



**Embassy Series  
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Washington, DC**

**His Excellency Namik Tan**  
Ambassador of Turkey to the United States

*A Conversation on US-Turkish Relations*

**Gail Kitch:** Well thank you for getting settled, this is terrific and good evening everyone and welcome. I am Gail Kitch, Vice Chair of the Women's Foreign Policy Group, which promotes women's leadership and voices on major international issues of the day. On behalf of the Women's Foreign Policy Group and its board members who are here with us tonight—as I pause to see if they're all here—Theresa Loar, I know is here, Mary Catherine Toker, and the Women's Foreign Policy Group's President, Patricia Ellis, here we are, you can wave hands or whatever, and then myself, of course you've heard. We are all excited, so thank you for all being here. I want to welcome you and thank you for joining us for our Embassy Series event in this glorious place hosted by Ambassador Namik Tan, the Turkish Ambassador to the US, who will be joined by *The Washington Post* Senior National Security Correspondent, Karen DeYoung, for a conversation on US-Turkish relations. This event, I will say something obvious, this event, could not be more timely, given all the changes in the Middle East, increased tensions on the Turkish border with Syria, about which I am sure we will hear something, and perhaps most importantly, recent events in Turkey involving the earthquakes. And I want to certainly let the Ambassador and all the Turkish people know that all of us involved at the Women's Foreign Policy Group convey our deepest sympathies to the Turkish people in connection with the earthquakes. I think we all read that with great sorrow and hope for the rebuilding that is already underway, so you are in our thoughts, certainly. We are so pleased to have the Ambassador with us to explore the complexities and importance of the relationship between the US and Turkey and extremely lucky to have Karen DeYoung back with us. She is certainly a favorite for us. I also want to recognize a few of the guests who are with us this evening. We have members of the Women's Foreign Policy Group Corporate Advisory Council, and of course, the Ambassadors and our diplomatic colleagues with whom we work closely through the year at our Embassy Series events. For those of you who have been to these in the past, you know just what a special opportunity it has been for us. The next of these Embassy Series events is at the Residence of the Brazilian Ambassador on November 29 and another at the Residence of the French Ambassador on December 15, so you are going to want to get your RSVP's in early, that's for sure. We hope that you will all join us at both of those events.

It now gives me great pleasure to welcome and briefly introduce our speaker and moderator. You have their bios in your program book, but I will highlight a few of their many accomplishments. Ambassador Namik Tan was appointed Ambassador of Turkey to the US in February 2010. Prior to this appointment, Ambassador Tan was Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, responsible for bilateral political affairs, and public diplomacy, and he served as Ambassador to Israel from 2007 to 2009. Ambassador Tan joined the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1982, and he served in Moscow and Abu Dhabi and twice in the US, in fact. In the 1990's, as Counselor and then First Counselor at the Turkish Ministry, he held a number of high level positions including Deputy Chief of Cabinet to the Turkish President until 1991, Chief of Cabinet to the Turkish Foreign Minister, Head of the Department for the Americas, Head of the Information Department, and subsequently, as the spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2004 to 2007. He is a very talented man with a great deal of expertise, so we are quite pleased to have him with us this evening.

Karen DeYoung, who is an equally talented expert, is the Associate Editor and Senior National Security Correspondent for *The Washington Post* and an author who has held senior positions at *The Post* here in Washington, DC, and abroad. Ambassador Tan will make opening remarks and then have a conversation with Karen, followed by an audience Q&A. Please join me in welcoming Ambassador Tan and Karen DeYoung. [Applause].

**Ambassador Namik Tan:** Welcome to our embassy. We are more than delighted to have you in this magnificent house and I'll tell you briefly about the history of the house, and you cannot escape it because there is no free lunch, as they say. Before that, let me set the record straight because I listened to my bio several times, as you can imagine, eight hundreds of times. At one point, when it comes to Israel, my serving as an Ambassador in Israel, I am not responsible from the present situation in our relationship [Laughter.] because when I left, the relationship was at the very top, the very peak. So, you should know about that. And I had three wonderful years in Israel. That's another point, but really, I miss my friends. I have hundreds of friends at all levels in the society and in the official levels, and they were, they are, and they will be my friends forever. This is important.

The second part of my bio that you could have missed, that's a warning, because I served for almost four years, three and a half to four years, as spokesperson. I was paid a fee. Therefore, I like speaking. There is only one person who can stop me. That's my better half, my wife. And she's not here, unfortunately, and so I am very sorry about that. Ladies and gentleman, we are delighted to have you here, again. This is a great opportunity. Turkey and the US, as two allies, have an impeccable history of a relationship. We have, from the very beginning, from the Cold War years, up until now, always been well coordinated. The agenda of our relationship is always positive. At no point in the history of our relationship have we had any negative issue. We had some challenges. There were some ups and downs, but never any deviation from the primary direction, and our objectives were the same. It started in 1927, the whole relationship, in a unique way. We had some sort of contacts earlier, before the First World War, but when we took the wrong side in the First World War, I think it's hard.

Then, of course, everything changed, and in 1927, Turkey was four years old all together because 1923 is when the Turk Republic was founded by a great leader, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. I am sure, 100% sure, every one of you, every single one of you, would know him. He is an exceptional leader, and he still is. We adore him, just like George Washington, or Thomas Jefferson, or you name it of your founding fathers. He's our founding father. And since then, we have had an impeccable relationship. Now, I don't want to go into details. It's a long history, however, I think I should tell you about the present situation, how we have fared in our relationship. Today, ladies and gentleman, Turkey is an indispensable ally for the United States, and the same is true for us about the United States. The United States is an indispensable ally of Turkey. The United States is a global power. Of course, it has so many other countries as its friends and allies, or it has a relationship with everyone, and most of them are good relations, but what makes Turkey different? Why is Turkey different? Something makes Turkey different. And it's taken for granted, most of the time, by all other friends.

There are, ladies and gentleman, 57, on the face of the earth, different Muslim majority countries, and Turkey is one of them. They are a Muslim majority country, but Turkey is different. With all due respect, we are proud to have our own religion as Islam, but we have made it possible that Islam can go hand in hand with democracy. This is what makes us different. We are the only Muslim majority country because we are 99.99% Muslim, Sunni Muslim, most of them, the great majority, but at the same time, we are members to all western institutions that you may think of, starting from NATO, a negotiating member of the EU, the European Council, OECD, and any other that you can think of. And we are the only synthesis of Islam and modernity. That makes us different. That makes us different among the Islamic countries, with all due respect to all of them, of course. They are our friends, but Turkey is different. Turkey has a secular democracy, parliamentary system, and free market economy. This is very important. That singles out Turkey as the most powerful Muslim majority country.

When I say powerful, not in physical sense, not in military sense, it is the most powerful society when you talk about values. The values that I am talking about are very familiar to you, tax, trust, transparency, accountability, professionalism, this and that. Such basic, but very important tenants of any civilized democracy. We are the most powerful, and we take the honor of resonating this power around us. Turkey, today, as we speak, is the most healthy economy in its region, probably in global sense, except China because we are competing with them, but next after China—most stable and powerful economy. Once a sick man of Europe, now is the healthiest man of Europe. And remember your history books. Today, Turkey is the most, I think, stable, most viable, most powerful economy in that part of the world. Politically, we have a stable democracy, a stable system, a stable political environment.

That's why, in the last nine years, ladies and gentleman, nine, simply nine, nine years is nothing, but in nine years, Turkey has multiplied itself by three. Now, what we had nine years ago is three times smaller than what we have today. We are in the G20 now. We are the sixth largest economy in Europe. We are the sixteenth largest all over the world. We have 11.6% growth rate in the first quarter and 8.3% in the second quarter of this year. This is an amazing performance. How we did it? You only think: democracy. Democracy. The values. That's why we are just there for our European friends, trying to teach them, at least, in our own power to think big, maybe thinking big is a daily routine for you, because this is the land of big thinking, ladies and gentleman. This country is the land of big thinking, and you should be proud of being a member of this society. It is not quite easy to find big thinkers there, unfortunately, on that part of the world.

So, today, the world is full of, especially in our region, again, what makes us different from yourself here or what makes this relationship important is because the magnitude of the challenges are so big. Let's take a moment and put yourself into our place and take a map of the world. Put Turkey in the middle, and then, it's up to you, go clockwise or counterclockwise, whichever way you like. Let me just tell you of a few of the problems that we are dealing with. Every day when we wake up these are the problems that we have to deal with. The entire caucuses, it's like a powder keg, now, Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, entire regions, entire North Africa, the Balkans, the fight against terrorism, energy and security. These are a few of them. The US has all the same in its own foreign policy agenda, so this agenda compels us, first of all, toward work together and the second, being a member of the same alliance, again, forces us to work together, and thirdly, cherishing the same values, most importantly, makes us work together.

But, we have one difference, though, again. You are 10,000 kilometers away from the region where we are, 10,000 kilometers away. You have two oceans, a wonderful Canada, and a wonderful Mexico. It's easy, to a certain extent, when you look at the issues, and judge them from 10,000 kilometers away, it's very different. It's not like Turkey. We have a 950 kilometer border with Syria, ladies and gentleman. Syria may be Maryland. It is Maryland to us, and Virginia is Iraq, put somewhere also, of course, in between, is Iran and this is the mix that we have. This immediate neighborhood. People used to tell me last year, as late as last year, you are siding with Iran. They were criticizing me. I said no, we are not siding with Iran. We are side by side with Iran. This is a huge difference. We have, ladies and gentleman, we have really achieved a very dynamic pace of course.

Now, our wealth, the living standards of the Turkish people have gone up. They want to enjoy it. They want to buy more cars, they want to travel, they want to go and ski, they want to swim. They want to do anything that you may think of here in this country, but one day, something happens in Syria, the other day in Iraq, the other day in Iran, or regarding caucuses in Russia. I have a problem with Russia, by the way, not in a negative or positive sense. Russia is there. Russia is a huge country. And the Balkans and everything, so, that's why the number one thing for Turkish foreign policy is that we want a peaceful, stable, and pleasant neighborhood. Believe me, we are sick and tired of it. The people here are less interested in for all good reasons in foreign policy issues, but we cannot just stay away from engaging those problems, we cannot, we cannot. And we need to be proactive and put off the fire before it starts. We need to do something before everything is messed up.

And this is why the US is there. The US is there because of its global position, because the US is the only more equal among equals. Not more equal amongst equals, the only one. The only more equal amongst equals. That is why the US, although it is 10,000 kilometers away, is a neighbor to us, in Iraq, in Iran, in Syria, in the Middle East, in North Africa, in everywhere, but, again, it makes a lot of difference. When our leader goes to Libya, no one can dare to talk in the liberation square or the freedom square of Libya to the Libyan people and get assaulted for acknowledgement. The same is true for Egypt. Egypt was gracious enough to say, "Listen to the demands of your people." It's very difficult, you can talk to your own people about Libya in your own country. It is very easy, but you cannot go to Libyans in their own country in the same tone. It takes some courage, and principle stance. That's why we can do this, because we are always very loyal and very serious about principles. The principles are the values that we are talking about.

The same is true in Syria. In Syria, for instance, we had a very good relationship, and now it has shifted into a very different kind of relationship. Why? We have no reason for that, but the people in Syria. They had some demands, very legitimate demands and they were responded by force, by violence, from the state, so we couldn't just condone this because we were telling to everyone the same answers. Now, about our relationship if, as a global power, the US makes those points for the regional countries, like Syria, this is something, but if we talk together it makes a big difference. Then it's heard more powerfully. If Turkey stays away, as one of the most respected and powerful Muslim majority countries then that is a different problem.

The same is true for Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, we are one part of the NATO force. We were asked to command it three times. One of them, I think four times, for the Kabul area protection, forces of NATO, and we are still running it. Why are we just asked to do that? A simple reason. Because when Turkey's there, the legitimacy of the whole NATO force is perceived differently by the people. Just think of the absence of Turkish forces there. We have some 2,000 troops, very sophisticated elite forces of the Turkish army. They are received, everywhere, every single corner of Afghanistan, with a warm welcome. When they patrol the streets of Kabul, together with the British soldier, they are safe, so that makes us different. Why? We can talk to all of those people because of our historical, religious, and cultural affinity with those people.

In Pakistan, why are we able to put the Pakistan President and the Afghanistan President and the entire establishment together? Just think about ten days ago. They never come together, they don't talk to each other. But when we are there, they talk. They deal with each other. They sign papers. Why we are able to bring Serbian leaders and Bosnian-Herzegovina leaders together? We are the only country who can do it. Otherwise, they cannot come together or do not like to come together. We have a soft power, ladies and gentleman. It is as simple as that. We have a real soft power. And we are using this soft power in the benefit of global peace, regional peace, and in the benefit and interest in our, of course, alliance.

I just want to make a little reference to the EU. Turkey is negotiating a full membership in the EU, but the EU unfortunately, I will be that idiomatic, so I do apologize for that, they cannot think big. They don't have that tenant. They think that we will go into this civilization project just for the sake of being a full member. No. We are not after EU. We are after nothing. We are after the values that they have instituted. This is important. We want our people to get those values and reach them and establish and maintain each of them. We are not there yet, we are not there yet. You may ask, why don't you do it on your own? Why do you need EU membership? I am going to give you this counter question. Why are you just making promise to yourself everyday that you are going to diet tomorrow? I never do it, I never manage it. And why are you having some dieticians to talk to you and therapists and this and that, why? You are alone, you can do it. Why can't you quit. When you want somebody to coach you?

They are our dieticians. We do not need them for those values, but they are not fair. They're not fair. They have a discriminative mindset. I am sorry to say this, but every day, they change the goal posts.

One day here, the other day here. They never judge us on our performance, but on some other things, sometimes religion, sometimes some other irrelevant things. That's what we complain of. And that's what we think is not fair. Otherwise, if they come and say, well you're not ready yet, yes you're not. We are not saying that we are ready, we are not hoping that we would be the next thing tomorrow to be a full member. No, we know where we are at. We know that we have some way to go. But it is different to say, you have somewhere to go, you haven't just covered enough ground, from you have no place in Europe. You don't belong to this. This is insulting and at the same time, discriminative and it is not fair.

Why I said this is the land of rethinking? It takes big to understand what Turkey is up to, what Turkey can bring to the EU. That's why here, from day one up to now, Turkey is supported by the US unconditionally, unwaveringly, and this and that—very strong. We are very much appreciative of the American support, very much appreciative. So politically, ladies and gentlemen, in short, because you have some questions, politically, it was not the case, to be honest with you, in the last years. We had some complications in our relationship. If you ask, I can tell you. But this year, it is excellent. I can tell you that it is really easily qualified as excellent. We have, despite the fact that we had some problems and strained relations with Israel, because this is an important factor, but still, it is excellent.

Economically, in the commercial and economic front, it is not the case, unfortunately. It is not the case. It is not the case. We are far below the potential, the real potential. We have 15 billion volume of trade, which is nothing compared to the potential that can be offered to both countries, and it is not balanced. It's against us. And we can also elaborate on that if you are interested. On that front, we have a lot to do. So, what I may ask you to do, and it's important, and you, first of all, you should understand, I think, I would greatly appreciate if you could understand that Turkey is a staunch ally of the United States—a strong supporter of the United States. And a strong supporter of the values that the US defends globally, and I think, in a historical way, we really all are presently faced with this relationship because the US is critically instrumental when we changed our direction to the west rather than some other places, but inspired from the NATO membership and the other institutions, this and that, it really helped a lot, so we are appreciative of that as a great ally. However, ladies and gentleman, the two countries, the two peoples, don't know anything about each other.

What I may ask you—to tell about what we are up to—how we think and perceive this relationship, to your friends, to your peers, to your neighborhood, to your institution, to everybody. So many people don't know where Turkey is in this country. And so many people in Turkey, the entire Turkish people, they know the United States, but the United States that they know is not the real United States. They have developed some prejudices about the United States for some good reasons. When the US comes to Iraq and puts forward a justification of that country having weapons of mass destruction and which comes, of course, to be something false. And this hurts the people, not only the Turks, but the others. The West that gets presented by Europe is a West that we know, but the West that is represented by the US is a different West. So, we should explain to our people that we have to make our own experience out of what the US stands for, which is, I think, we need to work hard. And the same thing is that it should be done by yourself, explain to the people of America what Turkey stands for. What sort of a country Turkey is, what makes Turkey different. That's what I was trying to explain to you. As I said, in the absence of my wife, I hope she hears me, I need to stop myself, so let me just stop here. There are several different questions that came up during mine, and I am ready to answer them.

**Karen DeYoung:** Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador, and again, thank you for having us in this wonderful, wonderful place. It's always a great pleasure to be here. As an aside, I will say, I think at this point, you might want to think twice about the Euro zone. This may not be the best time, and a slow assent into the EU might be wise for the next couple of years.

**Ambassador Tan:** Yes, but you have to think about Britain, England they are not in the Euro zone, so there can be some solutions.

**Ms. DeYoung:** I wanted to ask you a sort of larger question, though. I think you're absolutely correct in talking about this indispensable ally relationship between the United States and Turkey, and I think that the Obama Administration would say the same thing. In fact, they have said it on a number of occasions and talked about Turkey as the bridge between the east and west, not only geographically, but politically, and in terms of being a great help to the United States. As you mentioned, this is, at least from the US point of view, a relatively recent phenomenon, this proactive stance of Turkey. I think this year, we can go back to Libya where Turkey was a bit hesitant about the intervention, and in fact, tried very hard to slow it down and prevent violence from developing. I think that with Syria, with Iran, that Turkey has for a longtime called for caution and was not necessarily in favor of strong action by the West, least of all by the United States. And it's also fair to say that it's a relationship that, again as you mentioned, has had a lot of challenges over the years and had its ups and downs while maintaining a strong core. My question is, what happened this year? Was this a cause or effect? Did Turkey see what was happening around the world and say we have got to get into this? We have got to get into the Afghanistan political situation, despite being in the military arrangement there for some time, we have got to move ahead with Libya, we have got to move ahead with Syria, we need to be in the forefront as a mediator, as an activist in these situations. Was it that you saw the situation getting out of hand and thought you needed to move and take control of it? What is the motivation in the Turkish psyche that has made you into activists?

**Ambassador Tan:** Well, it is a very good question, first of all, and thank you for asking that. Actually, there is a very simple, I think, response to it, which is rare politics. The Arab Spring, I don't know why they call it as a spring, by the way, but the Arab Spring really made a very positive impact on our relationship. It really built a different kind of trust. It solidified the existing trust, let's say, between Turkey and the United States. Why? Because of the simple fact that we have detected one very simple thing—that what we wanted, as I said, a peaceful neighborhood—so the same thing is wanted by the US as well. When we talk about the demands of the people—that they should be met—that everyone has the right to achieve a better life, freedoms, democracy, this and that. The same thing is true for the US, and these are almost identical. The US was there already in Iraq, as I said, in Iran, by this nonexistent engagement policy. We made it happen, by the way. In Israel, this is a friendly country to both countries, it is important to both countries, so everything, everything just forced us to come closer.

The challenge was bigger. It is not just something isolated, as it was the case. A very big challenge was the so-called Iran nuclear issue but now, we have several issues. We have Iraq, we have Syria, Lebanon, as I told you, so that required the warmth in the relationship. Secondly, the personal, human to human relationship between our leaders is very important. And all of a sudden, these two leaders, in the shape of Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Obama—they developed a very close, personal relationship, as was the case in the 1980's during the Gulf War between President Azal and President Bush at the time. I was the Deputy Chief of Staff, and I remember how many times a day our President talked to President Bush, and President Bush, when he was in public, would say, well I just spoke to President Azal, so this was the atmosphere that has been developed in the recent couple of months. I think 12 to 14 times—I really lost track of it—they spoke over the phone. And our foreign ministers, believe me, almost on a daily basis sometimes. Here is one anecdote to you. Secretary Clinton saw me at some social event here, I told her, Madam Secretary, please if you talk to, you are going to see him tomorrow, if you talk to my foreign minister tell my regards to him because you are seeing him and talking to him every day. It's not the case for me.

So this is the type of relationship, but one other thing happened, of course. There was a sort of, again, undeclared type of testing times, on the part of the US—they looked at us, I mean what those people are trying to do, in all candidness, what are they trying to do in Libya? What are they trying to do? Because some others who are not confident about Turkey's achievements and Turkey's prominent role in this region, they were just generating some other views and some other complicated stories about Turkey. They saw that you are saying the same things everywhere. You mentioned about our reluctance in Libya. Why was that reluctance? Because they wanted to exclude us from this whole mission. They didn't invite us. How can you just force yourself into a place where you're not invited?

Tell me, I think. So, again, I don't go too far in saying who tried this and that, but that was the case. Later on, thanks to the leadership of the US, I think, they come to understand that Turkey is there. And to the leaders, for instance, after the Libyan affair, after everything is settled, they rushed down to visit Libya, a day earlier than our prime minister. Remember that? Why did they do this? There are hundreds of days in a calendar year. Again, I just leave it to your own judgment.

But what happened afterwards was a big embarrassment. Again, I don't want to say for whom. Now, the US Administration very well understood what we were up to because we are, each and every day, in coordination. This is true for Iran, for instance, we are damned for Iran. I am telling you, last year, you always see the foreign policy issues through symbols because you don't have time and you don't care. You only care for your social wellbeing—your pockets, your this and that, your insurance, your health care—so for all of these reasons. So about some foreign policy issues, when does Turkey come to your agenda? When you see our prime minister hitting the front pages of any Turkish newspaper. Look at the symbols or the pictures of last year. First of all, it was Iran. Our prime minister was hand in hand with the Iranian leader. This is not a pleasant picture for any American at the time, and it still isn't probably.

Secondly, Turkey is in a strained relationship with Israel, and some people were being killed in the middle of nowhere in the Mediterranean by an organized army. This is not a good picture, especially in this country. Thirdly, this missile defense thing and the radar and again, a local issue and domestic political issue, which is Armenia. Who knows where Armenia is here? When I say this, I didn't mean that you don't know nothing about it. But, in general, this is not even a marginal issue, like Turkey, who knows Turkey? So many people don't know about Turkey, but they make those visions to those symbols. These symbols were not pleasant symbols. However, each and every one of them has a story behind it. No one cares to listen or read to understand this. It requires time, and it requires political effort by the Administration, which they did not. Who asked us to intervene in Iran? Why was that pictured? International Atomic Energy Agency, and together with whom? The United States. They asked us to do all those things. Oral interventions, oral meetings, and this and that, but then, when it happened, they were lost all of a sudden. What you have seen—only the pictures.

**Ms. DeYoung:** Are you saying that the US attitude has changed now?

**Ambassador Tan:** Yes, absolutely. It has changed, and I can tell you, as compared to what we had last year, it dramatically changed.

**Ms. DeYoung:** I wanted to ask you about what's at the top of the news this week and that is Syria, which you also mentioned in your remarks. I think it's fair to say that Turkey was hoping to be able to keep the lid on the Syria situation. As you said, what Turkey wants in the situation is peace. It seems that Turkey has made a fundamental decision now that the status quo there is not going to result in peace and has moved to take a stand just in the past couple of weeks that they haven't taken previously. How do you see that situation unfolding now? What do you think the options are? What do you think the options are that President al-Assad is likely to take? Where do you see it going?

**Ambassador Tan:** That is an excellent question because I think our audiences should know about this. There is no magical formula. There are no shortcuts. There is no stick that we could just change things immediately. It is just the opposite. We are right at the beginning. We haven't seen anything yet. Rest assured, so your concerns are, in a multiplied way, our concerns. Again, you are concerned for all good reasons, but you are 10,000 kilometers away. Don't ever forget this—10,000 kilometers away. Whenever Syria comes right next to you—Virginia and Maryland—then, you will understand what I mean. We have a 950 kilometer border, ladies and gentleman—950, 950. If you take 950, you're in Disneyland. Now it is that long, so I think, to control this border is very important. Why is Turkey so enthusiastic in pushing into this? Let me tell you why. Again, take a moment. You are living in different places in this wonderful country, in different neighborhoods. Think of two problematic neighbors right next to you. One is on this side and the other is on the other. You have many of them, but let's say you

have two. Everyday doing something bad for you, bad for your children, bad for your poor kids, bad for your car, and this and that. Are you going to be happy? And can you say well, forget about them, ya know, let them do whatever they would like to do. No, you cannot. You would be nervous. Every day when you wake up, you will be terrified. You will say everyday that you will see him or her and he will do this and that. That's the case for us. We have to attend. We cannot remain indefinite to those problems. I think in that sense, Syria is of utmost importance.

Syria is very complicated because Syria is ruled by a minority. A 15% minority rules the whole country. There are Muslims, Sunni Muslims, there are a very, very small number of Shiite Muslims, there are Christians, there are Jews, there are Misari, there are so many other people living there. If a sectarian war, god forbid, starts, then what happens? Again, please, I do excuse about this, but saying this a hundred times—10,000 kilometers away, what happens to us? One day, one day, in the 1990's ladies and gentleman, again, of course, people tend to forget about this, one day from Iraq 550,000 people, in one day, one single day, passed through the border and came to Turkey. They were running from the atrocities of Saddam Hussein and we said what are we going to do? They wanted help, care, health, food, whatever you can think of. And what we received from our friends? They say, oh, what a terrible thing, we pray for you. 550,000—in one day, in one day. It is easy to say this—550,000—but what we did? We looked after them, and our situation was not as good as today. Why I am telling you this, it may happen to us again in Syria, if this man continues killing these people and they started running, now we have how many thousand. I think we have 7,500 Syrians who had just escaped from their country, and now they are in the camps.

**Ms. DeYoung:** Do you think it is possible still to resolve the situation diplomatically with sanctions? I know that Turkey, just this week has severed some of its economic ties with Syria, cancelled an oil agreement, and said that it was going to cut off electricity. Is that going to be enough?

**Ambassador Tan:** It's not going to be enough, and if you ask what is your solution? I don't know. We don't know. Nobody knows. That's the concern, the biggest concern. What we know is nothing can be done through violence. Nothing can be done through military interventions. Nothing can be done through sanctions. It doesn't work, ladies and gentleman. It doesn't work in this way. It only works like this: if we can create a united front, an ironclad united front, meaning in the UN, if we can all stand up, especially in the Security Council, and say enough is enough, well then the ball will roll in a different way. If, again, without any exception, everyone in the Arab world, in the north, Russia, and China and this and that, come and ask them to change the course of their policies, then it can work. We are not there yet. We have to create an internal legitimacy. You know what he is doing? Let me tell you, I mean I don't know how appropriate this is, but I just want to give an example. Sometimes it is so sophisticated, I mean this administration, since they have this Mahabharata and this and that, so they can even manipulate the situation in the country very easily. You cannot do it here. It's not possible in democracies, but that is the problem. One question that you didn't ask me, I will ask myself and answer it too because it is a very legitimate question. Sometimes people say, "Why were you so opposed to them just a year ago, why?" That was a very simple reason. The people in Syria were happy with it and no one just came up and criticized their own administration, so how dare we just go in there and challenge it and ask for a change? This is the case for any other country. We are not interested in poking our nose to the way of the regime until they have some brutality against their own people.

**Ms. DeYoung:** I want to just give a little bit of time—I know we are running out of time—to get some questions from the floor. Maybe we can do three questions and say the questions and then we will answer them all at once. How is that? And please be sure to say who you are.

**Question:** Hi, I am Jean Rogers with Center for International Private Enterprise. In about two weeks, Turkey will be hosting the Global Entrepreneurship Summit. You mentioned the economy several times and the desire for Turkey's economy to meet a greater potential. What are your goals for the summit and for the entrepreneurship for Turkey?

**Question:** I am Shelley Porges for the State Department, and I am the head of the Global Entrepreneurship Program, and I have been working at the Prime Minister's office on the Global Entrepreneurship Summit, so, thanks Jean. The question I have for you, you mentioned your friends in Israel, I appreciated that comment, and I would just like you to comment on what you see for the future of Turkey and Israel?

**Patricia Ellis:** Patricia Ellis, Women's Foreign Policy Group. I was just wondering if you could talk about one of your neighbors, Iraq. At the end of the year, the United States will be withdrawn. I'd like to know what your views are on the impact you think this will have and how is Turkey preparing for this?

**Ms. DeYoung:** So, we have the economy, Israel, and Iraq.

**Ambassador Tan:** Yes, I will be brief because with all due respect to let you go, I shall tell you about the history of this house very briefly, so that is why I will be brief. About the economy, what we are trying to achieve into this entrepreneurship. The spread of entrepreneurship, don't quote me on that, doesn't exist in the Islamic world. That's one of our failures in this environment. People in the operation, the invention, the exploration, whatever you call it, the new things, this culture does not exist. The best is Turkey, again. The best medium is in Turkey that exit. We are not perfect. We have a very long way to go, as compared to what you have here, to what some of our western friends have, but in those countries, it's very weak, so our most important aim is to create an awareness, to support the existing flourishing entrepreneurs and to give them a direction together with the values and try to explain to them that in the absence of those values, there cannot be any entrepreneurship. No such mindset can develop. Look, ladies and gentleman, what we learned throughout the time why we are different, you can change everything, you can change your costume every day, you can change your books, your regulations, your laws, whatever, and it's simple. But one thing you cannot change—that's the mentality. It takes time. That's what we are up to.

Coming to Israel, especially, presently, these two countries, as the only democracies in the region, do need each other very, very much. This is first of all. I mean, these two countries are indispensable for each other. And then, one other reason is that we have 519 years of history. Again, 519 years. Can you imagine? 519 years with the Jews. And 63 years of a solid relationship with Israel—there is no stain on it. When Israel was first established, Turkey was second after the United States, to stand up and recognize Israel as an independent state. And since then, there has been an uninterrupted relationship. We haven't been offered anything, no FMS credits, no agreements, and no President visited us to convince us. No nothing. As a Muslim country, we were the only country with that. Why? Because we are proud of our past relationship. We have always given them an embrace. We have always supported them. Everywhere, we have hundreds of diplomats who saved thousands of Jews from the Holocaust. They know it very well.

Anyway, this story is long, so we are not crazy to compromise this relationship. It is so important to us, it is so important to the region, to everything. That's why we worked hard for them to build the bridges between Syria and Israel. We will mediate it, and we were very close to some solution. Anyway, they did make a big mistake—they killed our people. So my question to you—Which country in the world can tolerate and just turn a blind eye to the killing of its people? Who were they? Doesn't matter. They didn't have any weapons. They had nothing. They were in the middle of the Mediterranean, 72 miles away from Israeli territorial waters, 64 miles away from the so-called blockade area. And they were killed. What should we do? What we did [ask for] was a simple apology from them. And any civilized nation would do this.

The same thing happened in 1994 when the United States Navy ship Saratoga, USS Saratoga, fired an accidental missile during an exercise and killed ten of our officers, ten, all of a sudden, one night. What did the United States do immediately afterwards? They did apologize and paid compensation. And that's what we wanted from them. That's the only thing that we want from them. We still ask from them because our people say, how can they do this? Who are they? How can the Israeli army do this to a

friendly country? They think that apologizing is something humiliating for them, so they don't apologize. The channels are open, ladies and gentleman, still the requirement is there, they have to apologize and we have put forward our understanding of what we could be satisfied with, which I think, is quite normal. And one last word, enemies never apologize. Only friends do apologize, so they should understand this. And I am hopeful.

And thirdly, your question was Iraq. You know I am quite in mixed feelings about Iraq. The US now came for the sole purpose of weapons of mass destruction, but there were none. It was a great disillusion by the people. Secondly, they said well now, we are here for democracy. Democracy is not just a cup of coffee. We don't have any democracy to put into a cup and stir it and then drink it and then become a democracy. There is no such thing. It requires some time. Now, in the most diplomatic way I can tell you, we have the mess before us for all good reasons, and we cannot stop you. But we may only ask why, then, you came there? But you are leaving. Now, we have a serious problem there. It is not settled. Have any one of you ever been to Iraq lately? [Audience member answers: 2005.] 2005? Then you know enough what the situation is. It didn't change much. I was there in the beginning of 2010, last year, before coming here. It's like a real moving plateau. Really, go and see it if you would like to see it. Now, we have to deal with it. You can come to this place, but we don't have any place to go. That's a big problem. We are concerned. What we say, at least, is that we try to engage every single party comprising this society—the Turks, the Shiites, the Arabs, the Sunnis, you name it—but, it is going to be a little bit difficult. I think that what can go wrong or whether we can be able to contain these things at least to keep up this relative stability—I don't know, I have no answer to that. The only thing is that we have a big problem. And I am thankful to you for listening to me.

But, very briefly, please let me tell you a bit about the history of this house. The original owner of this house was the inventor of the Coke metal caps, the Coca-Cola caps. He was so wealthy. Actually, he was wealthy before that and his wealth has been multiplied hundreds of times, so he decided to travel, read, and enjoy his wealth and he happened to one day be in Istanbul and he fell in love with Istanbul. And he met with another American in Istanbul. He was an architect, a chief architect of the Ottoman Palace. It was the late years of the Ottoman Empire, and he started just traveling in Turkey, Istanbul and Washington and one day, he asked from his friend, why don't you just build a house for me, here, in Washington, but carrying the futures Ottoman architecture, carrying the contemporary art and everything?

And the construction started in 1910 and finished in 1915, so this house is 95 years young, I won't say old. And the original owner with his family lived here until 1928. One day, he gathered all of his family members around, and he said, if in the future, after my passing away, you happen to sell this house, you should go to the Turks and give them the rights of ownership. If they don't want to buy this house, then you can sell it to anyone you like. And when he passed away, two years after, in 1930, his elder daughter comes to the Turkish Embassy at the time, and of course, Turkey was only 7 years old, but still with no means, they had only one thing, they used to think big. And their wisdom prevailed, and they bought it because, why am I saying this? They bought this place in 1930, which was the Great Depression time, I shall remind you, \$260,000. Everything included. Everything you see here, 65% of everything you see here in this house is original. Those chandeliers, and everything, these silk goblin covered cloth because the second wife was apparently an opera singer, and he did it for her to practice every day.

That's why we conduct our Jazz Series here. So our first Ambassador was Ahmet Muhtar, who was a great, great man and whose great uncle is the present CEO of Coca-Cola. And the second one is Mehmet Münir Erteğün and he had two sons, Ahmet and Nesuhi, and one daughter. He lived here for ten years.

During the segregation time, their best friends were the African Americans. That's what makes us different from others. They were so courageous, they started inviting people here for jazz jam sessions—whites and blacks, but what sort of people? Let me tell you. Duke Ellington, Sammy Davis

Jr., Ruth Brown, Ray Charles, and many others have come and performed here. In their rooms, in this hall, everywhere, and this has become the center of the town for jazz. And one day, the situation was so serious, a southern Senator wrote a letter to our Ambassador saying that, every day I pass by your embassy and I see so many black people in front of your front door, coming in and out. What is this? I mean, is this true? They shouldn't be treated like this, this is segregation. And what did our Ambassador write back to him? He says, Mr. Senator, you are absolutely right. I have been seeing those people in our house coming in and out because in our tradition, we always host our friends to our front door. That's why you see all those people at our front door. However, if you happen to come and visit us, you are more than welcome, but you should know, we will welcome you to our backdoor, [Laughter.] This is the courageous letter he wrote back. This is now in honoring them in their memory, we have started acting in jazz series. We then established Atlantic Records Music Company. You all know this. Why? Because the black musicians who were nobody then they helped them, became world famous and nationwide known people. They supported them. They made them celebrities here in this country. Ahmet Ertegün was a beloved friend of all African Americans and during this time, we should be honoring them, so that's why we started this jazz series. The 6<sup>th</sup> one is on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December and we are starting to institutionalize it and we will just never forget our fore fathers who have really invested in this relationship. So thank you very much, thank you.

**Ms. DeYoung:** Thank you Mr. Ambassador, thank you so much. And, particularly, thank you for ending on that story, which is one of my very favorite Washington stories. You've been very generous with your time, you've given us a lot of insights, you taught us a lot about Turkey, and I think that it's now incumbent upon all of us to visit Turkey and to make sure that Americans learn a little bit more about it, so thank you so much. [Applause.]