Algerian war of independence, allowed US marines to use Incirlik during the Lebanese crisis in 1958 and kept a diplomatic distance from most of the Arab states. This monolithic Western oriented policy started changing in the late 1960's with Turkey siding with Egypt during the Six Day War in 1967, becoming a full member of the OIC in 1976 and opening a PLO office in Ankara in 1979. Turkish rapprochement with the Middle East continued throughout the 1970's and 1980's, but it was centered primarily in economic and trade relations, while its relations with Syria continued to deteriorate, especially after Damascus provided safe haven and political support to PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan.

In this respect we have to highlight the continuous involvement of the Turkish military throughout the period in Turkish politics, as a guardian of the Kemalist regime. We should also recall that in 1960, in 1971 and in 1980 the military intervened assuming power either to suppress Kurdish nationalism or leftist so-called threats, thus striking a heavy blow to the democratization process in Turkey that started in 1950.

After the end of the Cold War Turkey remained preoccupied with the Kurdish question, while President Ozal's full political and economic support during the first Gulf War behind the US military campaign, served as a catalyst for Turkey's rapprochement and reengagement with the Middle East. Nevertheless, Ankara's signing of a military cooperation treaty with Israel in 1996, as a reaction to Arab and European criticism of its policies towards the Kurds, tended to isolate Turkey from a number of Arab countries. In the meantime, the Kurdish question continued to dominate the Turkish domestic and foreign policy agenda throughout the 1990's, especially after the death of President Ozal who had a broader perspective of Turkey's relations with the Middle East, as well as a vision of how to deal with the Kurdish issue. The remaining period of the 1990's which was characterized by many analysts as the lost decade, found Turkey submerged in internal issues with the Islamic threat now being added to Kurdish separatism in dominating the domestic agenda. The military played an active role in effectively subduing all Islamist political tendencies with the so-called "soft coup" of 1997 succeeding in forcing the coalition government of Islamist Prime Minister Erbakan of the Welfare Party to resign.

Let us now examine the new trends in Turkey's foreign policy under the Justice and Development (AK) Party government which, despite its Islamist roots, succeeded in wearing a conservative democratic uniform and winning in the 2002 general elections in a landslide. This is the time when Ahmet Davutoglu, then Professor of International Relations at Marmara and Beykent Universities, had published his book "Strategic Depth" by which he effectively influenced Turkey's foreign policy. In 2003 Professor Davutoglu was granted the title of Ambassador and was appointed Chief adviser of Prime Minister Erdogan on foreign policy. Since then he has been known as the AK Party's foreign policy intellectual architect and by even some as the Kissinger of Turkey's Diplomacy, because of the pro-active and multi faceted foreign policy he has devised and has been implemented since the AK Party came to power. Ahmet Davutoglu was appointed Turkey's foreign minister on May 2nd 2009. He was born in the conservative Turkish city of Konya in 1959, graduated from the German International School and holds a PhD in Political Science and International Relations from Bosphorus University. According to some analysts, it is because of his stellar credentials as a devout Muslim and an influential international relations scholar, that both Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gul from an early time noticed him and fully exploited his talents.

The main thesis of Davutoglu's theory, as he described it in his book "Strategic Depth" and in several speeches and articles, is that a nation's value in world politics is predicated on its geo-strategic location and historic depth. Based on this theory Turkey is uniquely endowed both because of its location in geopolitical areas of influence, particularly its control of the Bosphorus, and its historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire. Davutoglu emphasizes Turkey's connections to the Balkans, the Middle East and even Central Asia and argues that Turkey is the natural heir to the Ottoman Empire that once unified the Muslim world and therefore has the potential to become a Muslim regional power. During a handover ceremony at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Davutoglu wasted no time to assert his strategic vision. Turkey, he said, is going to pursue the forward looking and robust policies in its strategic neighborhood, the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans. "It has to take the role of an order-instituting country in all these regions", he said and he invoked the idea of Turkey's historic responsibility vis-à-vis the countries and the peoples that used to be incorporated in the Ottoman Empire. "Beyond representing the 70 million people of Turkey", Davutoglu said, "We have a historic debt to those lands where there

are Turks or which were related to our land in the past. We have to repay this debt in the best way”.

For this approach Davutoglu has been criticized for a neo-Ottoman policy which he has tried to refute in many of his articles and speeches, stressing that the aim was to reintegrate the country into its surrounding region, while at the same time maintaining Turkey’s long-standing Atlanticist and European tilt. “If you have more influence in your own hinterland, you will be a more meaningful contributor to the EU and to NATO”, Davutoglu told Jonathan Marcus, a BBC correspondent in an interview last September. In a very interesting article entitled “Turkey’s Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism”, the author Omer Taspinar concludes that “In short, there are clear differences between Kemalism and neo-Ottomanism in three main aspects of strategic culture. Where neo-Ottomanism favors an ambitious regional policy in the Middle East and beyond, Kemalism opts for modesty and caution. Where one favors multiculturalism and a more moderate version of secularism, the other prefers strict measures against headscarves and Kurdish ethnic identity. Where one is increasingly resentful of the EU and the United States, the other is trying hard to pursue EU membership and good relations with Washington”.

According to Davutoglu, Turkey’s geography gives her a specific central status which differs from other central countries like Germany, Russia or Iran. Turkey holds an optimal place because it is both an Asian and a European country and is also close to Africa through the Eastern Mediterranean. In terms of history, culture and its area of influence, according to Davutoglu, Turkey is a Middle Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian, Mediterranean, Gulf and Black Sea country. Thus, according to the “strategic depth” perspective foreign policy is perceived no longer as a series of bilateral relations or foreign policy moves, but as a series of mutually reinforcing and interlocking processes. In this respect he argues that in order to formulate a long lasting strategic perspective, one needs to take into account “historical depth” which provides a sound assessment of the links between the past, present and future, as well as a “geographical depth” penetrating into the intricate dynamics of the relations between domestic, regional and global factors. He further argues that the geo-economic factors that contribute to the strategic depth of a country could only be genuinely interpreted at the intersection of these historical and geographical paradigms. Making an analogy of a bow and an arrow, Davutoglu argues that the further Turkey strains its bow in Asia, the more distant and precise would its arrow extend into Europe. Hence, he argues, “if Turkey does not have a solid stance in Asia, it would have very limited chances in the EU”.

As a central country Davutoglu further explains, Turkey needs to go beyond a parochial approach to national security and to become a security and stability provider for its neighboring regions. Consequently, Turkey’s active engagement from Central Asia to Africa, from the OIC to the EU, from its membership to the UN Security Council to its involvement as a key player in the Middle East and as an energy corridor from the Caucasus, Central Asia, Iran and Iraq to Europe. Thus, while maintaining its traditional Western, NATO and EU orientation, Turkey also has a strong Eurasian and Middle East component. The premise of this argument is that Turkey should not be dependent upon any one actor like the West, but should actively seek ways to balance its relationship and alliances so that it can maintain optimal independence and leverage on the global and regional stage.

As Ahmet Davutoglu outlines in his article published in Insight Turkey, Turkey's new foreign policy is based on the following five principles:

The first principle is that there should be a balance between security and democracy in a country in order to be able to establish an area of influence in its environs.

The second principle is a “zero problem policy towards Turkey's neighbors”. Davutoglu sights as examples of this principle Turkey's relations with Syria and Georgia as well as its relations with Iran, Iraq and Bulgaria. Nevertheless, as he himself admitted in a speech at the Henry Jackson Society in June 2008, with the exception of Cyprus and Armenia, Turkey has excellent relations with all its neighbors. He further added that in the history of the Turkish Republic the first time a Syrian President came to Turkey was in 2004. The first time a Russian President came to Turkey in an official capacity was in 2005. Also for the first time a Saudi King, an Iraqi President and a Greek Prime Minister visited Turkey.

The third principle is the development of relations with the neighboring regions and beyond. As a result, Turkey became active in the Balkans, in the Middle East, in the Caucasus and in Central Asia.

The fourth principle is adherence to a multi-dimensional foreign policy whereby Turkey's relations with other global actors aim to be complementary, not in competition.

The fifth principle is a proactive foreign policy supported by rhythmic diplomacy which is manifested in the many initiatives promoted and the international meetings and organizations Turkey has hosted in the last 7 years, including the Alliance of Civilizations, co-initiated by the Turkish and Spanish Prime Ministers, as well as the hosting of the NATO and the OIC summits. Following a successful campaign in Africa in 2005, Turkey became an observer in the African Union. Turkey also facilitated or hosted a number of meetings on the issue of the nuclear program of Iran on the issue of Afghanistan, on the Palestinian issue etc. Through this intense diplomatic activity, Turkey succeeded after 48 years to be elected, by 151 votes out of 192, to one of the non permanent seats of the UN Security Council. This was the result of a forceful diplomatic campaign that extended to Africa (in 2005), to Latin America (in 2006), the Arab countries and Asia seeking to establish political and trade links and to provide development assistance to a number of countries. According to Davutoglu this rhythmic diplomacy has allowed Turkey to intervene consistently in global issues using international platforms, which signifies a transformation for Turkey from a central country to a global power. Davutoglu admits that this is the result not only of state policy but also the business community, the civil society, the academic community, think tanks and other actors, which he considers essential for promoting an effective foreign policy.

In order to realize his foreign policy vision Davutoglu has put forward a number of mechanisms which he analyzed in various articles, speeches and interviews both prior as well as after he was appointed foreign minister.

The first mechanism is an integrated foreign policy approach. This, as we have seen earlier, is a departure from Turkey's prioritization of foreign policy objectives during the Cold War. Today, Turkey does not turn its back to any areas or problems, as it did in the past. Its policy is flexible enough to respond appropriately to changes.

The second is an all-inclusive, equidistance policy aiming at including all related actors, forming a broad coalition to solve problems and develop initiatives.

The third is presence on the ground in particular during times of crisis. As Davutoglu points out Turkey needs to be on the ground whether in the EU, the Middle East or the Caucasus, as exemplified during the Russia-Georgia and the Gaza crises. Nevertheless, Davutoglu adds, Turkey is no longer a country which only reacts to crises, but notices the crises before their emergence and intervenes effectively and gives shape to the order of its surrounding regions.

Having outlined the main thrust of Ahmet Davutoglu's foreign policy vision as it has unfolded during the last seven years, let us now see a few examples of these initiatives as well as the new style employed by Turkey.

As pointed out by Igor Torbakov and Hanna Ojanen of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Turkey's growing strategic interest in and involvement with the troubled region of the Middle East is viewed by Turkish policymakers as being within the sphere of Turkey's geopolitical responsibility, as well as a region that currently poses the greatest number of threats to the country's security. The Iraq policy is one example. The Turkish government was against the US War against Iraq and its relations with the United States became very strained in 2003. In the end, following intensive bargaining Turkey secured \$US 16 billion in grants and loans along with an agreement that 20,000 Turkish troops could enter northern Iraq to protect Turkish interests there. According to state department senior officials at the time, Turkey also secured that all her vital concerns would be incorporated in the final version of the Annan Plan, following arbitration by the UN Secretary General. Despite the deal, the Turkish Parliament voted against allowing the US to open a northern front to invade Iraq from Turkish territory. Instead, both before and after the War, Turkey organized a number of meetings of the extended neighboring countries of Iraq with the participation of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Kuwait, intended to pave the way for Iraq to be considered not only an American issue but an international one, being dealt with within the framework of the UN. Moreover, Turkey's involvement was another way of further establishing its position in the Middle East as a facilitator and an important actor in the region, as well as safeguarding the unity of Iraq and averting its disintegration and fragmentation. Turkey's efforts to integrate the Sunni community in Iraq into the system are prevalent, while at the same time it maintains contacts and dialogue with all other groups within Iraq, even with the Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq. Yet the primary concern of Turkey over Iraq remains Kirkuk and how it will safeguard its perceived vital interests in Northern Iraq. As Davutoglu himself admitted in a Council on Foreign Relations speech, "Kirkuk is important because it is a multi-ethnic state and also Kirkuk is the oil-rich city. So everybody wants to get Kirkuk". Following the elections in the United States, Turkey became increasingly concerned over the US President's intentions for an early and full US withdrawal from Iraq, fearing a full scale civil war and an eventual break up which will have detrimental effects to Turkey's vital interests in the region.

Davutoglu's articulation of Turkey's Middle East policy is based on the following principles:

- Regional security for all, no one or the other side.
- Dialogue as the means of solving the region's problem, highlighting Turkey's role as mediator and communication channel;
- Economic interdependence
- Cultural coexistence and plurality

Davutoglu is widely considered the architect of dialogue with all the political actors in the Middle East, including the most controversial ones like HAMAS leader Khaled al Mashal. He has been also instrumental in Turkey's mediation between Syria and Israel. As Asil Aydintasbas wrote in the Forbes Magazine issue of last February, "under the AK Party Turkey has been delving into areas that its traditional westward-looking foreign policy considered off-limits, acting as a power-broker in far off disputes from Afghanistan to Palestine and Iran. In doing so, it certainly has become more enmeshed in the Muslim world, sometimes even positioning itself as the spokesman for the Islamic world, as reflected by Erdogan's outburst in Davos against Peres, or Turkey's reluctance to accept Danish Prime Minister Anders Rasmussen as the head of NATO, due to his stance during the Danish cartoon crisis"

It should be also mentioned that Ankara in its intensely promoted relations with Moscow, tries to avoid taking sides in any "Russia versus the West" problems. During the Russia-Georgia crisis of last year, Prime Minister Erdogan pointed out the importance of relations with Russia in the following way: "America is our ally and the Russian Federation is an important neighbor. Russia is our number one trade partner. We are obtaining two thirds of our energy from Russia. We act in accordance to our national interests. We cannot ignore Russia". To contain any crises in the region, Turkey suggested last year a Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform to configure a dialogue between the three Caucasus states, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, Russia and Turkey. No results have yet been produced from this initiative, primarily because of the issue of Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan's agitation against any potential rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia and/or Russia.

As a last example we should mention Turkey's successful initiatives to create an energy hub in Turkey. According to Davutoglu: "Thanks to the geographical position Turkey enjoys, part of its national strategy involves facilitating the transit of energy across its territory". It is, therefore, natural to remain preoccupied as to how to ensure that its role as an energy transit country will not be jeopardized by instability and conflict in the region. A web of pipelines already crosses Turkey, carrying hydrocarbons along east-west and north-south energy corridors. Among the most significant is the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, which connects the Caspian and the Mediterranean through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. One million barrels of Caspian crude is pumped each day through the \$4 billion pipeline. Another important pipeline is the Turkey-Greece Interconnector which has the capacity to transport 11.5 billion cubic meters of natural gas from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz field. An extension planned to link the line to Italy is expected to be operational by 2012. Other pipelines already pumping or in the works in Turkey include the Blue Stream pipeline which connects mainland Russia with mainland Turkey and will eventually deliver 16 billion cubic meters of gas annually once operating in full capacity, the Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline, a proposed bypass to the heavily traveled Bosphorus shipping lane, this 350 mile long line would transport oil from the Kashagan oil field in Kazakhstan's portion of the Caspian Sea and finally the recently signed major project, the Nabucco pipeline. This multinational pipeline, projected to open in 2015 would transport gas mainly from Azerbaijan with future contributions

from Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and other sources, to Central Europe through the Turkish gas hub of Erzerum. The main objective behind this last project is to diversify supply to EU countries, while bypassing Russian territory. Turkey in the meantime, is keeping its options open. Bulent Aliriza, Turkey project director at the Center for Strategic and International Studies says posturing by Moscow has pushed Ankara to balance its cooperation with the West while expanding cooperation with Russia and Iran.

As we have said earlier, this new neo-Ottoman, pro-active foreign policy of the AK Party government and its architect Ahmet Davutoglu, has received a lot of criticism both from within Turkey, but also from outside circles. One veteran Turkish diplomat described him as “having the capacity to fill old wine in new bottles”, because according to him there is little new in Turkish foreign policy, it is merely being repackaged. Ankara in his view has been unable to match the “pro-active” foreign policy with practical achievements. This is because of Turkey’s quasi-state nature, i.e. not functioning like a state- as long as real democracy does not fully function within all the institutions in the country. As another critic, retired ambassador and columnist Temel Iskit put it “It is hard to say that this visibility has increased Turkey’s effectiveness. For example, Turkey could not reap any harvest from its role as a facilitator in the Middle East. The Palestinian issue remains in stalemate and Turkey was not given any credit for the Israel-Hamas ceasefire”. In another article entitled “Vision or Illusion? Ahmet Davutoglu’s State of Harmony in Regional Relations”, the authors Kaya and Karaveli conclude with the following observation which I quote:

“The pull of economy and of ideology – of Arab capital and of political Islam – is inevitably making Turkey more Muslim Middle Eastern in its foreign policy outlook. Yet, the assumption that guides this foreign policy reorientation, personified by Ahmet Davutoglu, suffers from important weaknesses. The expectation that Turkey, empowered by its “strategic depth,” is destined to move to the center of international politics has already been revealed as highly unrealistic.

The effort to search for dialogue and understanding in a region beset by power rivalries, and not least by pathological suspicions of the intentions of the “other”, is laudable in itself. Yet the tendency to postulate a state of harmony, of the possibility of having “zero problems” with all neighbors, reflects a wishful thinking that is sure to be tested severely by regional realities”.

Now from a Cyprus perspective one thing remains obvious. On the one hand Turkey has increased its visibility and political weight internationally. Its recent election to the UN Security Council, its inclusion in the G20 and the Obama administration’s full support behind Turkey’s new pivotal role, are indicative of this strengthened position in the region and beyond. On the other hand, however, nothing seems to have changed in Turkey’s stand towards Cyprus, Greece, Armenia and the Kurdish issue, because these issues continue to remain under the firm grip of the Turkish military, being considered as the most important national issues that cannot move away from the jurisdiction of the army. Hence the Turkish air force’s continuing provocations in the Aegean, continuing threats regarding Cyprus’ legitimate oil and gas exploration plans, Ankara’s recent decision to authorize its oil corporation, the Turkish Petroleum Corporation to explore for oil in the Eastern Mediterranean, off the coast of Cyprus, as well as its continuous violations of Cyprus’ airspace are all indicative of this unchanged Turkish policy vis-à-vis Greece and Cyprus. Regarding the Cyprus question itself, it would be rather difficult in such a short period of time to analyze the policy of the Erdogan government and point to any possible changes

with previous administrations. One fact remains unchanged. The Turkish military, which continues to occupy Cyprus Republic territory, continues to have the first and final say on development on the island and its prospects for a solution. The previously mentioned observation of the veteran Turkish diplomat regarding Davutoglu, that he has the capability to fill old wine in new bottles, is absolutely fitting in the case of Turkey's Cyprus policy. Nothing in fact has changed regarding the Turkish positions on the Cyprus issue. To the opposite, I see further deterioration. When Mr. Davutoglu and the other Turkish officials do not even mention the word federation, let alone bizonal, bicomunal federation, as the basis for a Cyprus settlement and instead stress bizonality, new partnership based on political equality of two founding states and effective Turkish guarantees, this is nothing else but the old Turkish recipe of partition and separation based on ethnic and religious criteria. On the 17th of July this year, the Turkish foreign minister contradicted even more his theories of "strategic depth" and "zero conflict with neighbors" when, characterizing the ongoing negotiations in Cyprus as the last chance, he launched an indirect threat to the effect that either the Cyprus problem will be resolved by the end of the year, or Turkey will be forced to think about alternatives. The continuing non-recognition of the Republic of Cyprus, a member of the EU that Turkey wants to join, by the Turkish government and its refusal to implement the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement as far as Cyprus is concerned, by continuing to restrict Cyprus flag and Cyprus related vessels from entering Turkish ports and Cyprus registered airlines from using Turkish airports and air traffic corridors, constitutes also a sharp contradiction of the theory and philosophy behind Ahmet Davutoglu's "strategic depth". It is also a clear indication that the Turkish army is the one that dictates the Turkish Republic's Cyprus policy.

Above all, if Turkey wants to be considered a reliable power in the region and beyond, it has to be consistent. Whatever policies it promotes in Iraq, must equally be promoted elsewhere, where Turkey has perceived interests. When Ahmet Davutoglu rightly speaks against the idea of ethno-sectarian conflict in the Middle East and strongly holds that: "Historically, none of the Middle Eastern cities have been composed of a homogeneous ethnic and sectarian fabric. In order to establish order in the Middle East it is essential to maintain this composition in one way or another", he cannot condone and perpetuate policies of ethnic separation in Cyprus. When he strongly argues about the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq and Georgia he cannot condone and perpetuate the military occupation of Cyprus Republic territory, which is part of the territory of the EU.

Turkey's accession process for membership in the European Union provides the right avenue to achieve the necessary transformations in Turkey's international and domestic conduct as far as respect for international law and human rights are concerned. The EU is very clear on the criteria and on Turkey's obligations. Turkey cannot be treated in a different way from other candidates on the grounds that it now wants to portray itself as a global power. Big or small nations must equally go through the same transformations in order to have a chance to be admitted to the EU. No exceptions, no blank checks are permitted and no threats can change the rules.

Cyprus has always been supportive of Turkey's accession to the European Union. It views this prospect as a Win-Win situation for all parties concerned. No one would stand to lose from such membership. Of course, Turkey would stand to benefit first and foremost, by being able to consolidate democracy and to curb the Kemalist influence and role of the Turkish military in Turkish politics. Cyprus would also benefit by having as a neighbor a fully European country that abides by international law and human rights. Also Greece, the European Union, regional peace

and prosperity would also stand to benefit from such transformation and membership Turkey. Nevertheless, Turkey's EU accession process is an issue that has created, over the last couple of years, heated discussions in Europe, with positions voiced against Turkish membership on demographic, geographic, political and cultural grounds. This is not the place to discuss in depth these arguments and the difficulties surrounding Turkey's membership prospects. What remains important is for Turkey to continue with the necessary reforms that have been stalled for the past two years and proceed without delay to implement its commitments towards the EU. This would definitely give a sure boost to the process. Otherwise, it will continue to face many insurmountable obstacles.

I do not profess to be an expert on Turkey's foreign policy. I do hope, however, that I have given the right incentives through this presentation that could spark a dialogue around this table. Definitely, through such dialogue we could become wiser at the end of the day on this and other related issues.

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