OBAMA'S SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT OF TURKEY

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Category: Opinions

Part 1 Part 2 Part 3

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Mr. Speaker, Madam Deputy Speaker, distinguished members,

I am honored to speak in this chamber, and I am committed to renewing the alliance between our nations and the friendship between our people.

This is my first trip overseas as President of the United States. I have been to the G-20 Summit in London, the NATO Summit in Strasbourg and Kehl, and the European Union Summit in Prague. Some people have asked me if I chose to continue my travels to Ankara and Istanbul to send a message. My answer is simple: Evet. Turkey is a critical ally. Turkey is an important part of Europe. And Turkey and the United States must stand together - and work together - to overcome the challenges of our time.

This morning I had the privilege of visiting the tomb of the great founder of your Republic. I was deeply impressed by this beautiful memorial to a man who did so much to shape the course of history. But it is also clear that the greatest monument to Ataturk's life is not something that can be cast in stone and marble. His greatest legacy is Turkey's strong and secular democracy, and that is the work that this assembly carries on today.

This future was not easily assured. At the end of World War I, Turkey could have succumbed to the foreign powers that were trying to claim its territory, or sought to restore an ancient empire. But Turkey chose a different future. You freed yourself from foreign control. And you founded a Republic that commands the respect of the United States and the wider world.

There is a simple truth to this story: Turkey's democracy is your own achievement. It was not forced upon you by any outside power, nor did it come without struggle and sacrifice. Like any democracy, Turkey draws strength from both the successes of the past, and from the efforts of each generation of Turks that makes new progress for your people.

My country's democracy has its own story. The general who led America in revolution and governed

as our first President was George Washington.

Like you, we built a grand monument to honor our founding father - a towering obelisk that stands in the heart of the capital city that bears Washington's name.

It took decades to build. There were frequent delays. Over time, more and more people contributed to help make this monument the inspiring structure that still stands tall today. Among those who came to our aid were friends from all across the world, who offered their own tributes to Washington and the country he helped to found.

One of those tributes came from Istanbul. Ottoman Sultan Abdulmecid sent a marble plaque that helped to build the Washington Monument. Inscribed in the plaque was a poem that began with a few simple words, and I quote: "So as to strengthen the friendship between the two countries."

Over 150 years have passed since those words were carved into marble.

Our nations have changed in many ways. But our friendship is strong, and our alliance endures.

It is a friendship that flourished in the years after World War II, when President Truman committed our nation to the defense of Turkey's freedom and sovereignty, and Turkey committed itself to the NATO alliance.

Turkish troops have served by our side from Korea to Kosovo to Kabul.

Together, we withstood the great test of the Cold War. Trade between our nations has steadily advanced. So has cooperation in science and research.

The ties among our people have deepened as well, and more and more Americans of Turkish origin live and work and succeed within our borders. As a basketball fan, I've even noticed that Hedo Turkoglu and Mehmet Okur have got some pretty good game.

The United States and Turkey have not always agreed on every issue. That is to be expected - no two nations do. But we have stood together through many challenges over the last sixty years. And because of the strength of our alliance and the endurance of our friendship, both America and Turkey are stronger, and the world is more secure.

Now, our two democracies are confronted by an unprecedented set of challenges. An economic crisis that recognizes no borders. Extremism that leads to the killing of innocent men, women and children. Strains on our energy supply and a changing climate. The proliferation of the world's deadliest weapons, and the persistence of tragic conflict.

These are the great tests of our young century. And the choices that we make in the coming years will determine whether the future will be shaped by fear or by freedom; by poverty or by prosperity; by strife or by a just, secure and lasting peace.

This much is certain: no one nation can confront these challenges alone, and all nations have a stake

in overcoming them. That is why we must listen to one another, and seek common ground. That is why we must build on our mutual interests, and rise above our differences. We are stronger when we act together. That is the message that I have carried with me throughout this trip to Europe. That will be the approach of the United States of America going forward.

Already, America and Turkey are working with the G-20 on an unprecedented response to an unprecedented economic crisis. This past week, we came together to ensure that the world's largest economies take strong and coordinated action to stimulate growth and restore the flow of credit; to reject the pressure of protectionism, and to extend a hand to developing countries and the people hit hardest by this downturn; and to dramatically reform our regulatory system so that the world never faces a crisis like this again.

As we go forward, the United States and Turkey can pursue many opportunities to serve prosperity for our people, particularly when it comes to energy. To expand markets and create jobs, we can increase trade and investment between our countries. To develop new sources of energy and combat climate change, we should build on our Clean Technology Fund to leverage efficiency and renewable energy investments in Turkey. And to power markets in Turkey and Europe, the United States will continue to support your central role as an East-West corridor for oil and natural gas.

This economic cooperation only reinforces the common security that Europe and the United States share with Turkey as a NATO ally, and the common values that we share as democracies. So in meeting the challenges of the 21st century, we must seek the strength of a Europe that is truly united, peaceful and free.

Let me be clear: the United States strongly supports Turkey's bid to become a member of the European Union. We speak not as members of the EU, but as close friends of Turkey and Europe. Turkey has been a resolute ally and a responsible partner in transatlantic and European institutions. And Turkey is bound to Europe by more than bridges over the Bosphorous. Centuries of shared history, culture, and commerce bring you together. Europe gains by diversity of ethnicity, tradition and faith - it is not diminished by it. And Turkish membership would broaden and strengthen Europe's foundation once more.

Turkey has its own responsibilities. You have made important progress toward membership. But I also know that Turkey has pursued difficult political reforms not simply because it's good for Europe, but because it is right for Turkey.

In the last several years, you have abolished state-security courts and expanded the right to counsel. You have reformed the penal code, and strengthened laws that govern the freedom of the press and assembly. You lifted bans on teaching and broadcasting Kurdish, and the world noted with respect the important signal sent through a new state Kurdish television station.

These achievements have created new laws that must be implemented, and a momentum that should be sustained. For democracies cannot be static - they must move forward. Freedom of

religion and expression lead to a strong and vibrant civil society that only strengthens the state, which is why steps like reopening the Halki Seminary will send such an important signal inside Turkey and beyond. An enduring commitment to the rule of law is the only way to achieve the security that comes from justice for all people. Robust minority rights let societies benefit from the full measure of contributions from all citizens.

I say this as the President of a country that not too long ago made it hard for someone who looks like me to vote. But it is precisely that capacity to change that enriches our countries. Every challenge that we face is more easily met if we tend to our own democratic foundation.

This work is never over. That is why, in the United States, we recently ordered the prison at Guantanamo Bay closed, and prohibited - without exception or equivocation - any use of torture.

Another issue that confronts all democracies as they move to the future is how we deal with the past. The United States is still working through some of our own darker periods. Facing the Washington monument that I spoke of is a memorial to Abraham Lincoln, the man who freed those who were enslaved even after Washington led our Revolution. And our country still struggles with the legacy of our past treatment of Native Americans.

Human endeavor is by its nature imperfect. History, unresolved, can be a heavy weight. Each country must work through its past. And reckoning with the past can help us seize a better future. I know there are strong views in this chamber about the terrible events of 1915. While there has been a good deal of commentary about my views, this is really about how the Turkish and Armenian people deal with the past. And the best way forward for the Turkish and Armenian people is a process that works through the past in a way that is honest, open and constructive.

We have already seen historic and courageous steps taken by Turkish and Armenian leaders. These contacts hold out the promise of a new day. An open border would return the Turkish and Armenian people to a peaceful and prosperous coexistence that would serve both of your nations. That is why the United States strongly supports the full normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia.

It speaks to Turkey's leadership that you are poised to be the only country in the region to have normal and peaceful relations with all the South Caucusus nations. And to advance that peace, you can play a constructive role in helping to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which has continued for far too long.

Advancing peace also includes the dispute that persists in the eastern Mediterranean. Here, there is cause for hope. The two Cypriot leaders have an opportunity through their commitment to negotiations under the United Nations Good Offices Mission. The United States is willing to offer all the help sought by the parties as they work toward a just and lasting settlement that reunifies Cyprus into a bizonal and bicommunal federation.

These efforts speak to one part of the critical region that surrounds Turkey. And when we consider

the challenges before us, on issue after issue, we share common goals.

In the Middle East, we share the goal of a lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors. Let me be clear: the United States strongly supports the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. That is a goal shared by Palestinians, Israelis, and people of good will around the world. That is a goal that that the parties agreed to in the Roadmap and at Annapolis. And that is a goal that I will actively pursue as President.

We know that the road ahead will be difficult. Both Israelis and Palestinians must take the steps that are necessary to build confidence.

Both must live up to the commitments they have made. Both must overcome longstanding passions and the politics of the moment to make progress toward a secure and lasting peace.

The United States and Turkey can help the Palestinians and Israelis make this journey. Like the United States, Turkey has been a friend and partner in Israel's quest for security. And like the United States, you seek a future of opportunity and statehood for the Palestinians. Now, we must not give into pessimism and mistrust. We must pursue every opportunity for progress, as you have done by supporting negotiations between Syria and Israel. We must extend a hand to those Palestinians who are in need, while helping them strengthen institutions. And we must reject the use of terror, and recognize that Israel's security concerns are legitimate.

The peace of the region will also be advanced if Iran forgoes any nuclear weapons ambitions. As I made clear yesterday in Prague, no one is served by the spread of nuclear weapons. This part of the world has known enough violence. It has known enough hatred. It does not need a race for ever-more powerful tools of destruction.

I have made it clear to the people and leaders of the Islamic Republic that the United States seeks engagement based upon mutual interests and mutual respect. We want Iran to play its rightful role in the community of nations, with the economic and political integration that brings prosperity and security. Now, Iran's leaders must choose whether they will try to build a weapon or build a better future for their people.

Both Turkey and the United States support a secure and united Iraq that does not serve as a safe-haven for terrorists. I know there were differences about whether to go to war. There were differences within my own country as well. But now we must come together as we end this war responsibly, because the future of Iraq is inseparable from the future of the broader region. The United States will remove our combat brigades by the end of next August, while working with the Iraqi government as they take responsibility for security. And we will work with Iraq, Turkey, and all of Iraq's neighbors, to forge a new dialogue that reconciles differences and advances our common security.

Make no mistake, though: Iraq, Turkey, and the United States face a common threat from terrorism.

That includes the al Qaeda terrorists who have sought to drive Iraqis apart and to destroy their country. And that includes the PKK. There is no excuse for terror against any nation. As President, and as a NATO ally, I pledge that you will have our support against the terrorist activities of the PKK. These efforts will be strengthened by the continued work to build ties of cooperation between Turkey, the Iraqi government, and Iraq's Kurdish leaders, and by your continued efforts to promote education and opportunity for Turkey's Kurds.

Finally, we share the common goal of denying al Qaeda a safe-haven in Pakistan or Afghanistan. The world has come too far to let this region backslide, and to let al Qaeda terrorists plot further attacks. That is why we are committed to a more focused effort to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda. That is why we are increasing our efforts to train Afghans to sustain their own security, and to reconcile former adversaries. And that is why we are increasing our support for the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan, so that we stand on the side of their security, their opportunity, and the promise of a better life.

Turkey has been a true partner. Your troops were among the first in the International Security Assistance Force. You have sacrificed much in this endeavor. Now, we must achieve our goals together. I appreciate that you have offered to help us train and support Afghan Security Forces, and expand opportunity across the region. Together, we can rise to meet this challenge like we have so many before.

I know there have been difficulties these last few years. I know that the trust that binds us has been strained, and I know that strain is shared in many places where the Muslim faith is practiced. Let me say this as clearly as I can: the United States is not at war with Islam. In fact, our partnership with the Muslim world is critical in rolling back a fringe ideology that people of all faiths reject.

But I also want to be clear that America's relationship with the Muslim work cannot and will not be based on opposition to al Qaeda. Far from it. We seek broad engagement based upon mutual interests and mutual respect. We will listen carefully, bridge misunderstanding, and seek common ground. We will be respectful, even when we do not agree. And we will convey our deep appreciation for the Islamic faith, which has done so much over so many centuries to shape the world for the better - including my own country. The United States has been enriched by Muslim Americans. Many other Americans have Muslims in their family, or have lived in a Muslim-majority country - I know, because I am one of them.

Above all, we will demonstrate through actions our commitment to a better future. We want to help more children get the education that they need to succeed. We want to promote health care in places where people are vulnerable. We want to expand the trade and investment that can bring prosperity for all people. In the months ahead, I will present specific programs to advance these goals. Our focus will be on what we can do, in partnership with people across the Muslim world, to advance our common hopes, and our common dreams. And when people look back on this time, let

it be said of America that we extended the hand of friendship.

There is an old Turkish proverb: "You cannot put out fire with flames."

America knows this. Turkey knows this. There are some who must be met with force. But force alone cannot solve our problems, and it is no alternative to extremism. The future must belong to those who create, not those who destroy. That is the future we must work for, and we must work for it together.

I know there are those who like to debate Turkey's future. They see your country at the crossroads of continents, and touched by the currents of history. They know that this has been a place where civilizations meet, and different peoples mingle. And they wonder whether you will be pulled in one direction or another.

Here is what they don't understand: Turkey's greatness lies in your ability to be at the center of things. This is not where East and West divide - it is where they come together. In the beauty of your culture. In the richness of your history. In the strength of your democracy. In your hopes for tomorrow.

I am honored to stand here with you - to look forward to the future that we must reach for together - and to reaffirm America's commitment to our strong and enduring friendship.

Thank you.