Atlantic Council

TURKEY'S EUROPEAN JOURNEY

A Ringside View

Sir Peter Westmacott

The Atlantic Council is a nonpartisan organization that promotes constructive US leadership and engagement in international affairs based on the central role of the Atlantic community in meeting today's global challenges.

Atlantic Council, 1030 15th Street, NW, 12th Floor, Washington, DC 20005
(202) 463-7226, www.AtlanticCouncil.org

ISBN: 978-1-61977-403-2

Cover credit: European Union.

This report is written and published in accordance with the Atlantic Council Policy on Intellectual Independence. The author is solely responsible for its analysis and recommendations. The Atlantic Council and its donors do not determine, nor do they necessarily endorse or advocate for, any of this report's conclusions.

June 2017 - Second edition

CONTENTS

Introduction 1
Chapter 1 5
Chapter 2 9
Chapter 3 14
Chapter 4 18
Chapter 5 23
Chapter 6 34
Chapter 7 38
Chapter 8 40
Chapter 9 49

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1976, at the end of my home leave halfway through my four-year tour of duty as a young member of the British embassy's political team in Iran, I bought an old Land Rover Dormobile, bundled my family into it, and set off overland from London for Tehran. Stopping off to visit the extraordinary ruins of Ephesus, Pamukkale, and Hierapolis in Turkey, I felt that this was a country, like Iran, of such remarkable beauty, culture, civilization, and history that it would be worth getting to know it better.

I might not have had the opportunity. At that time, eastern Turkey was poor and dangerous, and local Kurdish villagers had become adept at stopping and robbing the growing number of well-off Europeans—and Iranians—driving out to Iran to seek their fortunes as the shah invested in what he called The Great Civilization. Those who didn't follow experienced travelers' advice never to drive at night east of Ankara sometimes didn't make it to the border at all.

Eleven years after that journey, I found myself in Ankara as head of chancery—a role that no longer exists in British embassies but was a stimulating combination of head of political section, director of human resources, chief of staff to the ambassador, and last resort for those who couldn't find anyone else to solve their problems.

Had I known I would be returning to Turkey some years later as ambassador, I like to think I would have made a better fist of learning Turkish. Wonderful as my Turkish teacher was, however, there was a limit to how much I was going to learn from a part-time language course in East London two hours from home while preparing the family to head overseas again.

My tour of duty in Ankara lasted from 1987 to 1990. Already the country was beginning the process of change and modernization that it needed if it was going to fulfil its potential as the only secular democracy in the Islamic Middle East that respected the rule of law and had a high-quality civil service, a powerful and well-equipped military, and a young, increasingly well-educated population, all underpinned by a strong sense of national pride in being the inheritors of the Ottoman Empire.

Soon after arriving, I wrote a paper asking whether an Iran-style revolution was a possibility in Turkey. I concluded that it wasn't, because the army wouldn't let it happen, because the secularism of the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), had taken root, and because the

traditions of Sunni Islam in Turkey—where even the imams of the mosques were civil servants—were very different from those of Shia Iran. By the time Turkey came close to succumbing to an Islamist coup in July 2016, only some of that was still true—but the coup still failed.

The modernization I witnessed didn't last long. In 1989 the reformist if controversial Prime Minister Turgut Özal moved upstairs to the less powerful but more prestigious position of president of the republic, dying in office a little over three years later. His successors allowed Turkey to drift back to the days of a weak coalition government and institutionalized corruption, culminating in financial and banking crises at the end of the 1990s and a humiliating defeat of the governing coalition parties at the hands of a new Islamist party, the Justice and Development Party, or AKP, in the general election of November 2002.

"[T]hat is one of many reasons why I became convinced that Turkey needed to believe it could one day be a member of the European Union (EU), and that I should do what I could both to help it meet the conditions of entry and to get the process started."

But the late 1980s and early '90s were times when Turkey was open for tourism and people could travel freely and safely almost anywhere, inconvenienced only by the occasional road block in the Kurdish southeast where the military and the gendarmerie kept a close eye on the activities of the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK (still, alas, engaged in terrorism thirty years later). Around the shores of the magnificent turquoise-blue Lake Van we would come across plenty of foreign tourists, including intrepid Germans in Das Rollende Hotel buses towing their accommodation behind them. Traveling round the country with a family of three small children, I never had any concern for our physical safety.

Turkish hospitality and helpfulness were legendary. The transformation of Turkish society and institutions was nevertheless patchy. We lived in an apartment one floor above our landlord in the residential area of Gazi Osman Pasha. I recall the landlord declaring one day that some of his wife's jewelry had gone missing and Ali our doorman—the ubiquitous *kapici*—must be responsible. So Ali was taken off to the police station where he was questioned for forty-eight hours. When he came home and I asked how he was, he showed me the signs of the beatings he had received. He was released because he

clearly couldn't say where the jewelry was. He hadn't taken it—the jewelry turned up soon afterwards in the landlord's flat.

There is a telling passage in Stephen Kinzer's excellent account of his time in Turkey with *The New York Times*, *Crescent and Star*, written more than a decade later, where he describes asking a Turk who had been treated in a similar fashion why he wouldn't lodge a formal complaint. The man told him he had been beaten by his father, he had been beaten at school, and he had been beaten doing his national service, so he didn't expect to be treated any differently in a police station.

Realizing that life doesn't have to be like this is an essential first step to dealing with the problem. And that is one of many reasons why I became convinced that Turkey needed to believe it could one day be a member of the European Union (EU), and that I should do what I could both to help it meet the conditions of entry and to get the process started.

View of Haghia Sophia, the magnificent 6th Century Christian basilica which became a mosque in Ottoman times and is now a museum in Istanbul, Turkey. *Photo credit*: Daniel Burka.

CHAPTER 1

The 1990s were a bad decade for Turkey, with poor governance, corruption, economic crises, and continuing conflict in the southeast. In 1997, for the fourth time in less than forty years, the army stepped in—this time without resort to force—to change the government. It did not assume power. But it did tell the leader of the Islamist Welfare Party, Necmettin Erbakan, that his position as prime minister had become untenable.

In the spring of 2001, as a deputy under-secretary of state at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), I found myself back in Ankara for a series of meetings. David Logan, the then ambassador and an old friend, hosted a dinner for me to meet Turkish officials. Half of them turned out to be old friends. On the flight back to London the next day, I decided that I should apply to succeed David when he retired at the end of the year.

Why? I knew the place and quite a number of people in Ankara and Istanbul. Turkey was a key country in a volatile region. It was a secular democracy, albeit an incomplete one, and the British government supported its aspiration to join the EU. It was a member of NATO and the Council of Europe. It was key to the United Kingdom's (UK's) obligation, as a guarantor power from colonial days, to try and find a solution to the Cyprus problem. It was an energy corridor. It controlled access to the straits between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. It had a series of unresolved sovereignty and airspace disputes with Greece that needed careful management. We had important business links but needed better ones. And it was a country of extraordinary natural beauty and breathtaking archaeology. I thought I could make a difference and enjoy doing so.

That wasn't quite how Foreign Secretary Robin Cook saw it. I had returned to the FCO from my first stint in Washington to become Americas director a few weeks before the UK's general election in May 1997, which swept the New Labour administration of Tony Blair to power, and Cook to the FCO. Several difficult issues arose in the next few years that brought me into close contact with Cook—some of which initially convinced him that I was one of many members of the FCO who he thought were closet, or not so closet, Conservatives determined to see him fail.

But over the years, as we worked together on issues ranging from a white paper reviewing our responsibilities for Britain's overseas territories, to the conclusion of an agreement with Argentina improving links to the Falkland Islands and the detention in Britain on human rights grounds of former

Chilean president Augusto Pinochet, the former president of Chile, distrust gave way to respect and even warmth.

So much so that when I told Cook in the spring of 2001 that I wanted to return to Ankara, he did his best to dissuade me. He would prefer me to stay in London, he said. And if I was determined to go abroad after five years at home, I could surely do better than Turkey—not his favorite country. After all, my level of seniority meant that I could reasonably expect to move on to a more prestigious posting.

From my perspective, going to Ankara would amount to a minor demotion. But I had always believed in going for jobs I wanted rather than those that were deemed to be good for my career, on the simple grounds that people tend to be happiest, and to fulfil their true potential, when they are doing something they enjoy.

Cook didn't insist: it was my life and he wouldn't stand in my way. He also pointed out that he could be out of a job at any time. Sure enough, in June 2001, before it was even confirmed that I was going back to Turkey, Cook was replaced at the FCO by Jack Straw and made leader of the House of Commons. In British politics, change can be sudden and brutal.

I arrived back in Ankara in January 2002 after an eventful and fairly stressful last few months in London. The 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon took place in my last few weeks in my old job. My second marriage, to Susie Nemazee, took place in London on October 6, 2001—just before the launch of coalition attacks against al-Qaeda and the Taliban administration in Afghanistan. Susie couldn't quite understand why I was happy to let our wedding proceed but had already cancelled my farewell reception in the FCO three days later—by which time I knew, but couldn't say, that the air campaign in Afghanistan would have begun.

Ankara in mid-winter can be bleak and cold. But we rapidly settled in and I felt sure the decision to return had been the right one. Part of the key to a successful tour as a diplomat overseas is to convince your hosts that you are there because you want to be, and that you believe in the future of their country. It helped that, in our case, both were true.

This was not entirely accidental: in recent years the UK's diplomatic service has made a better job than most of ensuring that vacancies are filled through a bidding system, which means that even at relatively junior levels our diplomats tend to go to places they have themselves selected.

Knowing people from my previous tour of duty in Ankara helped. I tried but, having cancelled the first one three times, rapidly gave up on Turkish language

lessons. Susie was more determined, and more successful. She already had good French, Persian, and Spanish and knew that learning Turkish would help her develop relationships with Turkish women. She did pretty well with the men too. It wasn't long before Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, as he then was, started asking me why my wife spoke better Turkish than I did when, unlike myself, she hadn't lived in his country before.

It was also an advantage that Susie's parents came from next-door Iran. Iranians and Turks historically didn't have much time for each other, as inheritors of what were for hundreds of years two rival empires, both Muslim but one Shia and the other Sunni. But a close friendship that formed between Iran's Reza Shah and the founder of modern Turkey, Kemal Atatürk, in the 1920s added warmth, and by the time we arrived back in Ankara visa-free travel between the two countries had led to a million Iranians living in Turkey and to the establishment of close business and energy links.

I presented my credentials to President Ahmet Necdet Sezer in February 2002, just in time to make it to Istanbul for a meeting of the foreign ministers of the EU and the Organization of the Islamic Conference held in glorious sunshine on the shores of the Bosphorus.

"Part of the key to a successful tour as a diplomat overseas is to convince your hosts that you are there because you want to be, and that you believe in the future of their country. It helped that, in our case, both were true."

My next few months were focused largely on trying to persuade the Turks to assume a leadership role within NATO's International Security Assistance Force, which the US and its allies were setting up in Afghanistan. The military campaign launched in October met with a good deal of early success, at least against the Taliban if not in running al-Qaeda into the ground. But it was already clear that the allies would need a continuing military presence so it was with some relief that, with the help of a series of senior visitors from London, we were eventually able to persuade the Turks to say yes.

By the early summer of 2002 it was clear that Turkey's three-party coalition government led by Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit was lacking both effectiveness and credibility. The one bright spot was the way Kemal Derviş, a former World Bank economist, had answered the call from Ecevit the year before, joined the

government as finance minister, and almost single-handedly put the Turkish economy back on its feet. Derviş shut down insolvent banks, carried out overdue structural reforms, reasserted the independence of the central bank, and began to stabilize the currency.

But it was too late to save the government. In the space of a single farcical day in July 2002, Derviş received me with a visiting British ministerial delegation, resigned as minister of finance, and changed his mind later in the afternoon when President Sezer begged him to reconsider. Three weeks later one of the three deputy prime ministers resigned and a second said he would not oppose holding an early general election, which then became inevitable.

On November 2, 2002, the AKP, created just fourteen months earlier from the ashes of the Welfare Party shut down by the military in 1997, swept to victory with 34.5 percent of the vote and two-thirds of the seats in the Turkish Parliament. Turkey found itself with a single-party government for the first time in fifteen years.

CHAPTER 2

There was one slight problem. The leader of the AKP and former mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, had been imprisoned for ten months and banned from political activity for reciting a poem that described the minarets and domes of mosques as the swords and shields of those fighting for a more Islamic way of life. The ban was still in place when the AKP won its election victory. So Abdullah Giil, a former Welfare Party minister and co-founder with Erdoğan of the AKP, took over as interim prime minister.

Dramatic as its victory had been, the AKP was regarded with deep suspicion by secular Turks, including the military and most of the Westernized elite. The 15 percent or so of the population who were not Sunni Muslim but Shia Alevi shared their concern. These groups feared that the hard-won reforms of Kemal Atatürk would be jeopardized by an Islamist administration.

Atatürk, after all, had based his vision of the successor state of the Ottoman Empire on the model of a secular, Westernized nation where women would not wear headscarves and men would wear suits and ties. He dropped the Arabic script of the Ottoman language in favor of Roman letters and numbers and replaced old Ottoman words either with new confections or a phonetic version of the French equivalent (he was a great admirer of Napoleon, the French legal system, and French culture).

In the new Turkish nation, there was no room for minorities other than those recognized in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne—Armenians, Greeks, and Jews. This meant that over the following years there was a steady—at times dramatic and perilous—exodus of many other minorities. Thousands of Armenians, Greeks, and Jews went too when their daily lives were made intolerable. The Kurds, who made up 15 percent of the population, had a particularly difficult time—as I explain below.

Like the Welfare Party it succeeded, the AKP was Islamist in character. It owed its electoral success to the alliance it had made with the followers of the mysterious, reclusive cult figure Fethullah Gülen, an imam who has lived in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania since 1999. Around that time, a grainy video appeared in which Gülen was filmed saying: "You must move in the arteries of the system without anyone noticing your existence until you reach all the power centers."[1] Gülen shared much of the AKP's vision and saw the creation of the

1 Maximilian Popp, "The Shadowy World of the Islamic Gülen Movement," ***Spiegel*** Online, August 8, 2012, http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/guelen-movement-accused-of-being-a-sect-a-848763-2.html.

AKP as a useful means of advancing his own agenda of a slow but irrevocable move towards the nirvana of a world united in its adherence to Islam.

Usefully for the AKP, the movement—known first as *jamiyat* or "society" and later as *hizmet* or "service"—had followers all over the world. It also had a network of schools in dozens of countries, including the United States, which generated both income and recruits. Its agents of influence were quietly infiltrating the institutions of the Turkish state but were, for now, making no trouble.

A decade later, as ambassador to the United States, I found members of the movement everywhere, actively building relationships and arranging for elected officials from states and federal bodies to make expenses-paid trips to Turkey. Most didn't even know they were going as guests of *jamiyat*. Back in 2002, the organization was of huge value to the AKP in getting out the votes, especially in the early days when the party was still getting itself organized.

Wisely, the AKP did not fall into the trap of being a carbon copy of previous Islamist parties that had been closed down by the courts, or the military. Instead, it made a point of including in its membership a number of avowed secularists. This helped reassure those who didn't support the AKP as well as the military, which had a constitutional obligation to protect the territorial integrity of the republic and preserve its secular nature.

Some months before the election I asked Erdoğan how he would reconcile his Islamist beliefs with the secular requirements of the Turkish constitution. He had no difficulty explaining that government was one thing and faith another: he would abide by the laws of the country if elected, and was determined to ensure that Turkey met the criteria for EU membership.

A few years later he was quoted saying that democracy was like a tram you rode until you reached your destination and then got off. By early 2016 he was saying boldly that words like democracy, human rights, and the rule of law were of no relevance to the modern Turkish Republic. Was that always his view, or did the exercise of power change him? Probably only Erdoğan himself can say.

The first big challenge the new government faced was Europe. Ten days after the AKP took over, Gül and Erdoğan travelled to Copenhagen for the December 2002 European Council—at which it was believed Turkish and Greek Cypriots might finally endorse United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Kofi Annan's plan for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem, at the same time as the European Council agreed that ten new member states, including Cyprus, would join the EU in 2004.

Such an effort was long overdue. The Cyprus dispute had festered unresolved since the Turkish military invasion of 1974 following an attempted coup by the Greek Cypriots, orchestrated by the military junta in Athens. Turkey's subsequent decision in 1983 to establish a "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus," still not recognized by anyone except the Turks themselves, did little to help. For a number of reasons, well-described in David Hannay's book *Cyprus: The Search for a Solution*, the Copenhagen European Council decided to proceed with the accession of the A10, as they were called, while no decisions were taken on the reunification of Cyprus. Raouf Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot leader, hadn't even bothered to show up.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan set a fresh deadline of February 28, 2003, for a "final" attempt to reach agreement, so that a reunited Cyprus could join the other nine candidates and become a member of the EU on May 1, 2004. After a further extension of this deadline by ten days, Annan summoned the Turkish and Greek Cypriot leaders to The Hague on March 10. That meeting, too, ended in failure, even though Denktash at least attended, cheerfully discussing his options over the phone with the Turkish foreign minister, Yaşar Yakiş, who was having dinner privately at my house in Ankara.

Disappointed, Annan had no choice but to report to the Security Council that he had failed. The Cyprus settlement process was once again put on ice. David Hannay, who had by then been the UK's special representative for Cyprus for six and a half years, decided to hang up his boots. So did his US counterpart, Tom Weston. Regular meetings with both, over a glass of whisky at the Ankara embassy, had been an enjoyable and rewarding feature of my first year on the job.

One reason the Turks didn't do better in The Hague was that they had other things on their minds. Less than ten days earlier, on March 1, the Turkish Parliament had failed to vote with a big enough majority to allow coalition forces—the US 4th Infantry Division and a modest UK military contingent—to transit Turkish territory on their way to Iraq.

Almost 90 percent of Turks were opposed to military action against Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. My argument—made in good faith—was that an effective military build-up, including the creation of a northern front through Turkey, was critical to putting enough pressure on Saddam for him to conclude that it would be better to *avoid* going to war and instead comply with the demands of the UN Security Council to come clean over his stocks of weapons of mass destruction.

Three months earlier, I had been invited to find a new job by some US neo-conservatives with whom I was attending an Aspen Institute of Berlin conference in Istanbul. My crime had been to explain that the UK would need

to be satisfied on both legality (on which the attorney general would have to rule) and legitimacy (meaning the UN Security Council had to agree) before joining the US in any military action against Saddam Hussein.

One of the US attendees told me firmly that I was out of line since my prime minister, Tony Blair, had already told his president, George W. Bush, that the UK would be with the Americans in Iraq come what may. The Chilcot report into the UK's role in the Iraq War published in July 2016 suggests he did indeed have a better idea of what the president and prime minister had said to each other than I did.

Our request for permission to transit Turkish territory turned out to give the Turks more difficulty than the Americans'. One Saturday in late February, Defence Minister Vecdi Gönül called me at home. He said he had, with great difficulty, persuaded the Council of Ministers to treat the UK and US applications equally. But he wanted me to be aware why this had been so problematic.

Soundings the governing party had taken in the southeast, he said, suggested that people could live with an American military presence if necessary but really didn't want the British there too. Why? Because people in that part of Turkey still held us responsible for the decision of the League of Nations in 1926 to divide (mainly Kurdish) tribal lands and give the new British protectorate of Iraq the oil and gasfields of Mosul and Kirkuk that would otherwise have gone to the Turkish Republic. Here was a reminder of how much baggage British diplomacy in the Middle East acquired during and after the First World War—much of which is still with us today.

The new Turkish government, with Abdullah Gül still at its head, had in fact decided that it would accede to the US and UK requests if the Turkish National Assembly was content—not least because the Americans were offering $6.5 billion in financial aid if it did. The Turks were also offered a say over future developments in northern Iraq, where they feared that the success of the Kurdish autonomous region—then protected by a no-fly zone policed by US and UK military aircraft—could encourage separatists in southeastern Turkey to push for autonomy of their own.

But it was not to be. When the vote was taken, the first message that reached me (at the time watching a movie with the US and Spanish ambassadors and their wives) was that Parliament had agreed. It had indeed. But Speaker Bülent Arinç then decided that the motion had to be approved by a supermajority.

Bitter recriminations followed, in Turkey and abroad. In Washington, there was widespread criticism of the Turkish military for failing to support the proposal more vigorously (the General Staff, always keen to remain in step

with public opinion and at this time no fan of the AKP, had been happy to keep their heads down).

For the next two weeks an unseemly and ultimately unsuccessful negotiation took place between the US and Turkish governments over whether or not to ask Parliament to think again. The law banning Erdoğan from political activity had been lifted on March 3 and, after a hastily arranged special election in the eastern city of Siirt he took his seat in Parliament, replacing Abdullah Gül as prime minister on March 14.

This helped government coordination. But in Washington, the Turks overbid. Treasury Minister Ali Babacan and outgoing Foreign Minister Yaşar Yakiş, invited to the White House, infuriated the administration with their talk of a $92 billion likely cost to the Turkish economy of a war with Iraq. Both subsequently told me they had not asked for anything like this much compensation, but had simply tried to give an idea of the cost of what was being asked of Turkey.

Erdoğan, badly advised by his political staff that the US couldn't go to war without Turkish support, thought he could delay taking the issue back to Parliament until his new government had received a vote of confidence.

On the evening of March 17, I decided to go and see him with details of the reassuring Turkey-friendly elements of a declaration made by President Bush, Prime Minister Blair, and Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar at their summit meeting in the Azores. With Turkish markets falling fast, I told him time was running out for an agreement. Later that evening, US Secretary of State Colin Powell called Gül to say Washington could wait no longer.

The next day, attendees of a summit meeting chaired by President Sezer agreed that the government should take "all measures necessary in the national interest" now that military action in Iraq seemed inevitable. But by this time operational considerations had forced the Pentagon to make other arrangements, and move the ships waiting outside the Turkish port of Mersin closer to the Persian Gülf. When a revised resolution was put to Parliament, the Americans wanted only overflights, and all but $1 billion of the aid was off the table.

As my US colleague, Bob Pearson, put it to me, the Turks had rejected the offer of a strategic partnership giving them a real say over the future of Iraq at a time when Ankara was terrified that fragmentation of the country after a US invasion might create a prosperous, autonomous, or even independent Kurdish state on Turkey's southeastern border.

CHAPTER 3

Against this complex background, the new government had to deal with the stubborn and recalcitrant Turkish Cypriot leader Raouf Denktash, still the most popular politician in Turkey and firmly opposed to a settlement of the Cyprus problem. New to government, under huge pressure on Iraq, and with Denktash digging in, for the AKP to reach agreement at The Hague on March 10 would have been an extraordinary achievement. In the end, it was too much to ask.

The invasion of Iraq took place from the south, with no northern front formed by troops and armor crossing the Turkish border. The strategic relationship between Washington and Ankara had altered dramatically. From April until the summer, attention in the region was focused almost entirely on what was going on in Iraq, with no one paying much attention to the Cyprus problem (or to Turkey, except insofar as its modest military presence in Iraqi Kurdistan helped or hindered coalition operations).

But by the autumn of 2003, with the accession of ten new EU member states—including Cyprus—due on May 1, 2004, I became convinced that it was time to make one more attempt at a settlement of the Cyprus problem. I wrote a non-paper, purely on my own authority, for the Turkish foreign ministry explaining why, whether or not it succeeded, the Turkish government needed to make a fresh effort to deliver what had become known as the Annan Plan. If it didn't, I argued, a divided Cyprus, with the Greek Cypriots having the only internationally recognized government, would become a member state of the European Union.

My colleagues at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)—Permanent Secretary Uğur Ziyal, Deputy Undersecretary Baki Ilkin, and Cyprus/Aegean Director General Ertuğrul Apakan—told me that my thinking coincided with theirs. They were ready to work closely with me and my new US colleague, Eric Edelman, in a final search for a settlement.

It was clear from the outset that, even if the diplomats were on board for a revised version of the Annan Plan, it was going to be a tough sell to other elements of the Turkish state—notably the military and the president. I found myself going through the text with senior generals at the headquarters of the Turkish General Staff, seeking to address their concerns and explain why the UN blueprint met Turkey's essential national interests.

On one issue, I had to negotiate almost as hard with colleagues in London as I did with my Turkish hosts: the need for the Annan Plan to include a provision for the secretary-general himself to "fill in the gaps" in the event that the Turkish and Greek Cypriot leaders were unable to reach agreement themselves. This was essential if the process was not once again going to run into the sand, because it would ensure that neither party had a veto.

The relative calm of this diplomacy was brutally interrupted, and the lives of my staff turned upside down, on November 20, 2003, by a massive suicide bomb attack on Pera House, the magnificent British consulate general in Istanbul. I was going into a meeting between EU ambassadors and Jalal Talabani, the Iraqi Kurdish leader, in Ankara when I received a call from my office saying there had been a bomb outside HSBC's headquarters in Istanbul. Five minutes later, my phone rang again: there had been another bomb at the entrance of Pera House. Several people were missing, including Consul General Roger Short and his secretary, Lisa Hallworth.

"The relative calm of this diplomacy was brutally interrupted, and the lives of my staff turned upside down, on November 20, 2003, by a massive suicide bomb attack on Pera House, the magnificent British consulate general in Istanbul."

I left immediately for Istanbul, along with the minister of the interior, incurring the wrath of fellow Turkish Airlines passengers who were unaware of why the plane was kept waiting for us. Five days earlier suicide bombers had killed more than thirty people at two synagogues in Istanbul. Arriving at Pera House, I saw the terrible destruction and learned that twelve people working at the consulate general, including Roger and Lisa, had been killed, together with three passers-by. At HSBC there were another thirteen fatalities and many injured.

Those few days changed the lives of us all. There was of course the devastating physical impact: the suicide bomber's pickup had been carrying 2,500 kilograms of explosives. One of our visa staff sitting in his office 120 yards away down an alley was hit on the back of the head by the bomber's foot. There were also emotional and psychological scars that were still some way from being fully healed when Susie and I left Turkey almost three years later.

Guilt, anger, resentment, inadequacy, entitlement, and shame all played their part.

That afternoon, I moved the consulate general staff to temporary offices in the Intercontinental Hotel, where the management couldn't have been more helpful. Foreign Secretary Jack Straw flew out from London to visit the site and meet our staff.

Some of us stayed overnight at the Intercontinental—or thought we were going to: at midnight two of our counterterrorism experts brought me a laptop with enough of an indication that a further attack was possible to leave me with no choice but to get everyone out of bed and decamp to yet another hotel. The following day, November 21, we moved the office into the recently vacated US consulate, while we decided what to do next. Prime Minister Erdoğan visited and spoke to me, in all the chaos, of his concern for our staff, his deep sorrow at what had happened, and his hope that we wouldn't give in to terrorism by advising travelers to keep away from the European Champions League soccer match due to be played in Istanbul the following week.

Already, our security people were advising us that the US building was vulnerable from a security perspective (the reason why it had been vacated by the Americans themselves), and that we shouldn't stay. So off we went again, this time setting up shop on a semi-permanent basis in the Hilton Hotel until, more than a year later, the offices of Pera House were again fit for habitation.

After a few days in Istanbul visiting staff who were injured and bereaved, and the one British tourist who had been hurt in the blast, as well as trying to restore some order from the chaos, my wife and I returned to Ankara. I asked two of my most senior and trusted colleagues—David Fitton, my deputy, and Dominic Clissold, senior management officer—to move to Istanbul to take charge while new, permanent staff were chosen. They stayed five months and, together with the Istanbul team, did a remarkable job of getting the place back to business in the most difficult conditions.

CHAPTER 4

Back in Ankara, life had to go on. The Annan Plan was still firmly on our agenda. With the role of the UN secretary-general as filler-in of the plan's gaps, and Special Representative Alvaro de Soto briskly shuttling between Ankara, Athens, and Nicosia, good progress was made—enough for it to be worth Kofi Annan's while to take all the parties off to a mountain retreat at Bürgenstock in Switzerland in March 2004 for the final stage of the negotiations. The British, the Americans, and the European Commission all sent delegations. Remarkably, agreement was eventually reached that a final, fifth version of the Annan Plan would be put to the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities for their approval in twin referenda.

Despite having put his name to the deal, President Tassos Papadopoulos of Cyprus began to campaign against the Bürgenstock outcome as soon as he got home. He even denied EU Commissioner Gunter Verheugen the opportunity to appear on Cypriot television to make the case for a Yes vote. The Turks, meanwhile, supported the Annan Plan and effectively marginalized Denktash, the president of the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus," who finally realized that, with the full apparatus of the Turkish state lined up behind a settlement, he could no longer stand in its way.

On April 24, just a week before Cyprus and the nine other accession states were due to join the EU, the two referenda took place. The Greek Cypriots voted almost three to one against the Annan Plan, and the Turkish Cypriots only a little less firmly in favor. On April 26, the foreign ministers of the European Union expressed their regret that the Annan Plan had not been approved but concluded that Cyprus would nonetheless join the EU. They promised to take measures that would end the economic isolation of the Turkish Cypriots in the north, so that they would not be punished for the lack of a settlement.

For years previously, the Turks had asked us—as we pressed them to engage with the secretary-general—what would happen if the plan were approved by the Turkish Cypriots and rejected by the Greek Cypriots. We could do no more than promise to do our best to persuade the Greek Cypriots to support a settlement, and to try and ensure that the Turkish side did not suffer the consequences if the process failed through no fault of their own.

We had, of course, repeatedly told the Turks that, if they left it too late, it would be impossible to deliver a settlement in time to ensure that it was a reunited Cyprus that joined the European Union. But they were understandably resentful that, after finally doing the right thing, the other side was allowed to

sabotage the process and was still rewarded with unconditional membership of the European Union.

It was an outcome the European side had largely discounted, as it failed to foresee that the Greek Cypriot side would be the spoiler, a role that until then had invariably been played by the Turks, with Raoul Denktash to the fore. It was also an outcome that ensured the Greek Cypriots would never again feel under any real pressure to make the compromises necessary to achieve a settlement.

Once Cyprus was in, the rules of the game changed. The Greek Cypriots were disinclined to do anything to help the Turkish Cypriots out of their isolation. Instead, pressure grew on the Turkish side to normalize relations with the (Greek) Republic of Cyprus, and to recognize it. Turkey was in any case required to extend the provisions of its Customs Union with the EU (something it had refused to do since the collapse of the original 1960 power-sharing agreement) to the new member states, including Cyprus.

In practice, this meant opening Turkish ports and airspace to Greek Cypriot shipping and aircraft, something Ankara was loth to do for two reasons. First, the Greek Cypriots in the south of the island refused to trade directly with the Turkish Cypriots in the north, except to the very limited extent provided by what was known as the Green Line Regulation. Second, the Turks worried that extending the provisions of the Customs Union to Cyprus by signing a protocol to the 1963 Ankara Agreement, which created an association between Turkey and the EU, would itself amount to recognizing the Greek Cypriot state.

Having backed the Annan Plan and undergone a reasonable amount of domestic reform, Turkey was hoping that the December 2004 European Council would agree on a date for the opening of its own accession negotiations. As December approached, my EU colleagues and I continued to press the Turkish authorities to maintain the momentum of reform to show that Turkey was meeting what were known as the Copenhagen political criteria. We also pressed them, again, to sign the protocol to the 1963 Ankara Agreement.

Just a week before the European Council, I told Erdoğan that, in addition to making further progress on religious freedoms, judicial reform, and freedom of expression, he simply had to commit to signing the Ankara Protocol. Erdoğan himself was noncommittal: he just complained—as he did for years afterwards—that I'd given him bad advice to back the Annan Plan. The Greek Cypriots had reneged on the deal, as he'd suspected they would, and joined the EU regardless. Why should Turkey now make the next move?

I said then, and on many later occasions, that as much as we regretted the decision of the Greek Cypriots to reject the Annan Plan, there would have been no chance of getting Turkey's membership negotiations with the EU started if it hadn't supported the Cyprus settlement. I believed it then, and I believe it now. In the background, other ministers continued to tell me that the politics simply wouldn't allow Erdoğan to do more on the reform front while the Europeans continued to back the Republic of Cyprus.

Given the importance of the Turkey dossier, 10 Downing Street decided I should travel to Brussels with Prime Minister Blair and his party for the European Council. Soon after we took off from London's military airfield, RAF Northolt, Blair told me he was puzzled. The Turks had won, and were going to get their date. So what was the problem?

I explained that the date was indeed the big prize. But there was a continuing problem over conditionality. The Commission's regular report of October 6, 2004, had concluded that Turkey "sufficiently met" the political criteria for the opening of negotiations but the Turks had yet to sign the protocol to the Ankara Agreement.

Other members of the party were relaxed, arguing that the Turks had nowhere else to go. I warned that too firm a line from the Dutch presidency of the European Council on signing the Ankara Protocol could drive Erdoğan into a corner. I reminded the prime minister of why, in my view, the collapse of negotiations between Turkey and the European Union would be serious, causing damage to UK interests in the region, to stability, and to the prospects for maintaining the momentum of reform and modernization in Turkey.

Arriving in Brussels on the afternoon of December 17, we went straight to see Erdoğan. The meeting went reasonably well. Erdoğan set out his concerns, and Blair promised to do what he could with his colleagues. In their usual way, heads of government and foreign ministers then disappeared for their respective dinners. I went to see how the Turkish delegation was getting on in its hotel, only to be told—with a great deal of emotion—that the current texts were unacceptable. I explained equally firmly why they wouldn't get any better.

Heads of government spent much of their dinner discussing enlargement of the EU in general, and the Turkish application in particular. Various formulations were tried, and the Dutch presidency eventually produced a version in the early hours of December 18 that was presented to the Turks just before breakfast. As it stood, the language was unacceptable to the Turks because they believed they were being asked, in effect, to commit to recognizing the Greek Cypriot Republic of Cyprus even if there was no political settlement. To them, this

was tantamount to rewarding the Greek Cypriots for torpedoing the Annan Plan and ensuring they would never be under any pressure to reach a solution.

Tony Blair immediately convened with a group of five other heads of government who could make a difference, and helped the Dutch presidency present a reworked formulation to Erdoğan. But at the critical moment, the Dutch foreign minister explained that the presidency would be making an additional, unilateral statement setting out a further condition that the Turkish side would have to meet in advance of accession negotiations opening the following year.

"Erdoğan believed he was being deceived, and decided he'd had enough. If that was what the European Union was all about, he told his close advisers, then the Europeans could keep it. And their Christian club."

Erdoğan believed he was being deceived, and decided he'd had enough. If that was what the European Union was all about, he told his close advisers, then the Europeans could keep it. And their Christian club. His pilot had been told to start the engines. He was going to the airport.

Friends in the Erdoğan team alerted me by text message, and in the corridors of the Council building. (One Turkish paper ran the headline "Come quickly, Peter" after being briefed by a member of Erdoğan's team on what had happened.) I told them it would be disastrous if Erdoğan walked out in a huff. Would it help if Tony Blair came and talked to him? Egemen Bagiş, Erdoğan's interpreter and one of his advisers, thought there was no point: his prime minister was too upset. But he would ask. Bağış returned, with the message that it was contrary to Turkish principles of hospitality not to open the door if a guest came knocking: Erdoğan would be glad to see the prime minister if he wanted to talk.

At that moment, Blair—whom I had already alerted—came along the corridor. In we went. Over the next forty-five minutes, during which Blair and Erdoğan were joined by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, and eventually Bernard Bot, the Dutch foreign minister, Blair went through Erdoğan's concerns and persuaded the other heads to join him in asserting that a commitment by the Turkish government to sign the Ankara Protocol was not tantamount to recognition of the Republic of

Cyprus. He then declared this in public at his press conference, as did French President Jacques Chirac and a number of others.

After a further wrangle over which member of the Turkish government should actually sign the key document—they chose Beşir Atalay, a state minister—the deed was done and the European Council agreed that formal negotiations would open, during the British presidency of the Council, on October 3, 2005.

The Turks didn't enjoy the experience. As we left the Council building, Ahmet Davutoğlu, Erdoğan's foreign policy adviser and later foreign and then prime minister, told me we hadn't done enough to defend Turkey's interests. If this was the European Union, he wasn't sure he wanted to be part of it. I replied that if that was his government's view, I wasn't sure the British government would be inclined to keep up the fight.

The sad reality was that the Brussels European Council convinced a lot of people on the Turkish side that the EU would never allow Turkey in, which fueled their resentment that Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots were being continuously punished for the decision of the Greek Cypriots to reject the Annan Plan back in the spring. We would hear more of this. On the EU side, those who had always thought letting in Turkey was a bridge too far returned home convinced they were right.

CHAPTER 5

In the early months of 2005, there were signs that Erdoğan was looking for an alternative to opening negotiations with the EU—a process in which Turkish public opinion was beginning to lose faith. His failure to appoint a chief negotiator was widely seen as a lack of interest. So was the lack of haste with which his government handled six outstanding pieces of legislation that the European Council said it had to enact if accession negotiations were to begin on October 3.

Erdoğan showed more interest in touring the countries—particularly the Muslim ones—that had been victims of the tsunami that struck the Pacific Rim with devastating effect just after Christmas 2004, and in visiting Africa and central Asian republics.

The Turkish public was also becoming less convinced that membership in the EU was ever going to happen. On one occasion I found myself speaking to a packed auditorium at the Erzurum Atatürk University in eastern Turkey about the importance of making a success of the accession negotiations. At the end of the question-and-answer session, a very articulate student shouted from the back that I should stop lying about Turkey's European prospects since I must know, as she knew, that there was no chance of Turkey ever being admitted. She brought the house down.

Nor were the Europeans showing much enthusiasm for giving effect to the December Council conclusions. The tide of EU enlargement—particularly momentum towards Turkish accession—had begun to ebb. The referenda in the Netherlands and France in May and June 2005, respectively, were ostensibly about the new Constitutional Treaty. But the resounding rejection of it in both countries reflected growing dissatisfaction across the EU with how the union was developing, and with the domestic performance of several EU governments. As I and others opposed to the UK leaving the EU argued during the Brexit campaign in 2016, referenda are a crude political instrument that rarely address just the question on the ballot paper.

By June, the one outstanding requirement for the Turks was to sign the Ankara Protocol. Having obtained public reassurance from several heads of government at the December Council six months earlier that signing did not amount to recognizing the Republic of Cyprus, the Turks had given an unconditional commitment to doing so.

In hindsight, they should have signed immediately after the December Council, while the momentum was with them and Turkish public opinion was positive about joining the EU. During the spring of 2005, several member states—not least the UK—encouraged them to get on with it, using the cover of the assurances they had been given back in December. But MFA officials advised Turkish ministers that they should do so only if they also formally reserved their position on recognizing Cyprus. The MFA duly began work on a declaration placing the Turkish position on record.

In the meantime, the new Luxembourg presidency of the Council tried to move ahead with implementing the promise foreign ministers had given in April 2004, just after the Greek Cypriot rejection of the Annan Plan, to agree to measures ending the economic isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. These plans centered on twin regulations, one covering aid and the other trade, which would develop economic links between northern Cyprus and the EU. The Greek Cypriots didn't want either—particularly the trade regulation, which they argued would discourage the Turkish Cypriots from working for a comprehensive settlement (a bit rich, as the Turks pointed out, given that it was the Turkish Cypriots, not the Greek Cypriots, who had voted in favor of the Annan Plan).

The Luxemburgers worked up a package including the two regulations but also the reopening of the port of Varosha—a Greek Cypriot resort that had been a ghost town since 1974—and placing the Turkish Cypriot port of Famagusta under international control. But the details were never properly explained to the Turkish side, and the Turks remained suspicious since the architect of the scheme appeared to be the Luxembourg ambassador to Greece. The plan quickly ran into the sand, so everyone decided to leave the knotty Cyprus issues for the UK presidency of the European Council beginning on July 1.

Shortly after the UK presidency started, we had another reminder of the terrorist threat—not just to Turkish citizens but also to foreigners holidaying in coastal areas of Turkey. On July 16, 2005, a small pipe bomb placed on a shuttle bus in the resort of Kusadasi killed five people, including a British girl, Helen Bennett, and injured a dozen more, including five Britons. I went straight there, with my consular team to help the victims and their families. The finger of suspicion pointed at the PKK, though the organization's spokesman denied responsibility.

Back on the political front, the Turkish side became increasingly determined, and publicly committed, to attaching a national declaration to its signature of the Ankara Protocol. When Erdoğan had breakfast with Tony Blair in Downing Street on July 27, Blair and Jack Straw urged Erdoğan and Foreign Minister

Gül not to allow the issue to further complicate relations with member states. It was agreed that the UK presidency and the Turkish government would work together, informally, to ensure they came up with a sensible text. The UK side warned that the wrong declaration would make it even more difficult to agree to the Negotiating Framework (NF)—a key document that had to be signed off by all twenty-five member states before the real negotiations could start on October 3.

I changed my plans and, instead of spending an extra day in London, returned to Ankara with Erdoğan and Gül. Our consultations began before we had even left UK airspace, with Gül insisting—in the nicest possible way—on the key negotiating role that I, as the British government's and EU presidency's representative in Ankara, would have to play.

After three days of almost continuous consultation, the Turks signed the Ankara Protocol, in the form of an Exchange of Letters between the UK and Turkish ambassadors in Brussels, attaching to it the least damaging declaration on non-recognition of Cyprus to which I had been able to get the MFA to agree.

As we had warned Ankara, the UK presidency then had to issue a statement in reply on behalf of the twenty-five member states, reiterating the EU's position on the status of the Republic of Cyprus. We hoped that a quick, firm response by the presidency would diminish the pressure from other member states for a more damaging counter-declaration.

It quickly became clear that more would be needed, particularly in terms of Turkish implementation of the Ankara Protocol. We nonetheless all disappeared for our August summer holidays feeling that something useful had been achieved, and hoping that the run-up to the formal opening of Turkish accession negotiations on October 3 would not be too eventful. Turkish colleagues were warm in their messages of appreciation of the UK's efforts.

The calm didn't last long. On August 2, in a television interview covering a range of foreign policy issues, the new French prime minister, Dominique de Villepin, declared that it would not be possible to open EU membership negotiations with a candidate country that did not recognize one of the member states (Cyprus).

The Turkish reaction was restrained, and efforts were made in the following weeks to bring the French position back from this potential deal-breaker. After all, Villepin's statements were seriously at odds with the position of President

Chirac, which was that the EU should honor the commitments it had given Turkey to start negotiations on October 3.

In fact, the French position over the following weeks became a good deal more conciliatory towards Turkey. Not surprisingly, however, Villepin's statement was picked up by Greeks and Greek Cypriots, whose position on the inclusion of "recognition" language in the EU's counter-declaration became significantly harder.

Trouble also appeared from a different direction. Despite having signed the Ankara Protocol on July 29, and made clear that Turkey would implement its commitments, Foreign Minister Gül began to say that implementation of those obligations would not include opening Turkey's ports and airports to Greek Cypriot shipping and aircraft. This made Greeks and Greek Cypriots—supported by a number of other member states—even more determined to ensure that the EU's counter-declaration included firm language monitoring Turkey's implementation of its obligations, with warnings that failure to comply would affect accession negotiations.

By the time foreign ministers gathered in early September 2005 for their traditional informal weekend—this time hosted by Jack Straw at Celtic Manor, a golfing resort near Newport in South Wales—the Turkish side was becoming distinctly edgy. As foreign minister of a candidate country, Gül was invited to Celtic Manor too. I travelled with him from Ankara and spent a good part of the journey warning him that we were finding it difficult to hold the line on some issues of sensitivity for the Turkish side, and that the "R" word—recognition of the Republic of Cyprus—would have to feature somewhere in the meeting's conclusions.

I also told Gül that his public remarks about refusing to open Turkish ports and airports to Greek Cypriot vessels were unhelpful, and likely to produce even tougher language from the member states on the need for Turkey to implement its Customs Union obligations in full. My strong advice was that he should say as little as possible about how he intended to "implement" so that any subsequent complaint could be dealt with through normal dispute settlement mechanisms, and not be a barrier to the opening of accession negotiations.

Not for the first time, I also talked Gül through the need to show that Turkey was continuing with its domestic reform program. I showed him articles from that morning's international press headlining the decision of a Turkish public prosecutor to seek the conviction of the world-renowned novelist Orhan Pamuk for declaring that a million and a half Armenians were slaughtered

by the Ottomans in 1915—without even using the term "genocide" to which Turkey took exception.

This was evidence, I argued, that further changes to the Turkish penal code were necessary to guarantee freedom of expression. There was an urgent need to reform the infamous Article 301, which made it a crime to denigrate Turkishness, the Turkish nation, or Turkish government institutions. An early, firm commitment from Gül to do so, I argued, would help mitigate the damage to Turkey's reputation.

Gul said this was impossible. Only after the courts had completed their proceedings against Pamuk would the government be able to take a view. I said this would take months, and be hugely damaging. (The case against Pamuk dragged on until early summer 2006, when he was finally acquitted; but the inadequacies of Article 301 were laid bare by the separate conviction of an Armenian writer, Hrant Dink, for saying that what had happened to the Armenians caused "poisoned blood" to run in the veins of Turkish citizens. Dink was murdered two years later by a Turkish nationalist strongly suspected of having close links to the military.)

Gul took my unsolicited advice in good part. He eventually made a move on Article 301 but in 2017 it is still intact and still outlaws denigration of the Turkish nation, state, Parliament, and government.

Gul was very upset when, shortly after our arrival in South Wales, he discovered that the UK had already distributed a draft counter-declaration that was not to his liking. After I had—on instructions—confirmed that we were not giving the text to the media, the MFA's director general for Europe, Volkan Bozkir, told me the Turks had got their copy from a Turkish journalist.

Stranded, like the Turkish delegation, at a hotel twenty miles from the conference center, I was unable to sort out the muddle directly with my presidency colleagues at Celtic Manor. But at least I had the pleasure of riding in the hotel elevator with David Beckham, Wayne Rooney, and Phil Neville of the England national soccer team who were in town for a World Cup qualifier against Wales the next day.

The following morning, I advised Gül to leave his UK and other counterparts in no doubt about the real Turkish bottom lines and to find out what theirs were. Gül didn't need much convincing. Immediately before lunch, he had forty minutes with the French foreign minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy, during which he failed to obtain any explanation for why Villepin had suddenly decided, a month earlier, that Turkish recognition of the Republic of Cyprus was an issue of major national importance for France.

Erdoğan makes the Rabia gesture to an audience.
Photo credit: R4BIA.com.

On his way to the dining room, I suggested to Gül that he join in the scheduled discussion of something called the Broader Middle and Near East Initiative and explain some of the valuable contributions Turkey was making to regional understanding, e.g., by brokering the first-ever meeting (in Istanbul) between the foreign ministers of Israel and Pakistan.

Gul replied that he wasn't inclined to say anything: if the EU wasn't interested in Turkey's fundamental interests, why should he contribute to the collective deliberations of the twenty-five member states? Even Gül wasn't immune to the Turkish tendency to prioritize national dignity over the advantages of showing others how much his country had to offer.

In fact, he spoke about the Turkish attitude towards Iran's nuclear weapons program. Some in Ankara wanted to show the EU that it could not take for granted Turkish support for its demands for Iran to suspend its enrichment program. They failed to persuade Gül, but the undersecretary at the MFA, Ali Tuygan, told me it had gone to the wire.

Travelling back to Ankara with Abdullah Gül, I found him in better humor. He felt that he had had a reasonable hearing from the dozen or so foreign ministers he had met. He also felt—rightly, as it turned out—that he had got Jack Straw to understand the true depth of his concerns at what was being asked of Turkey.

In Brussels, however, the debate didn't get any easier. As presidency, the UK had made clear to everyone that we wanted to see all the documents relevant to the opening of negotiations with Turkey on October 3 agreed to well in advance. It took seven meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper) to finalize all the texts, including the draft of the Negotiating Framework, which would serve as the roadmap for the negotiations between Turkey and the European Union for the next decade.

The Turkish side was comforted by our success in seeing off attempts by France and Cyprus, supported by Greece and others, to link Turkish recognition of Cyprus to the opening of accession negotiations. The Turks were also glad of the assurance that the issues that had been addressed in the counter-declaration would not be taken up again in the discussion of the NF.

From the UK's perspective, getting the NF endorsed by twenty-four of the twenty-five member states—with only Austria holding out for further changes—was something of a triumph. But not enough to stop Turkish officials from later grumbling about minor additional changes made to the draft before it was signed off by EU foreign ministers in New York on September 21.

As October 3 approached, the principal difficulty revolved around how to get the Austrians back into line. They wanted language in the NF making clear that something less than full membership was one of the possible outcomes of the negotiations with Turkey; that firmer references to the "absorptive capacity" of the EU as a factor would have to be considered before any decision was taken to admit Turkey; and that the eventual cost of any further enlargement of the EU would be equally shared among members. All were positions we felt at the time were unduly obstructive; but twelve years later in 2016, when EU governments were looking afresh at Turkey's membership prospects in the middle of the largest migration crisis Europe had ever known, some of the old Austrian arguments struck me as less absurd.

On Sunday, October 2, foreign ministers gathered in Luxembourg for dinner before the next day's General Affairs Council. Turkey dominated discussion. Several foreign ministers—Jack Straw in the lead—piled on the pressure for an agreement. The Austrians found themselves isolated, but at least went along with language reiterating that the shared objective of the negotiations was accession.

"Erdoğan, calmer and fresher than the rest of the team, was noncommittal. He wanted to talk to Tony Blair."

A new text reflecting discussion over dinner, and numerous bilateral meetings, was sent to me overnight in Ankara, in advance of the opening of the Council meeting at 10 a.m. on Monday, October 3. I went down to the foreign ministry as soon as it opened for business, and was taken straight in to see Gül by Undersecretary Tuygan. I explained that we thought there were the makings of a deal if we could offer the Austrians something on the need for negotiations with Turkey to take account of the European Union's absorptive capacity. Jack Straw wanted to discuss the latest text with Gül before resuming discussion with his fellow foreign ministers.

Gul rejected the text out of hand. In fact, the biggest obstacle for him had now become language in paragraph five, which the Turks feared would oblige them to stop blocking Cypriot membership of international organizations, including NATO. Negotiations, he said, were over. The UK presidency should stop trying to split the difference on alternatives to full membership, absorption capacity, and so on. Gül was convinced that the Turks had somehow been hoodwinked by the latest changes made to the Negotiating Framework (even though Turkish officials in New York had known about them).

I asked him to let me make one last try. Outside in the parking lot, I called Jack Straw. We agreed that it was worth another effort, but that the chances of bringing Gül back on board were slim. Straw called Gül and pressed him to show some flexibility. Gül suggested there might be a deal if the EU could move on paragraph five. In the early afternoon I sent round a new text with improvements to the opening paragraphs, which Jack Straw had negotiated with the Austrians, and a short "statement by the Council" qualifying the implications of the infamous paragraph five (now paragraph seven) language on international organizations.

Separately, I put Erdoğan and his close advisers in the picture. The prime minister and his party were traveling back to Ankara from an AKP gathering out of town—I tracked them down (one of the party told me) eating melons with some villagers on the outskirts of Kizilcihamam.

The Turkish team asked me to take the latest language round to AKP headquarters in the early evening. Gül and Economy Minister Babacan were there, accompanied by a dozen senior MFA, Prime Ministry, AKP, and other officials. Erdoğan, I was told, would appear shortly. I sensed we were close to agreement when the phone in my pocket rang. I left the room. John Grant, our ambassador to the EU, was on the line. The status of the language in paragraph seven had again changed: the Cypriots would not accept a "statement by the Council" but only a Presidency Statement "with the consent of the Council." Such arcane, semantic distinctions are alas the stuff of EU diplomacy.

I went back into the room and broke the bad news. Gül declared that the game was over and others round the table agreed. He explained that highly skeptical group leaders within the AKP had been briefed about the earlier formulation: no further changes, or concessions to the Cypriots, could be contemplated.

Jack Straw told me on the telephone that it sounded as though we really had reached the end of our rope. He could do no more for the Turks. I asked him to give me a few more minutes: I hadn't yet put the arguments directly to Erdoğan. I went back into the room, where the prime minister had just joined the party, told him how far Jack Straw, John Grant, and the rest of the UK presidency team had moved other member states in the course of the day, and that there really was no scope for further change in Luxembourg. I offered the view that the latest, minor change to the language of paragraph seven didn't warrant throwing away everything we had worked for over the previous three years.

Erdoğan, calmer and fresher than the rest of the team, was noncommittal. He wanted to talk to Tony Blair. This took a while to set up. While we waited, I did my best to impress the big picture arguments on the others in the room.

When the two prime ministers eventually spoke, Blair was able to provide the political and legal assurances Erdoğan wanted. When he offered a minor further adjustment to the text, Erdoğan decided that he would settle after all for the version that Gül, Babacan, and others had told me was unacceptable.

After Gül had briefed the unconvinced leader of the opposition, Deniz Baykal, over the telephone, he and the MFA party left for the airport—three hours after I had gone round to AKP headquarters with the presidency's "final" offer. Erdoğan suggested I join them for the trip to Luxembourg. I declined, on the grounds that I thought I would be more use in Ankara, and went home for a stiff drink.

When Gül arrived in Luxembourg, Jack Straw embraced him warmly, despite some reticence on Gül's part because the foreign secretary had declined to soften his opening statement in one or two ways the Turks had suggested. By now it was after midnight. But London was an hour behind, so the UK presidency concluded that we had after all met the objective of opening accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005.

Three days later, we gave a celebratory party at the embassy for Turkish ministers, officials, journalists, and our EU colleagues who had lived through the drama. Since we were in the middle of Ramadan, we made the party into an *iftar*—the evening meal Muslims eat when they have been fasting all day. We laid out a large buffet with all the usual ingredients. On the other side of the house, a bar served alcohol and more secular food for those who hadn't been fasting.

It was a curious mix, but the event we were celebrating—finally, the opening of accession negotiations—was powerful enough to bring everyone together and forget, for a moment, the differences between secularists and Islamists.

A few months later, as he said goodbye to FCO staff after five years in the job, Jack Straw said getting accession negotiations with Turkey started was the proudest achievement of his time as foreign secretary. He had worked extremely hard for the outcome—not least during the thirty hours of tortuous negotiations he conducted in Luxembourg on October 2 and 3. When he and his wife Alice visited Istanbul for a private weekend with us the following June, ordinary Turks would come up to Jack to thank him for his efforts on Turkey's behalf.

A week after the opening of negotiations on October 3, the leader of the House of Commons, Geoff Hoon, visited us in Istanbul for the annual Bosphorus Conference. I took him to call on the prime minister at his office in the Dolmabahce Palace, on the shores of the Bosphorus.

Erdoğan was in great form—I always found him more relaxed in his hometown than when he was immersed in the politics of Ankara. Hoon asked about the events of October 3, and how Erdoğan had finally brought himself to accept the package on offer from the EU's foreign ministers.

Erdoğan said he'd known when he walked into the room at AKP headquarters that the negotiations were over. My face had said it all: he knew I had done what I could and that there was no more blood in the stone. Of course, he'd had to make the call to his friend Tony, both to show others who'd been screaming that the deal was over that he'd made a final effort, and to hear from Blair himself that he could not get a better deal.

All of us—Blair, Straw, myself, and many other officials—had played our part. Ultimately, the outcome had been about respect, knowledge of the subject, relationships, credibility, persistence, and knowing when and how to make the critical moves. Twelve years later, with the EU and Turkey busy distancing themselves from each other for their own political reasons, the sense of achievement we all felt may seem misplaced. But at the time it was real enough.

CHAPTER 6

In fact, it began to unravel more quickly than any of us expected. During the first half of 2006, the Turks did less than they should have done to build on the momentum created by the opening of negotiations. Nothing happened on judicial reform, or the promised changes to Article 301. Unpleasant, sporadic outbreaks of violence against Christians in the Trabzon area of the Black Sea and elsewhere fueled tensions.

So did a resumption of terrorist attacks, apparently carried out by the PKK, in the southeast and in coastal areas frequented by foreign tourists. A bomb attack on one of the bastions of the secular establishment in Ankara, the Constitutional Court, caused outrage amongst the secular establishment and the media, who held the AKP indirectly responsible after Erdoğan's criticism of one of the court's decisions.

Worst of all, just a few months after the negotiations began, it looked as though relations between Turkey and the EU were heading for the buffers because of the Turkish government's continuing refusal to open its ports and airspace to Cypriot shipping and aircraft, as required by the famous Ankara Protocol. The Association Council scheduled for June 12, 2006, might not, after all, permit the opening of even one chapter of the negotiations.

As the year wore on, my wife's and my attention began to focus on our departure from Ankara. Initially, I'd been sent to Turkey for three years. I stayed on for a fourth, primarily to see us through the UK presidency. By the late spring of 2006, my time was formally up. But the FCO was taking its time making senior ambassadorial appointments. First up was Paris, which was on the board's agenda in July. I put my hat in the ring, knowing the country and the language well, with the feeling that this was a job I ought to be able to do well after Ankara. Just three weeks before the date I had agreed to to make way for my successor in the middle of October, I finally heard we were going to Paris.

By then the December European Council was approaching, with accession negotiations with Turkey once again high on the agenda because of Turkey's failure to comply with its obligations towards Cyprus. Erdoğan asked Tony Blair to leave me in Turkey until the end of the year. Blair replied, with a laugh, that he was sending me to a country where I would continue to look after Turkey's interests—a line that my Turkish friends didn't let me forget once I arrived in Paris.

I did my best to use my farewell meetings with the prime minister, Foreign Minister Gül, and Finance Minister and EU Chief Negotiator Babacan to press the case for continuing flexibility and reform.

But there was one other message I was keen to get across. It was becoming increasingly clear that the tensions between the AKP and secularists—even businessmen who had been ready to give them the benefit of the doubt—were becoming acute. The AKP was putting its own people into key positions, not because of their competence but because of their loyalty and their Muslim beliefs. AKP municipalities were banning alcohol in public places—and not just during Ramadan. The AKP continued to favor entry into the secular higher education system of the graduates of Imam Hatep (Islamic) high schools, which had originally been encouraged by the military as a means of countering communism in the 1980s.

Most sensitive of all, the AKP was seen to be encouraging women and girls to wear Islamic dress—principally a head scarf known as the turban. This both offended the secularists, who saw it as counter to the legacy of Atatürk, and encouraged the fear that Turkey under the AKP was sliding down a slippery slope towards the kind of Islamic republic that they observed with such distaste in next-door Iran.

I talked to Turkish ministers about the need to reassure secularists that the AKP did not have a hidden agenda, and was not threatening their way of life. Gül firmly disagreed. For all the inclusiveness of his personality, and his readiness to understand other people's points of view, he could not accept that the AKP was a threat to the way of life of more secular Turks. For him, it was the other way around. It was the secularists, and the laws enacted under the current constitution, written in 1982 under strong military influence, that made it so hard for his wife and daughter to go to university and pursue normal careers because they chose to cover their heads.

I persevered, noting that the accusations against the AKP were multiplying, and that there was talk once again of the military being secularism's last line of defense against the Islamization of Atatürk's secular republic. I believed Turkey had been better governed by the AKP than by any other government in recent times. But it needed to make a better job of protecting secular democracy.

I noted that, as Gül had frequently reminded me, the rest of the Sunni Muslim world was watching with fascination as Turkey sought to reconcile the tensions within its society, and to make a success of its Western vocation without alienating its own, overwhelmingly Muslim, population. The AKP was hugely popular. But it had to show that it was a government of all Turks, not

just a government of those with whom it felt comfortable, who funded the party, and who thought like the majority of the AKP's leaders.

I didn't make much impact. Some months later, in the spring of 2007 when I was getting settled into a new life in Paris, the same issue came to a head over the nomination of Abdullah Gül as president of the republic, in succession to the ultra-secular President Sezer.

Erdoğan's personal preference had been Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül. But the influential speaker of the National Assembly, Bülent Arinc, wanted Gül—a move that set Erdoğan thinking about the real loyalties of some of his colleagues.

"... [Erdoğan] was not going to be told who the AKP could and could not nominate for the most prestigious position in the land."

The military and other secularists grumbled that it would be intolerable for secular Turkey to have as president a practicing Muslim whose wife wore a headscarf, as Hayrunnisa Gül did (but Gönül's wife didn't). After the Constitutional Court—in a highly political judgement—ruled that the National Assembly vote giving Gül the job was invalid, Erdoğan called his opponents' bluff, held a general election six months early, and saw the AKP returned to power with an unprecedented increase in its share of the national vote (up from 34.5 percent in November 2002 to 47.5 percent in July 2007). He might not have been convinced that Gül was the right man for the presidency—though public opinion seemed convinced that he was—but he was not going to be told who the AKP could and could not nominate for the most prestigious position in the land.

There was some debate as to whether it was wise, so soon after this spectacular defeat of the secular establishment, for Gül to remain the AKP's candidate. He rang me in the middle of the campaign (Susie and I were on holiday in Turkey) to explain why he had decided to do so; why the AKP's supporters wouldn't understand if he withdrew from the contest after such a resounding public confirmation of the government's preference; and why it would be wrong to give way to pressure from the military and other elements of the "deep state."

He deserved the job. But the elevation of Gül to the presidency in August 2007—with the generals subsequently boycotting social events at the palace where Hayrunnisa Gül would be wearing her headscarf—was one of the developments that prompted the military and other secularists to encourage

the prosecutor of the Constitutional Court in early 2008 to petition for the closure of the AKP. The court also sought to ban seventy-one of its members from national politics, on the grounds that they were undermining Turkey's secularism.

The case paralyzed Turkish politics for months, complicated relations with the European Union, and caused real concern about the survival of the country's democratic institutions. In the event, the decision taken on July 29, by just one vote amongst the eleven members of the Constitutional Court, to fine the AKP but not close it down caused a sigh of relief audible across Europe—and the Atlantic.

The AKP, once again, had dodged a bullet. Gül served out his seven-year term as president and remained in office until August 2014 when Erdoğan was elected to succeed him—under new rules, for a shorter five-year term but with the possibility of reelection for a second term. With hindsight, I am clear that it was the stand-off over the presidency in 2007 that triggered the dubious court cases brought over the next few years against the military and their secular supporters by the Fethullah Gülen movement, with the acquiescence of the AKP—on which more below.

CHAPTER 7

The nearly five years I spent as ambassador in Turkey were not entirely consumed with politics and Turkey's relations with the European Union. We also found time to explore and enjoy the country, and to delve into its history. On a regional tour of central Anatolia, Susie and I once stopped in Amasya, a small city that occupies a strategic position on the edge of the Pontus mountains just south of the Black Sea. It was the birthplace of the Greek geographer-philosopher Strabo two thousand years ago and of at least two Ottoman sultans. As we wandered lazily through the small museum, the curator let drop that traces of seventeen civilizations stretching back over eight thousand years had been found in his city.

Who outside Turkey—or even inside it—is aware that the country's rich cultural heritage is so ancient? That it includes two hundred theaters and amphitheaters from Greco-Roman times? Or that it was at the Parliament of the ancient Lycian city of Patara—recently uncovered from the sand dunes near Kaş on the Mediterranean coast—that the nation-states of the Lycian League used to come together more than two millennia ago in what is probably the earliest example we have of pooled sovereignty?

"Turkey possesses an extraordinary variety of fascinating, unspoiled, and, with a few distressing exceptions, unreconstructed ancient sites of breathtaking beauty and historical importance."

Towards the end of my time in Turkey, I shared with Erdoğan some examples of how the UK, with far less raw material, had created attractions in unlikely historic sites to spectacular effect. If Turkey could grasp the potential of the unique sites it possessed beyond Istanbul and Ephesus, I argued, and open its mind to the importance and potential of the less well-known pre-Islamic sites alongside the treasures of the Ottoman era, there was scope to bring investment and tourism to parts of the country no one visited, and to enhance Turkey's reputation as a cradle of civilizations.

I suggested looking at the models of the UK's National Trust and America's national parks as ways of protecting important sites from predatory developers and corrupt politicians. Some months earlier, I had arranged a visit by The

Prince of Wales to the historic town of Mardin, an archaeological gem in the southeastern corner of the country where Turks, Arabs, Kurds, and Nestorian Christians lived side by side. The people of the city lined the streets ten deep. They had never seen anything like it, and for a while their city enjoyed a huge boost in tourism.

The prime minister took the point and made a number of speeches pushing the idea of Turkey doing more to celebrate its historical and cultural heritage. After all, this wasn't a wholly new idea: over the years, the Tourism and Culture Ministry had been able to engage with partners like the Koç Foundation to make a real difference to such remarkable sites as Aphrodisias and Hierapolis.

Overall, however, there was little take-up of Erdoğan's initiative, and some suspicion of foreign archaeological teams that were prepared to come at their own expense to explore important sites. But the potential is still there. Turkey possesses an extraordinary variety of fascinating, unspoiled, and, with a few distressing exceptions, unreconstructed ancient sites of breathtaking beauty and historical importance.

CHAPTER 8

In 2008, eighteen months after I left Turkey and just a year after Gül became president, a series of arrests and indictments began in response to an alleged plot by the deep state to overthrow the country's democratically elected government. As part of the investigation into the *Ergenekon* plot, so named after a mythical city in Turkish folklore, the next three years saw almost three hundred people imprisoned on the basis of evidence that always looked questionable and was eventually deemed unsound by the Court of Appeal in April 2016.

The bulk of it had in fact been fabricated, as a number of specialists testified at the time, only to be ignored by the courts (now believed to have been infiltrated by sympathizers of Fethullah Gülen). But dozens of senior military and media figures were jailed—including Turkey's recently retired chief of the General Staff, General Ilker Basbug, who was convicted, absurdly, of forming and directing a terrorist organization. Many liberals sided with the Islamists in concluding that, whether or not the evidence was sound, the military had for years been playing too much of a role in politics and needed to be reined in.

The plot was largely the work of Gülen supporters whose "peaceful" ways of promoting Islam did not exclude fabricating evidence and sending hundreds of innocent people to jail. Erdoğan and the AKP were not themselves behind it, and were at this stage still grateful for the help of the Gülen movement in seeing off the efforts of their opponents to delegitimize their party. Largely for this reason, they did less than they might have done to ensure that justice took its course, and to get the convictions overturned before they became an embarrassment to the country's judicial system—and had ruined the lives and careers of decent people. Erdoğan commented in a speech in 2009: "These crimes violate our constitution and laws. Let the judiciary do their job."[2]

In parallel with *Ergenekon*, but a few years later, another plot known as *Balyoz*, or "Sledgehammer," alleged that plans had been drawn up by the military to provoke either war with Greece or a coup d'état, providing echoes of the occasions in 1960, 1971, and 1980 when the army temporarily took power. Again, the allegations were nonsense, and included documents offered as evidence said to date from 2003 that had in fact been produced using Microsoft equipment not available before 2007. Hundreds were imprisoned, though the

2 Dexter Filkins, "Turkey's Thirty-Year Coup," ***New Yorker***, October 17, 2016 Issue, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/10/17/turkeys-thirty-year-coup.

Crowds during the April 14, 2007 protest in Ankara at the Ceremonial Plaza of Anıtkabir, the mausoleum of the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. *Photo credit*: Selahattin Sönmez.

great majority of those convicted in 2012 were released in 2014 pending a fresh trial. They were finally acquitted in March 2015.

The rest of the world wasn't sure what to make of these plots, though the European Commission expressed concern in 2010 at the number of *Ergenekon* cases being brought before the judiciary. Overall, Turkey continued to get credit for the remarkable economic recovery begun by Kemal Derviş and continued under the AKP as it focused on making a success of its bid to join the EU. By 2010, US President Barack Obama was declaring Turkey to be a "great Muslim democracy" and a role model for other countries in the region.[3]

By early 2012 divisions were beginning to appear between the AKP—Prime Minister Erdoğan in particular—and the Fethullah Gülen movement. In February, after leaking details of secret peace negotiations between the government and the PKK, Fethullah supporters in the judiciary tried to arrest Hakan Fidan, head of the national intelligence organization and a personal appointee and confidant of Erdoğan, on grounds of supporting terrorism. Furious, the prime minister immediately had the law changed to grant Fidan immunity. For good measure he shut down a number of the Gülen schools, which in Turkey—as in many other countries—were an important source of funds for the movement.

A further, dramatic indication that the mood was changing came in May 2013 when demonstrations against the government in Gezi Park in Istanbul were brutally put down by the police. Fortunately for Erdoğan, President Abdullah Gül ordered the police to back off just before, at Ankara's behest, they were about to disperse the thousands of protesters with even greater violence.

This was a moment when even the well-off middle classes took to the streets and braved the tear gas to show their displeasure. It also marked the point when the split between Gülen and Erdoğan became irreparable. Immediately after the disturbances at Gezi Park ended, Gülen published an Op-Ed in the *Financial Times* criticizing the Erdoğan government for its autocratic tendencies and suppression of freedom of speech.

Six months later, in December 2013, the police arrested Reza Zarrab, a young Turkish-Iranian entrepreneur who had made a fortune out of shipping thousands of gold bars from Turkey to Iran as part of an elaborate scheme to help Iran avoid US economic sanctions. The issue was not his gold dealings themselves but the sudden appearance of recordings indicating that Zarrab had paid large bribes to several government ministers, and implicating

3 "Obama: Turchia a Pieno Titolo in Europa," ***Corriere della Sera***, July 8, 2010, http://www.corriere.it/esteri/10_luglio_08/obama-intervista-corriere-edicola_71c9bf26-8a50-11df-966e-00144f02aabe.shtml?refresh_ce-cp.

Erdoğan's son Bilal in what appeared to be attempts, on his father's orders, to hide tens of millions of dollars.

The sons of three government ministers were arrested and four cabinet ministers were either fired or resigned. Erdoğan cried foul, dismissed or reassigned the police and judiciary officials involved in the investigations, and blamed Gülen for a "vile attack against the republic."[4] The wiretaps were almost certainly produced by Gülenist officials but Erdoğan's claims of innocence were not helped by the suggestion from one of the ministers who lost his job that the prime minister should also resign as he was as implicated as the rest of them.

Zarrab was released without charge in February 2014 but was arrested again in March 2016 in Florida, on the orders of Preet Bharara, then the US attorney for the Southern District of New York. Bharara charged him with helping the Iranian government evade US sanctions. Despite efforts by the Turkish government to have the case dropped, and to argue that the case against him was a Fethullah Gülen construct designed to embarrass the president, Zarrab is due to go on trial in October 2017.

None of the plots and scandals was enough to prevent Erdoğan from being elected president of the republic in August 2014, when Abdullah Gül's seven-year term ended. A few days before he stood down I went to see the outgoing president to try and persuade him not to leave politics—in my view he still had much to offer his country. Although the AKP had brought forward the closing date for applications to succeed Erdoğan as party leader, I thought Gül still had the option of putting his hat in the ring.

He would have none of it. For a former president to run for the more junior position of prime minister struck him as inappropriate; and in any case, he did not wish to be put in a position of potential confrontation with his successor.

The early phases of the Arab Spring in 2011 had allowed Turkey to appear as a beacon of change for the Sunni world, and an even more significant regional power. But it didn't last. First, Erdoğan was indignant when the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt, led by Muhammed Morsi, was overthrown in July 2013 after just a year in power. Second, he became embroiled in the civil war in Syria when, encouraged by some of the Gülf Arab states that were by then heavily invested in Turkey, he turned against his old friend Bashar al-Assad, angered by the Syrian president's refusal to engage with Syria's Sunni majority rather than start a brutal civil war.

4 Constanze Letsch, "Leaked Tapes Prompt Calls for Turkish PM to Resign," ***The Guardian***, February 25, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/25/leaked-tapes-calls-Erdoğan-resign-turkish-pm.

As Turkey—and its intelligence organization, MIT—began to support whatever opposition group it thought could weaken Assad, it found itself less and less able, or willing, to control the extremist Sunni organizations that were using Turkish territory for basing, recruitment, transit, and as a source of weapons. Journalists were imprisoned for treason after they reported that truckloads of men and weapons were being waved across the border on the orders of MIT.

At the same time, Turkey was becoming less and less tolerant of Kurdish successes in winning back territory from the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and establishing their own areas of influence along Turkey's southern border.

The Kurds had long been victims of brutality, betrayal, and sometimes plain bad luck. When the Ottoman Empire collapsed at the end of the First World War, the Treaty of Sevres of 1920 promised them autonomy with the option of independence within a year. But when Turkey's new leader, the hero of the Gallipoli campaign, Kemal Atatürk, rejected that treaty and it was replaced in 1923 by the Treaty of Lausanne, all mention of autonomy for the Kurds had disappeared. The Kurds were not even included in the list of minorities entitled to their own language and identity within the new republic.

By 1925 the new Turkish government was promising to "Turkify" the whole population, by force if necessary. Over the next half-century, literally dozens of Kurdish revolts were suppressed, with the perhaps inevitable result that the Kurds developed their own armed insurgency in the form of the PKK, now regarded as a terrorist organization throughout the Western world.

In the early days of the AKP government, Erdoğan was the architect of an enlightened policy of outreach towards the Kurds, allowing Kurdish language broadcasting and publications in the southeast for the first time and overturning years of Turkish government refusal to recognize the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq (where Turkish companies now do very good business). The result was a dramatic reduction in the number of terrorist acts committed by the PKK, although the violence continued sporadically until the PKK announced a ceasefire in early 2013.

A year later the mood began to change as the Kurds became more forceful players in the Syrian civil war, and won international sympathy for their courage in holding out against the forces of ISIS in the town of Kobane in October 2014—while the Turkish army stood by and watched just across the border. For Erdoğan, the close alliance that existed between the PYD, as the Kurdish political group in northern Syria was known; their military arm, the YPG; and the PKK carried too great a threat of contagion. Some observers

nevertheless believe that if Turkey had done more to help the Kurds when they were being slaughtered by ISIS at Kobane, Sinjar, and Mosul, the YPG might have become less of a concern to their national security.

Erdoğan was hoping that the June 2015 election would give the AKP a supermajority big enough to change the constitution and grant the presidency significantly greater executive powers, with the support of Kurdish voters.

"The Kurds had long been victims of brutality, betrayal, and sometimes plain bad luck."

But he hadn't anticipated the rise in support for HDP, a Kurdish political party with a young and charismatic leader in the person of Selahattin Demirtas. In early 2015 Demirtas said bluntly that if his party won the 10 percent of the vote it needed to get into Parliament in the June election, it would not support changing the constitution to give Erdoğan the executive powers he wanted. Meanwhile, the PKK declared an end to the ceasefire, which had been in place since 2013.

In the event, the HDP comfortably passed the 10 percent threshold (with just over 13 percent of the vote) and won eighty seats in the Parliament, denying the AKP an outright majority and leaving Erdoğan a long way short of the supermajority he needed for constitutional change.

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu tried to form a coalition, but clearly didn't have the support of the president. Once the deadline for doing so had expired, Erdoğan exercised his constitutional right to convene fresh elections on November 1. All that despite a well-publicized offer by Kemal Derviş, by then a respected academic at the Brookings Institution in Washington, to rejoin politics as a deputy prime minister in charge of economic policy should a coalition be formed around the leadership of the center-left, secular opposition party, CHP, of which he had once been deputy leader.

The politics quickly began to deteriorate. On July 20, a suicide bomber killed thirty-three people and injured another hundred in an attack on a group of Kurdish sympathizers at a rally in the border town of Suruc, just ten kilometers from Kobane. ISIS claimed responsibility but the Kurdish community accused the Turkish authorities of turning a blind eye and the PKK killed two policemen in retaliation two days later.

In response, on July 24 the Turkish military began massive airstrikes against the PKK and the YPG, but only tangentially against ISIS targets—despite agreeing the day before to allow US military aircraft to use Turkish airbases in joint operations against ISIS.

There were also attacks against offices and members of the HDP, and against newspapers sympathetic to the Kurdish cause. Erdoğan made no bones about his strategy: to wrap himself in the national flag to ensure that, the second time around, HDP was not able to deny him the parliamentary majority he wanted to change the constitution.

On October 10 two suicide bombings—targeting a rally of Kurdish sympathizers demonstrating against the renewed conflict with the PKK—took the lives of 103 people near Ankara's main railway station. No one claimed responsibility but the finger of blame was pointed at ISIS and there were again accusations of security lapses on the part of the police and the intelligence directorate, MIT.

The results of the general election held on November 1 partially vindicated Erdoğan's gamble that reviving the specter of Kurdish terrorism and intimidating the opposition would give the AKP a better result. The AKP won 49.5 percent of the vote and was able to form a government on its own.

The HDP had been prevented from campaigning on an equal footing and was deprived of publicity by the growing number of pro-AKP media outlets (the Council of Europe deemed the campaign to have been "unfair").[5] But it again managed to creep over the 10 percent threshold. With 10.7 percent of the vote, it once again denied the AKP the supermajority it wanted to amend the constitution and grant Erdoğan executive presidential powers.

The United States and its allies were dismayed that Turkey's priority had become weakening Kurdish groups rather than defeating ISIS, but largely ignored the deterioration in the political situation inside Turkey. The country's geostrategic importance was growing by the day as the civil war in Syria continued and millions of Syrian refugees made their way to the EU, largely via Turkey to the numerous Greek islands just a few kilometers off the Turkish coast.

By early 2016, the EU had struck a deal whereby Turkey would take back one Syrian refugee arriving illegally in the EU in exchange for every refugee resettled in the EU from amongst the hundreds of thousands housed in

5 Kareem Shaheen, "Turkish Election Campaign Unfair, Say International Monitors," ***The Guardian***, November 2, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/02/turkeys-elections-campaign-unfair-say-international-monitors.

Turkish refugee camps. Turkey was also promised visa-free access for Turkish citizens to EU member states within the Schengen Area and substantial financial help with the cost of looking after the refugees (most of which has yet to be delivered). But international concern about Erdoğan's growing autocratic tendencies, and the suspension of the rule of law and freedom of expression, was increasing.

Calling on Erdoğan in Istanbul in January, US Vice President Joe Biden said as much, in public and private; as did President Obama in a press conference after his bilateral meeting with Erdoğan in the margins of the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington in April 2016. In a sign of the times, Davutoglu called off a visit to Washington at the beginning of May because the White House would not promise him a meeting with the president. In the event, Erdoğan fired him, appointing Binali Yildirim prime minister in his place, on the day Davutoğlu had hoped to see the president.

By then, my own career as a diplomat had ended: I left Washington and the FCO, after a little over forty-three years, in mid-January 2016. I then spent three months at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government as a fellow at the Institute of Politics and at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

At Harvard I found myself repeatedly questioned about what had gone wrong in Turkey and how the rest of the world should respond. In various interventions, including a speech at Harvard's Center for European Studies in late spring, I highlighted Turkey's achievements since the elections of 2002, the efforts we in the UK had put into getting Turkey on the path to EU membership, and my disappointment that in the last few years Turkey had set aside so much of the program of reform and democratization that had characterized the AKP's early years in power.

By June, my wife and I were back in Istanbul where I had been invited to address the Global Relations Forum. The day before my address, as we dined with friends on the shore of the Bosphorus, news came through of an ISIS-organized suicide and bomb attack at Istanbul's Atatürk airport, which killed forty-eight people and injured more than two hundred. This was the ninth major terrorist attack Turkey had suffered in little more than a year.

I was struck by how people took the attack in stride, with calmness and resilience—Atatürk airport was up and running again the following day. But for the country as a whole it was a further warning that finally coming down unambiguously on the side of the coalition against ISIS was not going to be cost-free. Turkey had become exposed to terrorist attacks from both the Kurdish PKK and ISIS, was under pressure to do more to help the US-led

coalition, and was at the same time playing host to almost three million Syrian refugees.

In August, Turkish tanks crossed into northern Syria for the first time since the civil war began five years earlier. The incursion was billed as Turkish help with the expulsion of ISIS from the border area. But the aim was at least as much to ensure that the Kurds of the YPG—by then America's partners of choice in the fight against ISIS in northern Iraq—were not able to occupy territory along Turkey's southern border, and to remind the US that Turkey was a regional player in its own right with its own priorities. For exactly this reason, Ankara announced later in the autumn that it expected to play a role in the liberation of Mosul when the move to regain that city from ISIS finally got under way in northern Iraq; and, on April 24, 2017, launched airstrikes in northern Syria which killed twenty members of the YPG and another five members of the peshmerga fighting alongside them.

CHAPTER 9

Barely a fortnight after the attack on Istanbul's airport, Turkey was hit by another, even bigger crisis of a very different kind. Turks—most of them at least—could hardly believe their ears when they heard Prime Minister Binali Yildirim announce in the early evening of July 15 that a coup d'état was under way. By the time it was clear early the next day that the putsch had failed, more than 250 people had been killed.

As the news broke, there was initial doubt as to whether the putsch was the work of Erdoğan's nemesis Fethullah Gülen and his followers; of the military itself; or even of Erdoğan, since it became clear so quickly that he was the big winner from the fiasco.

It is now clear that the initiative came from the Gülenists, though Fethullah Gülen's statement unequivocally criticizing the coup, and his age, suggest he personally may not have had much to do with it. It is also clear that while a number of senior military officers were involved, particularly from within the air force and the gendarmerie, the most senior army generals were not; and that while Turks were treated to the extraordinary and unprecedented horror of army snipers shooting unarmed civilians, many of the junior soldiers used to launch the coup believed they were taking part in routine exercises.

One of the early results of the botched coup was a rallying of support for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. As army parachutists descended on the hotel where he was believed to be holidaying in the coastal town of Marmaris, Erdoğan was able to communicate to the outside world only by means of a FaceTime interview broadcast by CNN Turk.

By the time they all realized that the coup did not have the support of the top military leadership, that it seemed to have been the work of a network owing allegiance to an aging cleric living in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania, and that it had failed, even Erdoğan's fiercest critics had concluded that the affront to Turkish democracy was unacceptable. The Turkish Republic had known military coups before but none had resulted in loss of life on anything like this scale.

It was natural enough that the AKP base should be there for Erdoğan. But so too were the leaders of the other political parties and even leading secular figures known to have serious reservations about the direction in which he was taking the country. As one business leader put it to me, "we'd rather

have a Putinist strongman we're used to than another Ayatollah Khomeini returning from exile and giving us an Islamic Republic."[6]

The military saw things much the same way. Relations between the president and the top brass had improved significantly over the previous couple of years as both sides began to realize they had been played by the Gülenists in the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* trials, and the military grasped the extent to which their ranks had been infiltrated by the Gülen movement. Their enemy's enemy had become their enemy too.

Visiting Turkey a few weeks after the failed coup, I found widespread anger that the West—with the UK a notable exception—had not moved more quickly to condemn it, and conviction that the US must have been at best aware of and at worst behind the coup. How could it not be, the argument ran, when Fethullah Gülen ran his network—renamed by the Turkish government as the Fethullah Gülen Terrorist Organization, or FETO—without impediment from Pennsylvania, and with the support of neoconservatives long committed to the cause of "moderate Islam"?

Unsubstantiated as it was, the allegation of US collusion became an obstacle to closer relations between Turkey and the US. Erdoğan said he was determined to bring Gülen back to Turkey to face trial for terrorist offences. Previous Turkish complaints about Gülen have never been followed up with a formal request for his extradition. If this time Erdoğan is serious, and meets the requirements of US law, there will be acute disappointment if the US legal system turns him down.

One Turkish commentator reminded me that it took America's closest ally, the UK, nine years to secure the return of Joseph Doherty, an Irish Republican Army gang leader who had escaped from the Maze prison in Northern Ireland while awaiting trial for killing a British army officer. What chance, he asked, was there of Turkey faring any better if it asked the US to send back Fethullah Gülen?

He didn't know until I told him that the crime of which Doherty was accused, and later convicted in absentia, had been the murder of my cousin, Captain Richard Westmacott. Or that he was released early as part of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998—which I still hope could one day serve as a model for a political agreement between the Turkish government and the PKK.

In fact, there are more unanswered questions about what happened on the night of July 15 than there is evidence of any foreign interference. How aware was the president and his entourage of the plotters' intentions before the

6 The interview with the author was conducted in confidentiality, and the name of interviewee is withheld by mutual agreement.

putsch began? Why did the government leak the information that hundreds of military officers suspected of being close to Gülen were going to be fired in the annual appointments round a month later? If, as he has since suggested, the president was not at the hotel where he had been staying in Marmaris when a Special Forces team arrived to arrest or even kill him, where did he go, and how?

How much did President Putin—with whom Erdoğan had mended fences in June after Turkey shot down a Russian bomber close to the Syrian border in November 2015—know in advance? Did he in fact offer Erdoğan the safety of a Russian Special Forces facility just a few minutes' flying time from Marmaris? If tens of thousands of journalists, generals, academics, judges, policemen, and diplomats were known to be Gülen sympathizers, why was nothing done to root them out sooner?

Some conspiracy theorists suggest that Erdoğan emerged from the coup so much stronger, with declarations of support from round the world ringing in his ears, that it must have been stage-managed by the man himself. I think that is nonsense. He did emerge stronger, and more popular than ever—he called the failed coup "a gift from God."[7] But as the first Duke of Wellington never quite said of the Battle of Waterloo, it was a damned close-run thing—much closer than any theatrical producer could have choreographed.

What matters now is where Turkey goes from here. There is widespread relief that Turkish democracy survived the coup attempt, and fury at those who sought to destroy it by military means. Yet many of those who wish the best for the country would like to see Erdoğan magnanimous in victory, taking to heart the points a dwindling band of brave souls—some Turkish, some foreign—have been making to him for years now about inclusivity, freedom of the press, rule of law, and the need to clean up corruption in public life.

Instead, Erdoğan seems keener to crack down on his enemies. The McCarthy-esque roundup of tens of thousands of public employees, journalists, academics, and members of the armed forces alleged to be Fethullah supporters; the further suppression of press freedom; the restructuring of the armed forces as the AKP would wish; and the president's refusal to include the Kurdish HDP in his initiatives to promote national solidarity all point to a determination to consolidate his hold on power.

In November 2016 Erdoğan responded that Turkey's critics could draw whatever red lines they wished—he would draw his own. For good measure, he reminded

7 Marc Champion, "Coup Was 'Gift from God' for Erdoğan Planning a New Turkey," Bloomberg, July 17, 2016, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-07-17/coup-was-a-gift-from-god-says-Erdoğan-who-plans-a-new-turkey.

the world that Turkey had not willingly given up its title to the Dodecanese Islands in the Aegean handed to Greece after the Second World War.

Even amongst his supporters there are those who worry that widespread purges risk creating a dangerous degree of alienation (think de-Baathification in Iraq back in 2003), and that the open, tolerant society so many Turks have striven to achieve in recent decades is giving way to a culture of fear and intimidation.

As a secular democracy in a deeply unstable region, a country of eighty million increasingly sophisticated consumers, a NATO partner, a candidate (still) for membership of the EU, and an important partner in the fight to defeat ISIS and bring an end to the slaughter in next-door Syria, Turkey matters.

But the constitutional referendum held on April 16, 2017, did nothing to reassure those concerned about the direction of the country. During the campaign, neither Erdoğan nor his supporters saw anything wrong in denying the opposition airtime or branding those opposed to the proposed constitutional changes as traitors and supporters of terrorism; and on the day, in a significant break with the way polls have been conducted since 1950, ballot boxes were stuffed with fake votes.

Erdoğan won, by a margin of 51 percent to 49 percent. But he did so by a far smaller margin than most people, including the AKP, expected given the way the dice were loaded against the No voters. Complaints from independent observers, including those of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, were brushed aside. Amongst world leaders, only US President Donald Trump called Erdoğan to offer his congratulations.

As a result, Turkey's parliamentary democracy is to be replaced with a presidential system giving the president control over the judiciary, the Constitutional Court, and the Council of Ministers, with only Parliament—currently dominated by Erdoğan's AKP—able to provide limited checks and balances. The new system gives the president the right to seek two—possibly three—more terms in office.

Since the referendum, thousands more policemen, judges, and other officials have been arrested, even though none of the fifty thousand detained since the failed coup of July 2016 have yet been brought to trial. Critical journalists continue to be imprisoned, and social media remain blocked. The remarkable degree of national solidarity sparked by anger against last July's coup plotters provided an opportunity to bring the country together, not drive people apart, and to regain the momentum of reform and modernization I had the privilege to be part of more than a decade earlier. As I write in May 2017, there is little

sign of this happening, despite a bold call for comprehensive reform from former President Gül on May 4. Those who can should continue to impress on Erdoğan the importance for his country's future, and his own legacy, of arresting the slide into authoritarianism.

If it does not stop soon, it may be too late to salvage Turkey's political institutions, culture, and reputation. The people of that remarkable, diverse, vibrant, and indispensable country deserve better.

Ambassador Peter Westmacott

Distinguished Ambassadorial Fellow,
Future Europe Initiative, Atlantic Council

Sir Peter Westmacott is a distinguished ambassadorial fellow with the Atlantic Council's Future Europe Initiative. He became British ambassador to the United States in January 2012. His tour of duty ended in January 2016.

Prior to his service as ambassador to the United States, Westmacott served as ambassador to France from 2007 to 2012 and ambassador to Turkey from 2002 to 2006. Westmacott's forty-year career in the British Diplomatic Service has also included four years in Iran (before the Revolution) and a secondment to the European Commission in Brussels. He was the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's director for the Americas from 1997 to 2000 before taking a seat on the board as deputy under secretary. From 1990 to 1993, he was deputy private secretary to HRH The Prince of Wales.

Peter was born in Somerset in the south west of England and read history and French at New College, Oxford. He is married to Susie Nemazee and between them they have four grown children.