

Turkey At 100: Under The Grip Of Authoritarian Nationalism

*Featuring Henri Barkey, Sibel Oktay, and Sinan Ciddi
Moderated by Ambassador Eric Edelman
Introductory remarks by Jonathan Schanzer*

SCHANZER: Welcome, and thank you for joining us for today's events hosted by Foundation for Defense of Democracies, FDD. It's Thursday, October 26th, and today's panel will discuss the Republic of Turkey's trajectory and viability as a geopolitical and security partner at the 100-year mark of the establishment of the state.

I'm Jonathan Schanzer, FDD's Senior Vice President for Research. We're pleased to have you here for this conversation, some in person, some tuning in live, and some listening on your favorite podcast platform.

I want to say, first and foremost, that we congratulate the people of Turkey on this important milestone. That said, FDD, as many of you know, has a track record now of chronicling a very dangerous turn that we have observed in Turkey over the last decade or two. This wrong turn can be described in a number of ways, and I'm going to list some of them here today.

We have noted since 2011 that Turkey has fully embraced the terrorist group Hamas, based out of the Gaza Strip. There is a headquarters that operates in Istanbul. There are military operatives that run around in the country. There are fundraisers. There are political operatives.

All manner of Hamas operatives continue to roam free in Turkey, despite sanctions, despite the group's violent record. And for some reason, the government in Ankara has refused to change its policy. But it doesn't end there.

FDD has been involved for quite some time in tracking the illicit finance that has flowed through Turkey. And between 2012 to 2015, FDD was at the forefront of researching what was known as the Gas for Gold scheme. This was a scheme facilitated by the Turkish government to help Iran evade sanctions to the tune of \$20 billion.

This was the largest sanctions evasion scheme in modern history, and it was designed to help the Islamic Republic evade sanctions, right at the moment where the discussions between the United States and the Islamic Republic were their most sensitive. Where pressure should have been brought to bear, Turkey opened up the valve and allowed for massive funds to flow. And we have not yet seen the Turkish state pay a price. It doesn't even end there.

Between 2012 and roughly 2017, we saw a massive influx of fighters joining the Islamic State in Syria, passing through Turkey's borders. There was a time where some of my colleagues here at FDD, we met with a – let's just say a – an – a U.S. official who had recently left the region. And we asked him if he had discussed this matter with Turkish officials, and he openly stated to me that the MIT, Turkish intelligence, was, of course, aware of this influx of fighters, and that Turkish officials said that this would be something that after the Assad regime fell, that it would be able to take care of the problem.

Of course, we know what happened as a result of Turkey's disastrous policies. We saw the rise of the Islamic State and its violence rack the region. And in many ways, I think it has yet to recover. By the way, we can also note with certainty that the Islamic State was using Turkey as a jurisdiction of illicit finance transfer all throughout this process.

It doesn't even end there. 2019, we saw the Turks acquire the S-400 system from Russia. This was in defiance of American policy. It continues to be a major problem, and it is something that I think truly undermines the argument that we need Turkey as a bulwark against Islamic extremism to the east, and as a bulwark against the Russians as well.

Everything that we have seen over the last decade and a half has undermined this argument time and again. And now we see a Turkish government utterly defiant in the wake of the 10/7 massacre. Some people are calling it a pogrom – 1,400 people killed in southern Israel, while Hamas remains active in Istanbul. And the government of Turkey continues to defend its actions. Erdogan himself continues to talk about the group as a legitimate resistance movement. Unbelievable from an American ally.

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So, what now? I think we are likely to see sanctions handed down by the U.S. government against entities that are operating inside Turkey. There is a full mobilization of the U.S. government in this regard, but I don't think that it will end there. There will need to be serious discussions about the removal of that Hamas office in Istanbul. There will need to be discussions about maritime smuggling.

In fact, only a few weeks before the war erupted in the Middle East, we were all made aware of a news item revealing that there was a shipment supposedly of building materials that was sent from Turkey to the – to Hamas, or to the Gaza Strip. Inside that shipment of building materials was, in fact, tons of explosive materials. There are questions now about whether Turkey knew in advance of what was to come and whether this was in preparation for the rockets that Hamas would want to build.

We will need to talk about diplomatic passports that Hamas has been reportedly using as it travels in and out of Turkey. And I think finally, there will need to be a discussion perhaps about creating the mechanism, finally, for the ejection of NATO allies that are not acting like allies.

These are all tough questions, these are not easy things for U.S. policy to handle, but I do believe that a policy review is in the offing. These are a few ideas that we can put on the table right now, but what I can tell you is that U.S. policy cannot continue as it has been, turning a blind eye to all of this maligned activity being conducted by Ankara.

This is my framing for today's discussion. Thankfully, we have people here who are far smarter than I am, who are going to take it from here. I want to introduce them briefly before handing over the panel to my colleague, Eric Edelman.

First, I want to welcome Henri Barkey, who is the Bernard L. And Bertha F. Cohen professor of International Relations at Lehigh University, Chair of the Academic Committee, on the Board of Trustees at the American University of Iraq in Sulaymaniyah, and Adjunct Senior Fellow for Middle East Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. Henri previously served as the State Department Policy planning staff, working on the Eastern Med, the Middle East, and intelligence-related issues.

Next, we have my colleague Sinan Ciddi, an FDD Non-Resident Senior Fellow and an expert on Turkish domestic and foreign policy. Sinan is also an associate professor of National Security Studies at the Marine Corps University. Sinan was the executive director of the Institute of Turkish Studies, based at Georgetown University for nine years. Between 2008 and 2011, he established the Turkish Studies Program at the University of Florida's Center for European Studies.

Next, we have Sibel Oktay, who is a Non-Resident Senior Fellow at Chicago Council on Global Affairs and an associate professor and former director of the School of Politics and International Affairs at the University of Illinois, Springfield. Her current projects focus on elite and mass attitudes towards alliances, foreign policy fiascos, and how leaders influence coalition decision-making processes.

Moderating today's conversation is Ambassador Eric Edelman, former Ambassador to the Republics of Finland and Turkey in the Clinton and Bush administrations, and former Principal Deputy Assistant to the Vice President for National Security Affairs. He now serves as Chair of FDD's Turkey Program and is advisor to FDD's Center on Military and Political Power, also known as CMPP. He also holds positions at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments at the Philip Merrill School for Strategic Studies at Johns Hopkins University at SAIS [School of Advanced International Studies], and the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia. That's a lot of hats, Eric.

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Before we dive in, just a few final words about FDD. For more than 20 years, we have operated as a fiercely independent, nonpartisan research institute exclusively focused on national security and foreign policy. I should just note here that we have been so independent that we have produced pieces on Turkey, monographs in the past where people were denying much of what we were saying for a number of years. And we can now say with pride that both of these and a lot of our other products still stand, they still hold up today. We certainly recommend that you check out our website. You can look on the Turkey Program and you can find some of these products that we've put out.

As a point of pride and principle, we do not accept foreign government funding. Since the attacks on Israel on October 7, FDD experts have produced more than 600 broadcast, print and radio appearances and original research publications. To stay up to date on our real time analysis, I encourage you to check back regularly on our website, which is FDD.org, and follow us on Twitter, or the platform now known as X. We are @FDD.

That's enough from me. Ambassador, take it away.

EDELMAN: Thank you, Jon. Thank you for that introduction and thank you to FDD for hosting this event today. I'm thrilled to be on this panel with Sibel and Sinan and Henri.

Let me just make a –couple of opening observations before we dive into this, since we're marking the 100th anniversary of the Turkish Republic.

When I was ambassador, I – you know, I used to note to my embassy staff that Dean Acheson in 1947, at the time of the Truman Doctrine speech and when the bill for aid to Greece and Turkey was before the United States Congress, testified in closed session, not in public, that Turkey was a, as he put it, imperfect democracy.

And my own view was that, as an embassy, it was our job to help Turkey perfect its democracy. And I had in mind a comment that Lord Kinross made in his biography of – of Ataturk, which was that Ataturk had committed a very liberal act, a – had a liberal end, which he accomplished by very illiberal means, which was to set the country on the path of democracy and Westernization.

But when he died, unfortunately at a relatively early age – it's actually pretty amazing what he accomplished in that short span of time – he left a lot of questions unanswered. In particular, the role of religion in society, the role of the military in politics, the role of the state in the economy, and the role of ethnicity in the nation.

And Turkey has been working through those issues since he passed from the scene and since his successor Ismet Inonu launched Turkey on the path of multi-party democracy in 1950. I don't think we should look back on the relationship, you know, sort of with rose colored glasses.

There were plenty of ups and downs in the U.S.-Turkish relationship during the Cold War. We had the – there was a – not, you know, inconsiderable kerfuffle over the withdrawal of the Jupiter missiles from Turkey as a consequence of the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

A few years later, we had the Johnson letter, over one of the periodic crises over Cyprus, that rocked the relationship. And there were certainly tensions during the U.S. War in Vietnam. But throughout all of that, Turkey remained essentially a stalwart ally in NATO, in the larger Cold War with the Soviet Union.

And for those of us who consider themselves friends of Turkey, I think what's been dispiriting and concerning has been, in more recent years, as Jon said in his introductory comments, a turn towards much more authoritarian kind of politics domestically, which has been accompanied by a rise of anti-Western rhetoric, not just limited by, I'm sorry to say, to the ruling party, the AKP [AK Party], but shared broadly in the opposition, and a pattern that Jon talked about of Turkey collaborating with Hamas, offering Hamas leaders a home in Istanbul, as well as other kinds of aid and comfort.

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And that issue I think has taken on obviously a new dimension since October 7th and the horrific atrocities that Hamas committed in Israel, and the taking of hostages as well.

In addition, we've seen a pattern of hedging between Russia and NATO that is equally troubling. Jon mentioned the purchase of the S-400s but there are other instances one could cite as well.

And so I think we're – you know, we're sitting at an interesting point in time where a lot of the traditional verities about the U.S.-Turkish relationship are being questioned, I think for good reason, and I hope we'll dig into those today.

So Sinan, let me start with you, and let me start with the issue of Hamas leaders because you've written several pieces in the last couple of weeks about Turkey's relations with Hamas and their — and the question of whether or not they're willing to break these ties now in the light of what happened. I think we know the answer now but I think President Erdogan has kind of given us a dispositive answer in his comments in the last couple of days.

But just going back in time, we had not only meetings with Hamas leaders in – in Istanbul and Ankara, we had the Mavi Marmara flotilla which led to a crisis in Turkish-Israeli relations. In the current instance, we see Turkey, you know, trailing along behind Qatar, trying to insert itself in the negotiations over hostage relief, and those comments that I mentioned of President Erdogan glorifying, I would say, Hamas, calling them a liberation movement, and criticizing not just the Israeli response but the U.S. support for the Israeli response, arguing that it's a form of mental illness.

What can be done to get the Erdogan regime to focus on the damage it's doing to itself in the United States by maintaining these ties with Hamas? And is there any chance that we can get Turkey to take a slightly more nuanced view of this issue?

CIDDI: Thank you, Eric, and thank you all for coming.

I think it might be useful just to sort of initially begin answering your question, Eric, by suggesting that that hope that Turkey might take a more nuanced and more measured position in this conflict is fast dissipating.

For all those unaware, on Saturday there is something called the Great Palestine Meeting that will take place in Istanbul's closed Ataturk Airport that will be headlined by Erdogan and which is likely to be what I would call a sort of a jubilation of pro-Hamas propaganda. So please tune in to that if you haven't — if you're not already sort of aware of this, in terms of just sort of seeing where the Turkish government is on this level.

I also woke up to an image this morning of a bookshop in Beyazit, a relatively conservative district of Istanbul, where outside a sign was hung, saying, "Jews are not allowed in." And that is more representative I think of the position of public opinion, which I think has been radicalized by this government's sort of elite manipulation of antisemitic and anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli sentiments over the last number of years.

And I would just also like to say, you know, FDD has been very pronounced and clear on this for a number of years, suggesting that expecting Turkey to mediate or essentially have a more nuanced position of the Arab-Israeli conflict has not been something that we said is going to happen. And we've been very consistent in that, and we – I take no pleasure in essentially saying look, you know, we told you so.

But this morning, I also saw from the *Jewish Insider* saying the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations called Erdogan a charlatan for referring to Hamas as a group of Mujahideen fighting for the liberation of Palestine. And this was also representative of the attempt — the sort of well-intentioned attempt to think that Turkey and Israel could rebuild substantive ties. I think that has been a mistake.

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But hopefully in the coming days and weeks, you will see more research produced by FDD which specifically highlights some of the more individual connections, the network of Hamas leaders, their enablers, and their supporters in places like the Turkish Parliament, and the entrenched financial networks that continue to exist to this day.

So you could look at this in two ways. There is a historical precedent which I think needs to be established here. That first — that first precedent is Erdogan's own mindset, right? I remember going back to the days of the 2010s – the early 2010s, when Erdogan really sort of started to ruin the bilateral relationship between Israel and Turkey, and people started asking what changed in Erdogan, given that he is — was supposed to be this pragmatist that was a pro-Western, pro-NATO, pro-European approach to Turkey's foreign policy and situating. And my answer to that at that time was nothing. You know, this is Erdogan going back to factory settings.

And subsequent engagement and situating of Hamas inside of Turkey over the last decade or more has been very institutionalized. At that time following the Mavi Marmara incident, what we did see was the origins of Hamas being situated in Turkey as following the release of Gilad Shalit, the Israeli soldier, in return for which 10 Hamas prisoners were allowed to reside in Turkey. Some of these people are their leaders. They have essentially spent time in prison for the murder of Jewish citizens. They have done prison time for this. They now live in Turkey as citizens and they basically laid the groundwork for Hamas becoming institutionalized in Turkey.

More recently – and this morning, you also saw Ismail Haniyeh, one of the likely masterminds of the 10/7 Attacks, thank [Turkish] Foreign Minister Fidan, saying that, "we just had a wonderful meeting with him today and he would like to thank Minister Fidan for Turkey's continued support of Hamas."

My compatriots often ask me on social media, saying, "am I not ashamed to be sort of taking such an anti-Turkey position?" My position I don't think is anti-Turkey. I am literally ashamed that at the 100th anniversary of what you refer to, and I agree, as an imperfect republic, an imperfect democracy, one founded by – on the principles of Kemal Ataturk's vision, is now shilling for and representing a known terrorist entity with deep financial and military ties.

Some of these leaders, as Jon mentioned in his opening remarks, they should not be de-emphasized. People like Ismail Haniyeh and Saleh Al-Arouri carry Turkish passports. And that's not insignificant simply because Turkey plays a front-and-center role in enabling the Hamas attacks, that not just occurred in 10/7, but we can also say that is the means by which Hamas coordinates its international presence in the region. If those leaders cannot travel internationally, how do they coordinate with other powers such as Iran? This is front and center and it should not be de-emphasized.

Also – and I'll finish on this point because I'm sure that we have much more to say – Erdogan is also in — just before his vile sort of Mujahideen remark, has also been conducting shuttle diplomacy by telephone with his Iranian counterpart [President] Raisi, and not just in relevance to the 10/7 attacks, suggesting that Turkey and Iran should actually coordinate on a response to Israel's counterterrorism mission, but this has also been going back throughout this year, in the — outbreak of violence in — at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in — earlier this year. Erdogan again called Raisi suggesting that they should coordinate a response.

So what we are dealing with here is not a person or a leadership structure of Turkey that is interesting in mediating the problem or trying to find a solution, but based on the image of saying no Jews allowed in bookstores in Turkey this morning, what we're seeing is a person, a leadership, which just hates Jews and is anti-Israeli through to the core. And that is a problem that we will continue to address here at FDD.

EDELMAN: Let me just pull on a couple of threads if I could Sinan, before turning to Sibel, which is there have been these reports that the Turkish government asked Ismail Haniyeh and a few other of the leaders to please de-camp from Istanbul and to go to Doha. What do you make of that?

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And then finally, just this morning, you know, the *Financial Times* reported that the Turkish Borsa kind of had a collapse as a result of Erdogan's comments. The so-called "Circuit Breakers" have had — it fell seven percent. It was falling so rapidly. The Circuit Breakers were, you know, put into place to — to keep this from becoming a complete, you know, market rout.

A lot of this is being attributed to the business community's concern that the turn in economic policy, it was heavily dependent on securing foreign direct investment into Turkey and that Erdogan's comments were clearly going to screw that up. Is there a chance that sort of economic factors may come into play and modulate some of this?

CIDDI: I think if they do, that it is up to Erdogan because I think the extremist sort of rhetoric and intent to act against Israel is coming from Erdogan directly. And to that point, what you're seeing on the other hand is Finance Minister Simsek, who's obviously trying to be — in the last few months since the election, since he was appointed, trying to sort of band-aid and patch together Turkey's sort of plagued economy back to a sensitive — sensible, sort of established, sort of economic track but that's hamstrung.

To the other point though, it is — it has been reported that, on October 7th, Ismail Haniyeh was reportedly in Turkey, after which time he was asked to politely leave, knowing, as the news started trickling in of the mass casualties and atrocities that were occurring in southern Israel.

And that really does underscore a point that, you know, you can ask the question, what is a NATO ally doing hosting a leader who subsequently apparently held a — you know, a celebratory prayer as the news was trickling in of Israelis getting massacred.

And I don't know how the Turks get ahead of that. But also, since then, the — you know, the Turkish government has been on the horn, right, saying, you know, if you take Erdogan's tweets or the official communiques of the Foreign Ministry highlighting what Erdogan's saying, he's trying to highlight that, you know, what he calls gross human rights violations, where as the UN Commission on Human Rights saying against Palestinians there's massacres taking place, et cetera, et cetera, whilst, at the same time obviously, the Turkish military has been engaged in gross atrocities in northeastern Syria by bombing not only northern — north Syrians but specifically civilian installations, such as hospitals, healthcare centers, as well as schools apparently. Over 400 rocket strikes by Turkish artillery and military have been recorded in northeastern Syria since 10/7 ...

EDELMAN: And some close calls with U.S. Forces.

CIDDI: Absolutely, yes. And we've also just forgotten the — the notion that the United States shot down a Turkish drone for appearing to be too threatening against the positioning of U.S. forces, which, you know, it — by itself should probably have been event turning sort of thing but we — you know, it's gotten lost in translation unfortunately.

EDELMAN: Yes. There's a lot of news going on, more than I think we can consume.

Sibel Oktay, the Turkish Social Contract seems to be under enormous stress. Turkey, like other states — and we should in the United States be, I think, mindful of the fact we have our own divisions — but Turkey is deeply divided society across a variety of different axes. And each camp — the Kurds, Islamists, Nationalists, Kemalists — very suspicious of the others.

What impact do these deep divisions in Turkey have on Turkey's international standing? And to follow up a little bit on some of the comments that Sinan made, how deeply rooted do you think this, you know, antisemitism that leading AKP party figures have expressed since October 7th is in Turkey?

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You know, I'm mindful of the fact that there was an Ottoman tradition of somewhat greater sensitivity to, you know, minority, you know, rights, but I did see, while I was Ambassador at the beginning, during the early years of the AKP party's rule, proliferation of antisemitic literature, publication of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in multiple editions, *Mein Kampf* appearing in bookstores, et cetera. So this has been a 20-year sort of ongoing, you know, sort of ideological poisoning I think starting at the top. How deeply rooted do you think it is?

OKTAY: Thank you. Thank you for having me. Good morning, everyone.

I want to start by saying how fully I agree with the characterization that Sinan made of this really interesting moment that we are talking about, Turkey's involvement with Hamas, on Turkey's Centennial. And I share the emotions that you just described. I could not have described them better.

And before I talk about, you know, the Social Contract and these very timely questions that you're posing, Ambassador, I want to also continue pulling on those threads that we just sort of started fraying.

The fact that the stock exchange, Istanbul Stock Exchange, basically sky-dove, right, by seven points this – today, it's happening at the same time, on the same day that the Turkish Central Bank increased interest rates, right? That's the fifth consecutive hike in interest rates. That should have been received positively by the – by –foreign investors, by economists, but then you're seeing that the stock exchange is not responding in the same way that we would have otherwise expected, given this interest rate hike.

And so that just goes to show how deeply entrenched the political situation is in Turkey and how directly it impacts the economy of the country.

And so a lot of it is the government's own doing and it's — and no matter how — no matter these reforms, no matter how much Mehmet Simsek, the Finance Minister, and Hafize Gaye Erkan, the Governor of the Central Bank, want to — and their team want to improve the state of the economy through these, you know, gradual rate hikes, the way in which the government talks about the current crisis in Israel goes to show that it's not just about economic governing, right, it's also about how you conduct politics and foreign policy. So I wanted to bring your attention to that.

So let me start by the antisemitism question, going — following from what Sinan said. And I — again, I agree with his comments. I think antisemitism, as far as the AKP and Erdogan himself is concerned, it's baked into their DNA, it's baked into his profile as a politician in Turkey.

Now, let's remember that he was a protege of Necmettin Erbakan, right, the modern sort of founding father of political Islam in Turkey. And I remember when I was a kid and growing up in Turkey and I used to watch the news a lot — and look where I am now — and every other word that Necmettin Erbakan would say at — on TV and, you know, on the — on his stump speeches was all about Zionism, right?

(SPEAKING IN TURKISH)

You know, "Zionists are this", and, "Zionists are that". And so he was vilifying Zionism but also specifically speaking the Jews at every instance he could get.

Now, Erdogan's political coming of age happened at the same time that this rhetoric was prevalent in Turkish society. And so it is — I mean, the apple cannot fall far from the tree, right? So in this sense, I think understanding Erdogan has to start with understanding the political context, and the political context in which he grew up and he became a politician in and also the people he rubbed shoulders and elbows all through his political career.

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The second thing is — and this was something that used to come up a lot. I don't — I haven't seen this particular anecdote come up more recently — but back in the 1970s, when he was, I think, around 20, 22 years old, he wrote, directed, and starred in this play called "Mas-Kom-Yah", which is this sort of abbreviation for masons, Communists, and Jews. It's basically an antisemitic trope that includes, you know, all the — sort of all of the cliches and the stereotypes that you can imagine.

And he was proud, and this came up a number of times in his interviews, especially when he was an up and coming sort of national level politician and people were interested in his sort of political background and ideological leanings. And this used to come quite a bit.

And so now, when — you know, it — when he says Hamas is a liberator group, they are the Mujahideen, and he — it's not even blanket support anymore — or blanketed support anymore, it's basically outright support of what this terrorist group stands for — I think we should go back and realize that this was his factory setting all along, this is the mindset that he grew up in, that he practiced, and now he's conducting his politics. And so I think that's something that we should be cognizant of.

And going back to these debates about whether Turkey can mediate this crisis, absolutely not. I mean, I hope I get to be proven wrong but I really don't think that Turkey is in a position to mediate this crisis, and certainly Erdogan is not.

And this is not even the first time that Turkey dropped the ball on this, right? So prior to Operation Cast Lead around the around 2003, 2004, when he recently had become President at the — Prime Minister at the time, he was very interested in negotiating a or sort of mediating the Arab-Israeli conflict.

He both wanted to pursue a Syrian-Israel track, he also wanted to pursue a Palestinian-Israeli track, but again, this sort of DNA that he cannot — or this sort of reflex that he cannot control comes to the fore. And as soon as the — Operation Cast Lead started, he sort of did a swift 180, and the rest is history, right? The Davos walkout in 2010 — in 2009 against Shimon Peres, the very man who negotiated the only viable peace agreement that remains in history books, right? The Oslo Accords and the Israeli-Jordanian Peace Treaty and all of that.

And so, and Mavi Marmara flotilla is another episode. And so given all this thick history between Turkey under Erdogan and Israel, I really don't think mediation is in the cards for them.

Now, going back to this question of social contract, again, very important, very timely question, considering this specific moment where Turkey's celebrating its centennial. I — and without going all sort of professorial on you or anything, let's talk about what a social contract means to begin with, right?

So Ernest Renan, famous French historian, talks about how nation is a daily plebiscite, right? It's a very sort of civic understanding of a nation. It's not about your ethnic heritage, it's not about the blood that's in your veins, it's really about having this kind of daily pledge of solidarity with people who you might have never met in your life but you celebrate the same things and you mourn over the same things.

And I think when we talk about social contract in Turkey, this idea of being a nation in a civic sense, right, celebrating and mourning together is really no longer there, right? And social contract — I understand social contract to be undergirded by this idea of a nation, and I think it's really sort of shattered — it has shattered before our eyes.

Turkey — when I — when we talk about social contract or when I think about social contract, I'm thinking of not just celebrating and mourning together but also having ties of trust, having ties of love, right? The — this sounds kind of fluffy but, you know, it's — it really is what makes a nation hold together.

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It means competing in good faith, right? We will compete in politics. We will compete in economics and social life. But as long as people do it in good faith, that means if you lose today, you might win tomorrow, and if you lose today, that doesn't mean the end of your life and livelihood as you know it. That has been completely shattered in Turkey.

Now, you might argue that there are reasons for it, reasons some of which are not in the people's own making, such as the horrific governance of the economy, and people are in deep economic crisis everywhere in the world — in the country, but also, you know, unprecedented levels of corruption and nepotism that depreciates trust in institutions, which I hope we get to talk about.

But also, this is the government's own making, right? If you constantly vilify 50 percent of your society, of your population as enemies, number one, then that obviously starts to fray and stretch and ultimately tear this social fabric apart.

Now I'm really glad that you brought up the October 28th demonstration on greater Palestine. What's really striking to me, what's remarkable to me, that this is happening the day before October 29th. That's the centennial of the republic. And so that just goes to show where President Erdogan and where his — where his heart lies, it seems, and that is, I guess the sort of — a final data point — I should say a last, but not least, you know, a data point on where — what — how we should think about Turkish society and Turkish social fabric and the contract going forward.

EDELMAN: Sibel, I want to pull on — you — you want to talk about nepotism and corruption. I'm going to give you an opportunity to do that right now.

OKTAY: Sure.

EDELMAN: Turkey has municipal elections coming up beginning of mid — well, spring of next year.

OKTAY: That's right.

EDELMAN: In the last round, AKP lost control of Ankara, Istanbul, other major...

OKTAY: Izmir.

EDELMAN: ... metropolises. In fact, I think they lost control of, I think, urban areas that produce about 70 percent of the nation's wealth. He obviously wants to take those back. I mean, he tried to keep Ekrem Imamoglu from...

OKTAY: Sure, yeah.

EDELMAN: ... actually serving as mayor of Istanbul — failed. But he wants to take them back, and one of the reasons he wants to take them back is because of the potential for speculation and corruption.

OKTAY: Right.

EDELMAN: Do you think that — I mean, is he crazy like a fox? Is all of this antisemitism and pro-Hamas stuff actually helping him mobilize his base for the elections next spring? And is he following, in a — in essence, a strategy of polar- — a positive strategy polarization? He wants to polarize society in order to drive out his — you know, drive up his vote total?

OKTAY: I mean, I guess it's too soon to tell whether this will impact or his take on Hamas and his positioning about that, how that will affect elections. But if there is one thing I guess we all know about Erdogan is that everything is about the next election, right? Everything is about survival. Everything is about whether he — he's going to be able to expand the AKP's strongholds and recapture Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, these major economic powerhouses, including the capital of the country. And so I don't know how this particular moment will play out in the elections, but certainly, that's something that he's after.

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And I guess we can also talk about this more in the Q&A, but one thing that really separates Turkish politics, and I guess, when you compare Turkish politics to U.S. politics and electoral politics is how here, it's all about turnout and who you can bring out to the polls. Turkey has historically had very high turnout rates. But I think for this local election, I think a lot of it will come down to whether the opposition can bring out its supporters out to the polls and who is going to turn out their own base.

So this might implicate, but I think it's too soon to tell.

EDELMAN: Last, but definitely not least, Henri — or Sinan, did you want to say something...?

CIDDI: Just a couple of brief comments. I'll not monopolize, but it's...

EDELMAN: Sure.

CIDDI: Otherwise, I'll forget.

At the centenary of the republic, I agree with Sibel. We should be at this point celebrating the diversity of Turkey over the last century. You know, we have approximately 25 percent of the population which is Kurdish of origin. Turkey's largest remaining non-Muslim minority are the Turk — Jew — the Jewish population. I would really care to think or ask how they are feeling right now, given what's about to take place on Saturday and these mass vitriolic rallies.

When she — when Sibel really nailed the notion of, this is Erdogan down to his core, I mean there should be no doubt about this. I mean, you have a man that is fixated on completely tearing down Turkey's — you know, existing relationship with Israel, one which he broke. I mean, he's supposedly trying to put back together in the last 10 day — a year or so, which has completely, I think, been abandoned. But also his notion of, you know, is it just electorally determined? And is it just, you know, to woo voters with this sort of vile, anti — you know, Kurds are terrorists. Jews are, you know, murderers, right? Whatever he calls them.

It should also be known that in the Turkish Parliament, my colleagues, Melissa Sacks and Joe Truzman of FDD, have really nailed this, and will be working on this more in the coming future. We're seeing — also identify members of the Turkish Parliament who are AKP members who not clandestinely, but quite openly associate and host Hamas meetings, their leaders, as well as their "philanthropists", quote-unquote, within Turkey. And they put those up on the social media accounts, and this is publicly-available information. It's not that this has been sort of, you know, hidden.

So even if it sort of electioneering in one mode, on the other hand, the fact that you have parliamentarians openly, you know, you know, spurring on and cheering for Hamas's exist — institutional existence in Turkey is deeply-entrenched. Sorry.

EDELMAN: Henri, as I was saying, last but definitely not least. You've spent a lot of time, both in the academy but also in government, working on the U.S.-Turkish relationship. In every previous era, when we had ups and downs, you have looked for pathways to put the relationship on a more solid footing and to maintain a kind of strategic, what we used to call back in the late '90s, a strategic partnership. I don't think we've called it that more recently. Hard to describe it that way.

You just recently wrote in *Foreign Affairs* about trying to break the impasse between Ankara and Washington. Can you talk about how you think that can be done? And is there some utility in posing the question of, you know, of who lost Turkey? Not that Turkey was ever ours to begin with, but that we seem to have lost the thread in terms of U.S.-Turkish policy. So is there something to be said about looking back retrospectively that gives us some guidance for how we might change things and put things on a more positive basis?

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BARKEY: Again, let me thank the organizers for inviting me. It's good to be here. It's not a good time though. But in any case, look, the Turkish-American relationship and Turkey's position in the world has changed quite a bit, and it has to do essentially a lot with Erdogan.

But you can argue that Turkey was changing in the sense that, as it became a more prosperous, more dynamic, a special economy — I mean, think of the Turgut Ozal days — that Turkey was actually already changing, and Turgut Ozal was the harbinger in many ways of that change, but except that his vision of the change was different than Erdogan's.

Turkey has always been part of the West, but in a very rather timid way. It really never cared about the Middle East that much. The Middle East was a part of the world it was not really interested in.

And even if you look today, in terms of Turkey's economic relationships, it's all with the West. I mean, six countries, United States and European countries account for more than 45 — almost 45 percent of Turkish exports. Four countries, I think, in the West account for almost 70 percent of investments in Turkey.

And when you look at the relationship between Turkey and the Middle East economically, it's not that significant. Yes, there's — especially if Ankara there's a lot but it is not a deep relationship. I mean, Turkish business folks — and this is what may be the stock market in Turkey is collapsing — is really embedded in the West. And what Ozal was trying to do was actually deepen that relationship but use it also to expand elsewhere, but use the West as its — shall we say, as its anchor.

Now, Erdogan is different. Erdogan is different in many respects. Look, he has done a lot to change Turkey, and let's face it, in the 20 years that he has been the president of Turkey, Turkey has changed quite a bit. I mean, economically, it's far more than — it has expanded — I mean, again on Ozal's footsteps, if you want — but he also decided that he wanted to expand Turkish relationships with all other parts of the world.

But fundamentally, right, here you have a populace authoritarian leader. And if you look at populace authoritarians around the world, I mean, they do two things. A) they have very expansive views of their own societies, their own countries, but also of themselves, right?

And Erdogan, especially after 2007, 2010, decided to reshape Turkey's economic, politic — what, shall we say, foreign policy, but in a way in which he saw Turkey becoming a pivotal country in the world. He made it very — I mean, open.

I mean, he thinks that Turkey should be a member of the Security Council, as a permanent member of the Security Council. The Security Council has to be changed. He saw himself as the leader of the Muslim world, as Turkey being the most, shall we say, dynamic and important Muslim country, a country that's part of NATO, and yet, economically, very powerful. But in all of this is — there is this element that he actually sees himself as a global leader.

What's interesting, of course, is that Turkey is a member of NATO and Erdogan has decided to challenge what he sees as American hegemony in the world. And so what — yes, the United States has other, shall we say, competitors. I mean, you can think of Putin and Xi as leaders who are challenging the United States.

But this is — what's interesting about Erdogan, of course, is that he's a challenger that comes in from inside the Western alliance, right? So — and clearly U.S. government hasn't figured out how to deal with him, in part because, yes, Turkey is very very important.

Look at geography. I mean, it is probably geographically — geopolitically, I should say, one of the most important companies, first or second in the world, in terms of, I mean — and Eric, you've been in government, so you know better than all of us in that sense.

So Turkey has a great asset it can deploy at any point in time in its favor. So Erdogan has been smart about using that.

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EDELMAN: It's too big to fail.

BARKEY: It's too big to fail, right? And so he has challenged the United States from within the alliance and we haven't figured out how to deal with that. And he's gotten away with it, right?

I mean, look at — when you look at his , shall we say, rhetoric, right, increasingly it has become anti-American and blames the United States for just about every ill in the world, right? Even — I mean, forget about the Gaza conflict now. Even before Gaza, I mean, the economic problems that Turkey encounters is America's fault. The coup in 2016 is America's fault. The — everything that happens in the world is America's fault.

Yet, he never says the same thing about Russia, right? Why doesn't he say the same thing about Russia? I mean, Russia is hate — is a main, major problem for Turkey in many respects, right? And when you look at Russia — not just in Ukraine but elsewhere and Russia supporting the – Assad all these years as somebody he want — Erdogan desperately wanted to overthrow, he doesn't because he can get away with attacking us because we don't respond, right?

And that has been the main mistake I think that the United States has made over the years, that we have essentially allowed him to get away with it. You can argue it's almost maybe there's a —at State or White House and elsewhere in the US government, “oh, you know Erdogan, he can say whatever he wants, so, you know, we'll let him — we'll let him say what he's” – I'm – in other words, not taking him seriously.

But that was a mistake. It's a mistake in the sense that, in Turkey, anti-Americanism was actually owned by the left in the old days. What Erdogan has succeeded in doing, he's – now has made anti-Americanism something that both the left and the right own jointly.

EDELMAN: Yeah.

BARKEY: 70 percent of the Turkish public think that the United States is the single most important threat to Turkey. I mean, how can you ...

OKTAY: Reconcile.

BARKEY: ... reconcile this with the fact that you are a member of NATO, right? So — but here — and I do blame the U.S. government for not essentially standing up to this because ultimately what we have ended up with is a – now a population in Turkey that is very anti-American, right?

Paradoxically, when you look at the upper-middle-class, where is it that they would like to go? It's the West and the United States. I mean, you know, the United States is still the most desirable location for many Turks.

But the only time we have stood up to him was when the S-400 crisis happened, right? And on the S-400s, to me what's interesting about the S-400s is that he was told not to buy the S-400s, right, for all the reasons that we know, because of the Russians and the — and co-locating them with the F-35s. He was told that he would lose the F-35.

And remember, the F-35 program was such a sweet deal for Turkey. No other country got the same deal. Turkey was going to build part of the F-35s, the – including the fuselage. Turkey was going to be the location for kind of repairing or maintaining — doing the maintenance of all the F-35s in some of the Eastern European countries. It was a huge boon for the Turkish economy to add technology transfers and stuff like that.

And he claims that we want — we didn't want to sell the Patriots, which is not true. And he said there was not — that the United States didn't want to give – do technology transfer on the Patriots. What — we're doing all this technology transfer with the F-35, what are you talking about? As if the Russians were going to give him any technology with the S-400s.

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But it was — and then this is what's — to me, is interesting. And this is — I'm going to speculate now and I don't usually like to do that. But I think that he generally believes that the coup in 2016 was organized by us, just like they think that the coup against Erbakan in 1996 was done by the United States. So the S-400s may have been a system that he was going to put it on Ankara, on his palace or around, shall we say, Ankara because he doesn't trust us after the 2016 coup.

I don't know. This is, again, speculation. That's why he went for the S-400s. And this is the only time the U.S. government said no, and stood by it. And I think he assumed that we will say no, no, no, no, no, and then we would accede, because we always do to what he has done in the past.

And I think, again...

EDELMAN: And there were serious costs to saying no, I mean, for the US, which is to say the program was slowed down, we had to relocate some of the production facilities...

BARKEY: Right.

EDELMAN: ... when we kicked Turkey out of the F-35 program. Costly for Lockheed Martin, the manufacturer. I mean, there were — it was not without costs.

BARKEY: Except that we kept the money that the Turks paid for the F-35s, so.

EDELMAN: Right.

BARKEY: So...

EDELMAN: I'm sure it was an even deal.

BARKEY: But he was not — of course it was costly. And, look, Turkey is a NATO country. We do want the Turks to have the fifth-generation aircraft. Now they will not get the fifth-generation aircraft, fighter jet — fighter jets. So it's not — I mean, the way we look at it from a defense perspective, I mean, as a NATO country, especially a front line NATO country, we want them to have the best equipment.

So but this should have been also a point on which the U.S. government could have built its new approach to Turkey. I — I don't — I think Turkey and the United States are allies, they should remain allies. We have to build a relationship into, like, ideally would like it to be like United States and Italy. I mean, the Italians don't do these things to us, right? Italians may be — disagree with us on many things, but they don't do this kind of stuff.

So why is it that the administrations, right, when Erdogan says “you did the coup” or “you are the cause of our — our economic problems,” don't go around and say, what are you saying? I mean, you need to push back. If you don't push back, Erdogan is going to go through an open door. And I think that's the trick, I think, to dealing with them.

But again, remember, he's a populist authoritarian and his ambitions at this stage trump the needs of Turkey and the national interests of Turkey, if you want, as I say that, because they are — his — I mean, his own interests are far more important than Turkey. And that's not going to change. Let's face it, that's not going to change.

The only thing we can do is maybe contain him, but to do that, we have to expand a great deal of political capital, and I don't see that willingness.

EDELMAN: Why do you think that is, Henri? I mean, Turkey is a middle power. I mean, this is not like dealing with Russia or China. I mean, it's — it is an ally. I mean, I think what you're calling for is — and which as you know, because we've talked about this incessantly — is a more transactional relationship. I mean, we've tended to treat Turkey as if it's an ally. Yes, it's sort of misbehaving, but if we treat them like a responsible ally, you know, it will make them respond in kind somehow.

And that's been repeated over and over again by administrations, as you suggest, without a positive result. I mean, obviously, the, you know, Einstein quote about doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result comes to mind.

So why is it – and by the way, you know, I wrote an op-ed in *Politico* back in 2018 with someone who – co-author who I think should have some influence in the U.S. government, Jake Sullivan, in which we argued for a more transactional approach, that we can't just say, OK, treat them like an ally. You have to take each issue on its own merits and basically say, OK, what have you done for me lately? If you want X, I will give you Y.

Why do you think it's been so hard, you know, to get the U.S. government to do that?

BARKEY: I completely disagree with the premise of your – of your question.

EDELMAN: OK.

BARKEY: What we do have now is exactly a transactional relationship.

EDELMAN: OK.

BARKEY: It's not a relationship of principle. It's not a relationship of ...

EDELMAN: Well, yes.

BARKEY:... right?

EDELMAN: Yes, I agree.

BARKEY: We just do business with them. We – you know, we want them to - we want bases, we want access to this or they want this from us, right? So the point is we need to move from a transactional relationship to the – a relationship – I mean, we don't have a transactional relationship with – with – with –

EDELMAN: maybe –

BARKEY: but we don't have a transactional relationship with Italy ...

EDELMAN: Right.

BARKEY: ... right? Which is also, strategically, a very important country, given its shape and everything else, right?

That's what - that should be our goal. But for that, we have to have – we will always have differences with countries.

EDELMAN: Sure.

BARKEY: We've had differences with the French all these years. I mean, you know, even – but I think the relationship that we have to – the – what we have today with Erdogan is a great deal worse than what had with de Gaulle, and de Gaulle had nuclear weapons.

If you – but the – well, the point here I really want to make is no, we don't want a transactional relationship. A transactional relationship is what we have now and what we – is we are ending up with this anti-Americanism.

Look, we also – I should – I do want to make a sense – I mean, these guys also have – have played into what's going on in Turkey. I mean, all the Turks see is a bombing of Gaza, and that's pretty horrendous. I mean, that's not – so Erdogan can play on that.

I don't think if the Israelis had not bombed it, he would have been sympathetic to Israelis, but that's another issue.

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But anyway, to go back to the – this issue of – we would like to - we should have a principled relationship and we should tell them what the principles are. You want – you – but there is a cost, not – the – let me be – with a transactional relationship, there are no costs to Turkey. If you want a principled relationship, then you say, here is – here are the – what we want. The – OK, we know what you want, but you don't , you're going to pay a price. They paid a price for the S-400s.

Today, look at the – again, to go back to the stock market, why is the stock market collapsing? Because Turkey needs huge amount of money. And that money is going to come not from the Gulf, but from the West, right? And they realize now that that's – that money is now endangered with ...

EDELMAN: In jeopardy.

BARKEY: ... his – his comrades. So there is a cost to Turkey of really antagonizing us, and when they may have to go to the IMF [International Monetary Fund] for a – for a stabilization program, the United States plays a very big role there.

OKTAY: But there's also a cost on the United States, no? And that's the idea that Erdogan operates on, which is – you know, one of the questions that you asked earlier was about hedging and how – I mean, the question that you posed to Sinan about how, you know, Turkey is playing the sort of politics of hedging in the region.

And while I agree in principle with what Henri has said, that kind of principle/sort of borderline punitive relationship that the United States might take with Turkey will push Turkey only away from the United States into China, into Russia, and into the Middle East.

And so is that something that the United States is willing to, you know, facilitate? I don't know.

BARKEY: But Sibel, look at the relationship that – the economic relationship that Turkey has with China. China buys nothing from Turkey. Turkey buys a lot of stuff from China, right? What is the relationship with Russia? It's essentially energy, and now because of the Ukraine war, there's all this other stuff going on. But normally, there's nothing, you know, the Russians buy from Turkey, right?

So if you're looking at the future of Turkey economically, that future is in Europe and the United States because those are the markets that buy Turkish goods. And the – and the Turkish economy is – actually needs those markets.

EDELMAN: And Turkey is on the opposite side of any number of regional issues from Russia, whether it's Libya or Syria or Ukraine.

OKTAY: And yet Turkey is the only country who was able to talk to both Ukraine and Russia.

Listen, I'm not trying to defend Turkey, but I'm also trying to show that, like, there is a logic to it. Italy will never antagonize the United States because Italy does not have a hedging strategy, it doesn't have an "other" it can fall back on. It seems that Erdogan and the administration thinks that Turkey does have these others that it can fall back on.

Whether that's rightly placed, whether that's, you know, a –sort of a smart thing for Turkey to do ...

EDELMAN: You know, this goes to the point of perhaps minor disagreement between Henri and me, although I think it may be more taxonomic than anything else, Henri – but, you know, yes, we've been trying to be more transactional with Turkey, we're just not very good at it, you know?

So we've tried to be transactional on the issue of Swedish admission into NATO and ratification of the amended NATO treaty and trying to, you know, tie it to the F-16s, even though everybody denies that it's tied to the F-16s, except that's a – you know, we all know that it is.

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But it – it's still – you know, the administration, I think, is pulling punches because, to Sibel's point, they think Turkey might be useful at some point in negotiations between Russia and Ukraine. There are already – Turkey is the venue right now for ongoing prisoner exchanges and swaps between Russia and Ukraine.

If we ever get to the point of negotiation over the war in Ukraine, which I'm a little bit doubtful about, but if we ever did, Turkey might be, you know, the party that could do it. So therefore, you can't completely put the screws, you know, to Turkey on all these other issues.

We need to turn to the audience for Q's and A's, and we're delighted to take questions. If you have one, please raise your hand, and my colleague back there will bring the microphone to you.

CORLU: Sure. Thank you for this very insightful and nuanced presentation. I'm Axel Corlu. I'm a historian, political scientist, and many other things. I wear many hats. And the question that I'm going to ask is based on these many different hats.

I essentially agree with what Henri was saying about the transactionalism, that how Erdogan is not exactly made to pay a price. Basically, he has gotten away with things that no other leader in Turkish history would have gotten away with over a prolonged period of time.

But at the same time, as I think about all these higher level engagement things that we're talking about – you know, higher level actors, states, institutions, and so on – I also think about the other side of this. And that comes from both being a historian and so on, but also as a minority in Turkey, as a Greek, Armenian, Levantine in Turkey, who has witnessed, as well as studied, the last 100 years – well, I haven't witnessed the last 100 years.

(LAUGHTER)

But what enabled Erdogan, what made Erdogan, was part of that public. It's not as if Erdogan came out of nowhere, and it's not as if Erdogan created the Turkey that crushed its minorities, that destroyed a good chunk of its, you know, variety and multicultural heritage and so on and so forth. He's just a different branch that, you know, came up and destroyed the old social contract.

If it was a social contract, it was a very limited social contract – and I'm addressing Sibel here – because a social contract that's not inclusive, a social contract that's based on excluding large chunks of the society and crushing them is not quite the social contract that Renan wants to talk about.

So addressing these things at a top level, at transactionalism, you know, what can be done and, you know, how you can put pressure on Turkey and Erdogan, should it be principled and so on, I think these are very valuable.

But what about the public that enables the – all these things? Erdogan draws power from these things. There's a chicken and egg dynamic in that the more Erdogan drifts to the right, the more he utilizes antisemitic tropes, anti-Christian tropes, a whole variety of anti-Western tropes, and so on, the more, you know, support he derives from good chunks of Turkish society, and even deriving support from society that does not vote for him.

When Henri gave the example of what used to be the Turkish left, that was the, you know, anti-American element, and now, Erdogan has actually sort of become their leader in a sense as well. That speaks to that. Also, a society that recently in the poll showed to be overwhelmingly anti-American, you know, seeing the US as a great enemy and so on and so forth.

So what do you think the role of public diplomacy is? How do we address the other side of this problem, not the top level but track two diplomacy, public diplomacy? How do we create a nuanced, multi-pronged approach to Turkish public?

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Because as the Turkish public drifts further and further into this anti-Western, you know, antisemite, anti-Christian, anti-minority position, Erdogan and his, let's say, followers, whoever will follow Erdogan after he's gone, are going to continue using these dynamics.

So how do we address it, not just at the top level but also addressing the Turkish public? Thank you.

EDELMAN: Sibel, do you want to take a crack at that one?

OKTAY: That's a difficult one, but I fully agree with everything you've said, Axel, including the idea that the social contract will have to have more colors than what it originally, you know –or what I may have painted it with. So I fully agree.

I think it's very difficult to change hearts and minds because, going back to what Ambassador Edelman said about, you know, anti-Americanism and the sort of tense relationship between US and Turkey was not a something of the last two decades, but, you know, there are instances in the past, going all the way back to the Pilgrims and the Johnson letter and – all of that, including sort of entrenching greater anti-Americanism, antisemitism, anti-Greek tropes and so on and so forth.

So I think it's not something that can happen overnight, and I think it's going to take a generation, perhaps, to overcome these deeply entrenched fears and antipathies and this – feelings of threats.

And it's – I mean, I'm glad I'm not a public diplomacy person because I think it's a very difficult thing to do, but I don't think it's going to happen overnight and certainly will need decades and decades to rebuild that relationship and to rebuild perceptions.

EDELMAN: Sinan, did you want to?

CIDDI: So your neighbor who was sitting there, Alan Makovsky who's just stepped out, he and I were talking last night, and he said, you know, there was a Pew Research poll that he saw back from the days of Turgut Ozal where Turkish notions of Judaism and Jews in Turkey was completely the opposite of what we're seeing now. And I saw a poll from Metropoll that came out just today, actually, as Eric Sanjo's was reporting just how much, you know, the public opinion is swayed.

I agree with you. I think, you know, I agree with the premise of the basis of what you're saying historically, but I think elite manipulation of public sentiment is at the top of this, and I think it's going to take decades, I mean, if not, you know –I'd be impressed if most of the people attending that pro-Hamas rally on Saturday could even place Jerusalem on a map. I mean, if they ask them, you know, what do they – you know, why are they protesting, I don't think they'd necessarily have an idea of it, essentially other than what they're going to be handed to them.

But I think, you know, the elite manipulation of that sentiment, at this point, is the central figure of this. I mean, just daily, you know, spewing of this and that, in terms of publicly vilifying minorities. And, you know, the Kurdish minority is obviously, you know, accustomed to this, decade on decade.

And so I agree with the basis that it was already pretty, you know, entrenched there historically, but I don't think necessarily that was going to – you know, that could have – you know, could not have been overcome in the last 21 years of Erdogan governance.

You know, if they really pursued the Europeanization track, if they really sort of tried to sort of, you know, have a more substantive relationship with the United States and its allies, which would have meant looking at Hamas by a government standard – if you wanted a relationship of values and principles, then you look at this and say, "Hamas is a terrorist organization and it should be condemned and we're — we find it abhorrent."

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Instead, when you say the opposite and say " Hamas is a group of Mujahideen," you get a sort of, you know, mindset that just sort of nods because they're being fed that through channels of media nonstop.

EDELMAN: Yeah, I mean, as someone who broke his pick on the public diplomacy issue back in 2003 to 2005, I think the media environment in Turkey is extremely challenging and it is way worse now than it was when I was there.

ERDEMIR: Thank you. Aykan Erdemir, Anti-Defamation League. Thank you for this great presentation. I have a question to Sibel about a potential mismatch between political elites' rhetoric and behavior and the grassroots behavior.

On the political elite side, I think messaging has been very clear, right? An AKP city councilor recently stated — you know, he praised Hitler, he called for cleansing the world of Jews and destroying Israel, and he's — and no one in the city council opposed him, including the opposition, and he's still in office, or Erdogan has openly endorsed Hamas, called it a — you know, as you said, a liberation group, a Mujahideen. And we're told in — the opposition glorified Hamas violence by sharing even footage of body cams and motorized paragliders. So the political elite behavior is clear.

But then, we also see the streets and get the assumption that the people must be with the political elite. But according to a Metropoll survey carried three to six days after the 10/7 attacks, even within the AKP, among AKP voters, only 12 percent state that Turkey should support Hamas. Those who say support Palestinians but distance from Hamas is only 24 more percent.

So even within Erdogan's party, only 36 percent say support the Palestinian side, with or without Hamas. More than half of AKP voters — and this is even higher with other party members — say Turkey should either be a — mediator or should remain neutral in this conflict.

So how do you explain the mismatch, if this poll is accurate — and it was a representative survey — if this poll is accurate, how do you explain the divergence between the political elites and the Turkish electorates? And also, how do you explain the mismatch between these spectacles of glorification of Hamas violence and terrorism on the streets and what I see from this poll, the silent Turkish majority?

OKTAY: Right. Thank you. That's a very good and tough question. So let me try to take a stab at that. So I think Ozer Sencar is leading Metropoll, right? So I respect him, obviously he's an expert in public opinion polling in Turkey, but I wonder if the timing of this poll was critical in explaining that particular result that you're talking about.

So if I'm understanding, if I listen to you correctly, it — you're basically saying that 36 — only 36 percent of AKP supporters are interested in supporting Palestine and supporting Hamas and the — some combination of those two, but then the majority wants Turkey to either play a mediator role or be neutral.

I think that was — and this is, like, three to six days, you said — this was about the same time, if I can, you know, reconstruct the timeline in my head, where, A) Turkey did have this sort of — floated this idea, and Erdogan did float this idea, of potentially mediating this crisis between the two sides.

And I think had we redid — I don't know if there is a new poll coming out. I hope — I very much hope that Metropoll does this poll again and asks the same question. I would bet that the results would be much more different in favor of that 36 percent. I think I would see a lot more sort of increase on those who would say, you know, we should support Hamas and we should support Palestinians.

I think the timing and the unexpectedness of this attack was — could explain the sort of lackluster, the sort of uncertain support that Palestinians and Hamas in — specifically would be getting.

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I will say the following — a couple of things that I hope will also address, Aykan, your question. Political elites on — across all parts of the spectrum sympathize with the Palestinian cause, and the lack of information or the lack of understanding of that story with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I think, easily spills over to supporting Hamas and supporting antisemitism.

And so I think there is — you know, regardless of what Erdogan might say and what — what Davutoglu might say, which are basically cut from the same cloth, let's face it, I think parties on the left, nationalists, I think all sort of colors of the political — political spectrum, if scratched long enough, will show some kind of anti-Israel and pro-Palestine, and particularly pro-Hamas, sentiment.

And so I think there, that kind of elite fueling is imperative, that people are shaping their decisions, the public is shaping its decisions and sort of opinions about the conflict based on what they hear from the elites, but also — and I agree with both Sinan and Ambassador Edelman, in terms of how the vile rhetoric in the media is stoking these attitudes further.

And again, considering the — most recent sort of types of news coverage that comes out of Turkish television channels and newspapers, considering all of that, I would assume that if we were to re-field this exact survey now, I think the sentiments would be much more in favor of supporting Hamas and sort of supporting Palestinian cause, at the expense of Israel, right? There is that caveat that we should be cognizant of.

I think it's OK to argue that, you know, Palestinians deserve to live in peace, in prosperity, and in safety along with Israel. I think it's OK to say that, and I think we should say that. But saying that we support Palestine, with the caveat that — at the expense of Israel, I think that's where more people would fall in if we were to do this survey again.

But, you know, I stand corrected.

EDELMAN: I think we have time for maybe just one more question, cause we need to wrap up at 12:30, so.

GRIGORIAN: Hi. I'm David Grigorian, I'm a senior fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School, ex-IMF economist. I suspect that part of the reason why we didn't hear much by way of policy prescriptions today is that there's still disagreements among panelists as to what Turkey is bringing to the table. I might be wrong.

As I was listening to all the — three of you, I was sort of picturing a stylized balance sheet of Turkey-West relationship, and there's a lot of things, items on the liability side. Couldn't come up with anything on the asset side. There were one or two examples.

So — and as a — as a former crisis manager, I appreciate Ambassador Edelman's parallel to too big to fail, and even there, there are solutions to a — medium-term solutions to how to solve the big-to-fail — too-big-to-fail problem.

So what would be your prescriptions for Turkey/U.S. relations in particular? What would call Erdogan's bluffs in many of the situations? And by the way, to the negative dates, I — I'd like to add the Turkish role in 2020 Armenia-Azerbaijan wars of supplying not only special forces but also Islamic Jihadists. Thank you.

OKTAY: You want to take it?

EDELMAN: Policy prescriptions? Henri? That's...

BARKEY: Well, I — look, I think I've made it clear that I think we have to essentially sit down with the Turks and basically say that if you want to improve relation — the relationship with the United States, and if you want to benefit from a close relationship with the United States, meaning especially economically, that you need to change your behavior, and if you don't — we have to explain to them that as an ally — as a member of the alliance — and I'm — this is — I'm not talking about in terms of punitive; I'm talking about establishing a new basis, right?

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Because everything I — all — after all these years, the basis that we used to have has completely corroded. There is no basis to the relationship except that geopolitically, it's important we have bases there, we have interests there, and we want to continue that relationship. And it's very clear that they do not have other options. They not — they— as — I tried to explain earlier, because of where Turkey is economically, it doesn't have any other choice, right?

So our — we have played cards in our hands, and we have to explain to them, and we have to ask him — ask Erdogan to change his rhetoric and say to him that this is going to be the basis of it — of our — the definition of our relationship.

Look, at the moment, one of the things that really antagonizes him, or he's really angry at is I think by the end of the Biden — first Biden administration, this is going to be the — probably the first time that a Turkish leader doesn't come for a state visit to Washington, right? Biden has been very good about that. You know, he's made it very clear. "You're not coming to the White House," right? And it's driving Erdogan crazy. But we have to explain to him, this is going to be the future of the relation.

Of course, presidents change in the United States. We've had presidents who like — all — others of the — who we know likes authoritarian leaders. So how can , you know, talk about a pause. But U.S. government has a strong bureaucracy that has to, first of all, agree within it — itself as to what the policy's going to be. There is no agreement at the moment within USG, and therefore, you have people all over the place on Turkey, and we have to have a conversation within the government first here as to what it is we want to achieve and how we achieve. We're not getting what we want at the moment.

And my argument is — goes back — you know, doing the same thing over and over again is as Eric said, insanity, and that's what we're doing at the moment, right? Give...

So what I'm arguing is for rethinking the relationship and establishing the baseline.

EDELMAN: Sinan?

CIDDI: Excellent question. I would say just based on the notion of practicality, I don't think any - you know, policy prescriptions are not likely to succeed until Erdogan is out of the picture. I think there's no stone that hasn't been overturned.

I don't think we can rebuild a substantive relationship, even on the base of transnationalism or a more substantive principal thing. And when I say Erdogan being out of the picture, I mean, this is up to Turkey to remedy. They need to finally realize that Erdogan has to be voted out, if that's possible.

Short of that, I agree with Henri, in terms of like the United States government should take a leaf from Vladimir Putin's book, which is, when the Turks shot down a jet in 2015, what did Putin do? He stuck it to Erdogan by punitive economic measures and diplomatic initiatives that resulted in Erdogan formally apologizing to Putin, because Turkey's economy contracted by 0.5 percent.

He understands force and he responds to it. If he can see that Turkey is negatively impacted by it, beyond the point of his own, even, opinion. In the current environment, you know, if you look a, you know, for example, what should Turkey's position be towards Hamas? This is not a hard one for the United States to drill down. I think a letter emanated out of Congressman Chris Pappas' office yesterday, sent to the Secretary of State, saying here is what we are asking of Turkey to do. Be consistent and hard on that.

Revoking the passport of people like Ismail Haniyeh and Saleh al-Arouri should not be a heavy lift for this administration to ask of Turkey. This is low-hanging fruit. These are terrorists. It's not hard to say, hey Turkey, you know what? Get rid of their passports.

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That's not okay. Shut down their offices. Stop giving them media space. Stop allowing them to, you know, shuttle back and forth between Iran. Stop providing raw materials, if it is emanating from Turkey, even with your consent or with your tacit acceptance that ends up in the hands of Hamas, a rocket making material. That should not be hard, right?

Another policy thing is, and you know, and this is how the - you know, the Turks shoot back, and it's been quite effective in Washington and I think it's time that the United States government gets on top of this.

The whole notion of the SDF [Syrian Democratic Front]. You know, Turkey's basically going around saying, oh, you want to stop, you know, helping Hamas. "Why don't you stop helping Kurdish terrorists," quote, unquote, "in Northern Syria, the SDF?" The United States' partners. Can we just get behind this notion? And the United States government should be vocal about this, saying the SDF are not terrorists, right?

They have not made one single act threat or actual military engagement that has threatened the lives of Turkish, nor do they have any intention of doing so. They have been instrumental in fighting against the Islamic state and still containing it.

By the way, a role which we offered to Turkey under the Obama administration and Erdogan walked away from it because he was so hell-bent on trying to overthrow Assad for God knows what reason. Right?

But also, they are still the only ones there manning ISIS prisons, preventing thousands of ISIS Jihadis flowing out into the region and ...

EDELMAN: And they are.

CIDDI: ... compromising the territory integrity of our allies, such as Iraq, right? You know, to the extent that the United States just doesn't shoot back at this and say, enough, it's high time we move beyond this. Get behind it. Counter-terrorism means fight against ISIS.

If you want coordinate and collaborate on that by contributing troops towards that fight as opposed to backing Al-Qaeda freely to the Jihadis, we'll welcome that. Anything short of that, enough. This soft-pedaling of SDF or terrorists and even - you know, we just seem to meander around this and I'm - personally fed up.

I'm fed up with my own government not actually taking a strong stance and saying, put an end to this, right?

And Henri's mentioned this to me before, when they mention that the United States, you know, backs Turkey's counterterrorism or sort of, you know, it's terrorists or security concerns, it was the United States government that explicitly help the capture of Abdullah Ocalan and hand them to the Turks.

EDELMAN: Yes.

CIDDI: Whether you agree with that or not. Why do they not say that?

EDELMAN: Right.

CIDDI: So it's just frustrating. But until Erdogan leaves, nothing changes in Israel. Yes, Israeli and American cooperation, whether you agree with the outcome of that or not. But you know ...

EDELMAN: I think that's the perfect point on which to end Sinan. Thank you very much. I want to thank our panelists for a very stimulating discussion. I learned a lot, as I always do from all of these folks. So, thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

END