

**Address to the United States House of Representatives
Committee for International Relations
on Current Issues in U.S.-Turkey Relations**

Washington D.C., April 12, 2005

Tai-Heng Cheng*

I am Tai-Heng Cheng, an attorney with Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP, but I come today as a member of Network 20/20 and speak to you in that capacity. Thank you for taking time from your busy schedules to meet with Network 20/20 to discuss our fact-finding mission in Turkey last Fall. I'd like to thank Mr. Richard Mereu and Mr. Hillel Wineberg for extending the Committee for International Relations' invitation to us, and to Kevin Murphy for working so hard to organize this event. Thank you Kevin.

I am delighted to be here to report on Network 20/20's numerous interviews with Turkish cabinet ministers, military generals, opposition politicians, NGOs, academics and leading businessmen. Although we've presented our findings at the Turkey Consulate in New York, the New York City Bar Association, the Kennedy School at Harvard and in colleges all across the South, it is truly a privilege *bar none* to meet with you today.

In 2003, the U.S. government was caught off guard when Turkey's Parliament could not muster enough votes to allow our troops access to Turkey in our Iraq intervention.

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Network 20/20 went to Turkey to learn more about the country in the hope that there should not be such surprises in future.

Today, Turkey continues to impact key U.S. foreign policies. Looking West from Ankara, Turkey's possible accession to the EU could profoundly change Europe and our relationship with it. Looking East, Turkey's responses to the Kurds in Iraq and to Iran impact our global security policy. To leave time for your questions on these and other issues, I will focus on three high-level findings in my presentation:

- (1) Turkey and democracy;
- (2) Turkey and the EU;
- (3) Turkey and radical Islam.

A. Turkey and Democracy

Turkey is becoming increasingly democratic and liberal. In Network 20/20's interviews with military generals, we were impressed that they were respectful of the democratically elected government. Significantly, the Chairman of the National Security Council, what some call the "shadow cabinet," for the first time is a civilian and not a military officer. Cabinet ministers and parliamentarians stressed to us that the AKP party, which is presently in power, is a populist party whose support base originated from Anatolia. AKP parliamentarians and ministers still account for popular opinion in their policies.

However, should the military perceive the Turkish Republic to be under attack internally by radical Islam or externally by terrorist groups or other threats, the military might reassert control over Turkey. A former intelligence officer turned political strategist alleged that each Cabinet Minister is given a book by the National Security Council which outlines the

boundaries of his Ministerial power.¹ At a meeting with ASAM—ostensibly a think-tank but run by former generals—at their underground bunker, I asked them about suspected radical sects. A younger director told us that ASAM has its eye on radical groups and, perhaps in a momentary slip, said that ASAM will act should things get out of hand. A senior general quickly corrected this unfortunate young director by clarifying that ASAM “would ask the government to act.” At another meeting, a retired general who had also been a NATO commander said that if the Kurds in Iraq continued threatening Turkish security and the United States did not control them, the Turkish military may reconsider its non-intervention policy in Iraq.

Not only do the military and its affiliated groups appear to be willing to intervene if they perceive the Turkish Republic to be under threat, they have the power to do so. The military recruits Turkey’s most outstanding youths and provides them with superior education. Its long vetting process before officers rise to leadership positions minimizes infiltration by Islamist radicals and other disruptive elements. The military bank Oyak has over \$3.6 billion in declared assets.²

In light of the power of the military and its willingness to deploy that power even though Turkey is democratizing, the United States should continue to engage the Turkish military. We cannot just focus on Turkey’s elected government. We should also be aware that some military officers lean towards the Caucasus and Central Asia rather than the United States. As an emblematic example, ASAM displayed at our meeting the flags of Central Asian countries

¹ Without access to this highly confidential document, it is difficult to conclusively assess whether this document imposes limits on Ministerial power, or whether it is a more benign document setting out national security concerns in a manner similar to U.S. State Department reports.

² See Turkey Report, at 8.

rather than of the United States, in stark contrast to many of our meetings where the U.S. flag hung alongside the Turkish flag.

B. Turkey and the EU

Many sectors of Turkish society are keen to join the EU. For the government, EU accession should open up labor and consumer markets. For the Turks, EU accession might translate into more jobs and higher wages. For civic organizations, EU accession will hopefully usher greater respect for human rights and civil society. At meeting after meeting, officials sought the United States's support for EU accession.

I regard EU accession for Turkey to be in U.S. interests. The EU could serve as a proxy to manage Turkey at low cost to the United States while maintaining our access to Turkey's strategic geographical location. EU accession could also help to counter-balance the influence of the original EU member states within their organization with the newer pro-U.S. member states. Conversely, the costs of non-EU accession could be high. A foreign policy advisor to the Turkey's Prime Minister hinted that Turkey could align itself with China and the Caucasus if Turkey was rejected from the EU. A hollow threat perhaps, but nonetheless indicative of Turkey's willingness to consider all options and to respond and contribute to changing global power balances.

The most important question is however not whether Turkey should be allowed to join the EU because EU accession, if it occurs, will be decades away. The more pressing issue now is how to manage Turkey during its decades-long accession process. The carrot of EU accession has led Turkey to rapidly modernize, democratize and to support Western European and U.S. interests. The EU accession process should continue to be leveraged to sustain Turkey's support for American values and interests. However, too rapid a change risks a

backlash from the socially and religiously conservative Anatolians. Without popular support from Anatolia, the AKP government may lose its ability to control radical Islam and other destabilizing vectors in Turkish society. The AKP party may reverse their modernizing policies to shore up electoral support. We can continue to push for change using the EU issue, but we need to push gently.

C. Turkey and Radical Islam

Turkey is a valuable partner in combating radical Islamist terrorism. Turkey is staunchly secular because of its secular military roots and is likely to remain so. Due to Turkey's cultural and historical ties with Turkic populations from Germany to China, it can exert a moderating influence on militant Islam in Central Asia and the Middle East. Turkish officials report that Turkey has and continues to be a go-between the United States and less friendly states, such as Syria and Iran, by passing messages between our countries. According to these officials, Turkey also shares intelligence with us on terrorist groups.

By the same token, because of its strong links to the Middle Eastern region, Turkey is vulnerable to external destabilizing factors and terrorist cells. When we were in Turkey, we were lavishly hosted by the Gülen sect. Their associated business group, İSHAD, organized a grand dinner at the Four Seasons in our honor. We heard allegations that Gülen sect members include senior cabinet members, media editors, business moguls and civil society leaders. Some of these alleged Gülen followers met with us. We also heard allegations that Gülen group was affiliated with other religious groups that have expanded beyond Turkey, such as the Nur Group, which exerts influence in Turkmenistan. While the Gülen sect's message is ostensibly peaceful, their leader, Fethullah Gülen, who is resident in United States, is wanted by the Turkish government for allegedly delivering a sermon calling on his followers to rise up

when the time is ripe. We do not know enough to pass judgment about the Gülen group. Is it simply a powerful moderate religious group not unlike some religious groups in the United States, or does it have a more insidious agenda?

The United States should watch this group closely. More broadly, the United States should be prepared to help Turkey oppose radical Islam so that Turkey can continue to moderate radical movements in the Middle East.

D. Conclusion

Turkey's importance to U.S. foreign policy cannot be understated. In order to effectively engage Turkey to promote global security and advance U.S. interests, policy-makers should be aware of the nuances of Turkish society and the complexities of the Middle-East.

Thank you for putting up with me so patiently through this presentation. I am always impressed by the Committee on International Relations' deep understanding of some faraway countries. Mr. Alan Makovsky, who is here today, has an encyclopedic knowledge of Turkey and I plan to deflect difficult questions to him. I hope that my brief remarks have been an aperitif to an in-depth conversation with you all about U.S.-Turkish relations.

Appendix: List of Persons Interviewed by Network 20/20

I. Persons Interviewed in Turkey

Academia

Atilla Askar	<i>President Koç University</i>
Fatoş Göksen	<i>Assistant Professor of Sociology Koç University</i>
Fuat Keyman	<i>Professor of International Relations Koç University</i>
Hasan Subaşı	<i>Distinguished Executive in Residence Koç University</i>
Şuhnaz Yılmaz	<i>Department of International Relations Koç University</i>
Bariş Tan	<i>Professor of Operations Management Director of Graduate School of Business Koç University</i>
Kemal Yılmaz	<i>MBA Student Koç University</i>
S. Gülden Ayman	<i>Director, TÜSIAD Boğaziçi University, Foreign Policy Forum</i>

Think Tanks and Non-Profit Organizations

Hasan Ali Karasar	<i>Chairman, Turkestan Studies ASAM (Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies)</i>
Major General (Ret.) Armağan Kuloğlu	<i>Head of Geopolitics and Strategic Studies ASAM</i>
Navy Captain (Ret.) Yılmaz Aklar	<i>Senior Researcher, Geopolitics and Strategic Studies ASAM</i>
Kemal Köprülü	<i>General Coordinator ARI Movement</i>
Özgül Erdemli	<i>Secretary General, International Relations ARI Movement</i>
Haluk Önen	<i>Member of the Coordination Council ARI Movement</i>

Kaya Aslan	<i>Deputy General Secretary ARI Movement</i>
Elcan Yılmaz	<i>Board Member ARI Movement</i>
Ural Aküzüm	<i>General Secretary of Local Development ARI Movement</i>
M. Faruk Demir	<i>General Manager GELECEK International Consultancy</i>
Altay Gökakın	<i>Senior Advisor GELECEK International Consultancy</i>
Fatma Kabasakallı	<i>Foreign Relations Assistant GELECEK International Consultancy</i>
Ayşe Bilge Dicleli	<i>Chairwoman KA-DER (Association for Support and Training of Women Candidates)</i>
Sevi Bozoğlu	<i>Attorney at Law KA-DER</i>
Seyhan Ekşioğlu	<i>Attorney at Law KA-DER</i>
Nil Mutluer	<i>Academician İstanbul Bilgi University KA-DER</i>
Ayşe Bilge Dicleli	<i>Publisher KA-DER</i>
Dr. Mustafa Şahin	<i>President European Studies Department, ASAM</i>
Şanlı Bahadır Koç	<i>Researcher USA Research Desk, ASAM</i>
Rana Birden Güneş	<i>Civil Society Development Programme</i>

Business

Erkut Yüceoğlu	<i>TÜSIAD (Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association)</i>
Ahmet Ciğer	<i>Vice President İSHAD (Business Life Cooperation Association)</i>
Levent Kenez	<i>Deputy Secretary General Foreign Relations, İSHAD</i>

Mustafa M. Günay	<i>Executive Board Member / Secretary General İSHAD</i>
İsmail Köksal	<i>Secretary General TOBB (Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey)</i>
Füsun Karacasoy	<i>Manager, Department of International Relations TOBB</i>
Duru D. Özkaban	<i>Head, Department of Foreign Economic Relations TOBB</i>
Kemaleddin Koyuncu	<i>Deputy Head of Department Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency</i>
Ahmed K. Han	<i>Executive Consultant Turkish Exporters Assembly</i>
O. Faruk Berksan	<i>President KAR Groups of Companies</i>
Mustafa Baştuğ	<i>Chairman of the Board Uşak Industrialists and Businessmen Association</i>
Ahmet Demirel	<i>Senior Executive Vice President TSKB (Turkish Development Bank)</i>
Süleyman Kan	<i>Chairman of the Board Baykan Group</i>
Yaşar Küçükçalık	<i>President Küçükçalık</i>
Ömer Sengüller	<i>Chairman Sessfoods</i>
Dr. Erkut Yücedoğlu	<i>Chairman of the Board TURKUAZ Tourism Investment and Trade</i>
Ahmet Çalık	<i>President Çalık Holding</i>
Necdet Timur	<i>Orgeneral, (Ret.)</i>
Erdal Bahçivan	<i>General Manager Bahçivan Food Industry and Trade A.S.</i>
M. Fatih Balatacı	<i>General Manager AKFEL Group, Energy and Pipeline Solutions</i>
Gülsün Bozkurt	<i>Sultan Kaniklari (The Sultan's Boat)</i>
Selçuk Sevinç	<i>Assistant to the President Calik Holding, A.S.</i>

Serhat Albayrak *Deputy General Manager
Calik Holding, A.S.*

Evrin Rizvanođlu *Business Development Manager
Fermak Construction Company*

Government

Recep Tayyip Erdođan *Prime Minister*

Egemen Bađıs *Foreign Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister*

Ali Babacan *State Minister in Charge of Economy (AKP)*

Mustafa Rumeli *Chief of Staff, Office of the State Minister Ali Babacan*

Cemil iek *Minister of Justice (AKP)*

Mehmet Kemal Bozay *Director of Iraq Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

Ebru Barutu *Head of Department, Policy Planning,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

Dr. Skri M. Elekdađ *Member of Parliament
İstanbul, Turkish General Assembly*

T. Ziyaddin Akbulut *Member of the Parliament
Tekirdađ, Turkish General Assembly*

Meral Barlas *Deputy Directorate General for the Americas
Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

Local Government

Mustafa Sarigl *Mayor of ŐiŐli, İstanbul*

American Embassy in Ankara

Eric Edelman *U.S. Ambassador to Turkey*

John Kunstadter *Advisor, Political Affairs*

Stuart Smith *Political and Economic Section Chief
Consulate General of the United States of America*

Media

Aslı AydintaŐbaŐ *Columnist
Yeni Binyıl*

Nuri Çolakođlu	<i>Coordinator for Print Media and TVs DOĐAN Media Group</i>
Ekrem Dumanlı	<i>Editor- in- Chief Turkish Daily ZAMAN</i>
Abdülhamit Bilici	<i>Foreign News Editor Turkish Daily ZAMAN</i>
Dođan Satmıř	<i>Hürriyet</i>
Harun Tokak	<i>President The Journalists and Writers Foundation</i>
Mustafa Akyol	<i>Director of International Relations Journalists and Writers Foundation</i>
Nevval Sevindi	<i>Journalist/ Writer and Chief Advisor Journalists and Writers Foundation</i>
Murat Yetkin	<i>Ankara Representative Turkish Daily RADIKAL</i>
Sedat Ergin	<i>Hürriyet</i>
Celil Sađir	<i>Diplomatic Correspondent ZAMAN</i>
İsmail Birol Konuk	<i>Journalists and Writers Foundation</i>

Military

İlhan Kılıç	<i>General TUAF (Ret.) 22nd Commander TUAF</i>
Dr. H. Edip Bařer	<i>Director Yeditepe University Institute of Atatürk's Principles and Revolution History</i>
Ogan Soysal	<i>Strategic and Social Researchers Foundation The Marmara Group</i>

II. List of Persons Interviewed in the United States

Washington

Abdullah Akyuz	<i>Representative to the United States Turkish Industrialist' and Businessmen Association (TUSIAD)</i>
Zeyno Baran	<i>Director, International Security and Energy Programs Nixon Center</i>
Yakup Beris	<i>Deputy Representative TUSIAD</i>
Matt Bryza	<i>Director of Aegean, Caucasus and Central Asia U.S. National Security Council</i>
Soner Cagaptay	<i>Director of the Turkish Research Program Washington Institute for Near East Policy</i>
O. Faruk Logoglu	<i>Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey Embassy of the Republic of Turkey</i>
Larry Silverman	<i>Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs U.S. Department of State</i>

New York

Turkkaya Atavo	<i>Professor Ankara University</i>
Talat Halman	<i>Professor Ankara University</i>
Clark B. Lombardi	<i>Cleary Gottlieb Steen and Hamilton</i>
Dilek Pamir	<i>Wife of the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations</i>
Ömer Önhon	<i>Consul General Consulate of the Republic of Turkey in New York</i>
Rodney B. Wagner	<i>Retired Vice-Chairman J.P. Morgan</i>

Boston

Samuel Huntington	<i>Vehbi Koc Professor of Turkish Studies Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University</i>
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Pittsburg

Omer Bilen	<i>Master Candidate in Public Policy and Management Heinz School, Carnegie Mellon University</i>
Martin Black	<i>Director, Career Services Carnegie Mellon University</i>
Suleyman Erdem	<i>Masters Candidate in Public Policy and Management Heinz School, Carnegie Mellon University</i>