

Nicholas Burns:

Strobe thank you so much, ladies and gentlemen good morning, it's a pleasure for me to be here, a pleasure and really an honor to give this 4th annual Sakıp Sabancı lecture here at the Brookings Institution. In that regard let me just return the favor and say to Strobe Talbott how thankful I am for his friendship and how grateful I think all of us are to see how well Brookings is doing under Strobe's leadership, so thank you Strobe for that and thank you for believing so much in this US-Turkish relationship. There are a lot of friends here from the United States government, Carlos Pascual, ex-officials of the United States government, now officials of Brookings, Carlos Pascual and Phil Gordon, my friend Ömer Taşpınar who has been such a great.. over the last couple of weeks, guide to me on all things Turkish and if you haven't read his foreign affairs article, Ömer's article in the November-December edition of foreign affairs, you should, I think it's the single best piece that I have written, that I read excuse me, on Turkey over the last couple of months. Others here Jim Holmes, ambassador Jim Holmes has been a great friend of Turkey for a long time, also Steve Pfeiffer, way in the back in the back row, also someone with whom Strobe and I have worked. Güler Sabancı, thank you very much for being here, I know you are very busy and you got a lot on your mind, but you have helped to build this great university in honor of your uncle and this foundation that supports research and we are happy to have you here in our capital Washington D.C. once again. And may I say we have a lot of screens here, to all the faculty and staff and students of Sabancı University in Istanbul, you are most welcome, I am looking forward very much to our discussion afterwards which I assume is gonna be a lively and full discussion of US-Turkish relations and I agree with Strobe, there isn't a prettier, more beautiful, more historic city than the city in which the university sits, Istanbul, and so it's a pleasure to have all of you with us today. I think that Brookings and Sabancı are surely right to each year remember that extraordinary and visionary Turkish leader Sakıp Sabancı. His advocacy and work for a Turkey that would embrace democratic and economic reforms, his call that Turkey should have a rightful place in Europe was certainly the right way for Turks to think of their own country and it did so much to orient Turkey in the direction in which it is currently heading. And I was intrigued to talk to Güler before we walked into this room that Sabancı University has done extraordinarily well for a university that opened its doors in 1999. Güler is going up to Boston, my home town, later on today and there are 45 graduates of Sabancı in the Boston area universities alone, Harvard and MIT in Boston college and others and that is quite a distinction, I think quite an interesting metric, evidence of the success the university is already having. So I am delighted to be here, I am also delighted to be here for another reason, this is my very first speech since I retired from the US government state department and so that in itself is a kind of uncharted new territory for me. When Strobe and Dan Benjamin asked me to give this Sabancı lecture I thought of how often in my own career, and in my work, and that of the work of US foreign policy, we intersected with Turkey, and I think of that historical pattern as kind of a metaphor, for the vital importance that both countries have for each other in this US-Turkish relationship. I was a young diplomat 25 years ago in Mauritania, in West Africa and then in Cairo in Egypt and then in Jerusalem, and I saw then, in the early to mid 1980s, that Turkey was one of the very few countries in the world that would enjoy good relations with the Arab countries as well as with Israel. And during the first Gulf War in 1990 and 1991 I had a front row seat at the White House, I was the National Security Council official responsible for Turkey and I remember very clear and decisive intervention that President Turgut Özal made. In the thinking of the Bush administration, the Bush 41 administration, about how we should look to the opportunities as well as the dangers of trying to rescue Kuwait, of assembling a major international coalition and of defeating Saddam Hüseyin, I never thought since that President Özal received enough credit for his leadership which was very clear and I thought visionary at an important time, not only in the history of the Middle East, the modern history of the

Middle East, but an important time of the development of a strategic partnership that has since emerged, globally, and particularly in the Middle East between Turkey and the United States. When President Clinton came into office he asked Strobe and I to travel to Ankara, and Strobe may remember this, in September of 1993 and our mission in visiting Turkey was to encourage the Turkish government to extend its assistance, its attention, both through the Turkish private sector as well as the government to the newly founded independent countries in Central Asia. We didn't have to actually give any advice when we got to Ankara, because I remember very clearly Strobe and I being impressed by the clear strategic course the Turkish government was already on. To reach out to those countries diplomatically, economically and for the Turkish private sector and you see that now, when you travel through Central Asia, you see it in South Asia, I certainly saw it in Afghanistan. The presence of the Turkish private sector has a force for Turkish society in these new regions of the world. As State Department spokesman in the mid 1990s I found myself and my country caught between two great allies, Turkey and Greece. In the Imia, or the Turks call it Kardak crisis, in the Aegean Sea and then as ambassador in Athens, I saw along with my colleague Mike Parris then ambassador in Turkey, how those two horrific earthquakes, the first in Turkey, the second in Greece, led the citizens of a country first, and then the leaders, to decide enough with Greek-Turkish tensions and I think it was a citizen-led movement in both countries followed by the governments to reach out to each other and to create what I think since has become a historic rapprochement in modern times between the Greek and Turkish peoples and the two governments and then it was led very ably by two leaders who become friends, Prime Minister Erdoğan of Turkey and Prime Minister Karamanlis, Kostas Karamanlis of Greece. And the last few years, as both Dan and Strobe mentioned, I sat at the Nato table in Brussels and that's quite an experience because there are no sovereign at that table, there is no government to which we are accredited. We are accredited to each other around that table and I had the great pleasure to sit in alphabetical order at the end of that Nato table with my Turkish and British counterparts, with Ahmet Üzümcü, a really fine Turkish diplomat, with Onur Öymen, someone with whom I had a very close personal relationship and someone who stood up for Nato and the US-Turkish relationship while he was ambassador. And then in the last three years I had the great pleasure, really an honor to chair for the US side our strategic dialogue with Turkey and we would meet, I was last in Istanbul and Ankara in September of 2007, we would meet and talk about not just the bilateral relationship, we talked about what concerned Turkey, about its strategic position in the world and what concerned us and how we could work together, and Strobe mentioned a phrase, Turkey matters to the United States. That's how I felt sitting at the Nato table with my Turkish colleagues, that's how I certainly felt as Undersecretary of State, thinking about the problems of Europe, of the Middle East, of Central and South Asia, the Balkans, that Turkey matters to the United States. Now I say that because I clearly remember and some of my colleagues who were US officials at the turn when the cold war ended, when communism melted away and democracy began to grow in Eastern Europe, I remember American pundits, and maybe there are still some of them left in the room today, sayin Turkey would be less important to the Unites States because the cold war is ending, because Turkey of course had been a bastion of democracy during the cold war itself. That prediction turned out to be spectacularly wrong. I think any of us sitting here today, looking at Turkey objectively, looking at the relationship between our two countries objectively would have to say that Turkey is decidedly more important to the United States and to the European Union today, than it was during the cold war. I think Richard Holbrooke put it best, he was last year's Sabancı speaker and a good friend. Dick Holbrooke has said that, Turkey is now to our national security what Germany was in the cold war to American national security, it's a front line state and that front line is no longer in Europe. That front line is in the Middle East and that is the first and primary reason why Turkey, in my judgment, is so clearly and so vitally now the pivotal European ally in a literal and figurative sense, for my country. During

the last decade, I think the most important single shift in American strategic thinking has been this. That we have migrated from a singular focus on Europe and the problems of Europe and the vital challenge they posed to us in the 20th century to now what is pretty much a singular focus in this city, the Middle East, and its problems and challenges to our country in the 21st century. And as we Americans struggle and debate in our political campaign, what to do about Iraq, what to do about American involvement in Iraq, how do we stop the Iranian government from becoming a nuclear weapons power, how do we prevent Iran from continuing to arm and fund nearly all of the Middle East terrorist groups that are shooting at us and our friends, Israel, the moderate Palestinians, the Arab States? How do we make sense of the problems that 60 years after the creation of Israel, and we commemorate that next week, Israel and the Palestinians are still not at peace? Israel doesn't have security and the Palestinians don't have what they deserve, a home, a state they can call their own. And Israel does not have a state of peace with most of the Arab world. These are the problems that are at the forefront of American strategic thinking, along of course with the opportunities, positive and negative, in South Asia and of course, as we look at the rise in China and what that means, for strategic stability in the Far East. This is where American foreign policy is currently heading, and if that is the case, and I believe it is, then I think we have to argue, and I will certainly argue this morning, that Turkey is going to be a singularly important ally for us, and partner. In the Middle East, as I have already said, Turkey really is the only country that I can think of, that has built bridges to all of these countries that I just named, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Israel, in the modern Middle East. Turkey's importance is self-evident. It's also a function, as Dan and Strobe both mentioned, of its geography, of its clear influence in the Balkans, the Black Sea, the Caucasus and South and Central Asia. It's in this part of the world that the United States finds itself as a partner, militarily, of Turkey. In securing the peace in Bosnia and Kosovo, as President Clinton did I think so bravely in the 1990s with Turkey and the other European allies and if now, supporting the independence of Kosovo as Turkey and the United States did together just in the last few months, both of us support the sovereignty and independence, the true and effective independence of Georgia, from intimidation by Russia and finally both of us are acting politically but also militarily and economically to support the Afghan people and the Afghan government in its struggle to protect itself from the sordid influence of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Turkey is also one of the leading players in what has become in my mind probably the leading international issue in 2008, and that's energy. Turks and Americans share a common interest in preventing the domination by one country, Russia, of the oil and gas sources and pipelines for Western Europe. Turkey is of course the gateway for the exports of oil and natural gas from the Caspian region to Europe as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and now the Turkey-Greece-Italy interconnector so happily demonstrate. And finally, I think Turkey is important for a normative reason and perhaps even an existential reason. Turkey is in many ways the most successful Muslim state in the world, and this point I think cannot be underestimated. Turkey's development since the extraordinary vision and leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is historic and is unique among all Muslim countries of the world. Atatürk gave, before many European countries did, political rights to women. Atatürk led the way towards the economic renaissance in Turkey of which the Sabancı Group of course is a great representative. Atatürk established the Turkish Republic as a secular democracy and now another generation of Turkish leaders led by President Gül and Prime Minister Erdoğan are demonstrating that a democratic, pro-market, secular and globally integrated country can succeed in our time, in the 21st century and in some cases succeed in spectacular fashion. In this sense, there is no question whatsoever in my mind that both President Bush and President Clinton had been right over last 10 years to argue, and many times to argue with our European friends, West European friends, that Turkey must accede to the European Union. With Turkey as a member, the European Union will have united Europe geographically and in its democratic values for the first time in its history. Without it,

Europe will have passed up a unique opportunity in its modern history and has to have the benefits of Turkey inside the European Union as the literal and figurative bridge between Europe and Asia and between the peoples of Europe and the peoples of the greater Middle East. And so if we agree on Turkey's importance to the United States, we must then agree that Turkey and the United States should continue to act to rebuild a partnership and an alliance that was weakened considerably since the start of the Iraq War in March of 2003. I hope that Turks and Americans will agree that we must never again permit a legitimate difference of opinion and strategy on an issue of war and peace to drive a wedge between us and to lead to what was arguably the lowest point in our relationship over the past 50 years. That's what happened in the spring of 2003, and in its wake, we talked less, we cooperated fitfully and we reached a point of estrangement and even distrust at times, that reflected poorly on both of us. Fortunately we began in 2007 to climb out of that diplomatic hole that we had dug together. We resurrected the relationship and it all started with the PKK. Now we Americans have known how neuralgic and emotional and important the PKK issue is, not just for the Turkish government, but for the Turkish people as well. And I believe that President Bush met his commitment to Prime Minister Erdoğan in the past 6 months. United States has given Turkey unprecedented support in its fight inside Turkey and along the Turkish-Iraqi border and in my view President Bush acted decisively and resolutely to support Turkey in its hour of need, from an American perspective, but I will be interested to hear from the students and faculty at Sabancı if they agree with this. United States decision to deliver substantial assistance to the Turkish military has begun to transform this relationship for the better. In doing so the United States hopes that Turkey and the Iraqi government, including the Kurdish regional authorities, can find a way to cooperate to reduce the terrorism there, so that military operations at some point will no longer be needed because on the final analysis peace and stability as well as justice and true understanding will only come about when Turkey and Iraq are working fully in common cause and when peaceful discourse takes the place of violence and terrorism practiced by the PKK and of a need for a response. And so as we look ahead at 2009 and a new American administration I believe a very high priority must be the continued recovery of our Turkish-American alliance and with that in mind and remembering that diplomacy is a two-way street, I offered the following proposals for what both governments can do to continue and accelerate the progress that we see over the last several months. Whomever is elected by the American people must decide that our alliance with Turkey is a priority and that the United States should set out to support Turkey in some very specific ways. Here is what I think the Americans should do, we Americans. First, the next American President must make a basic choice and that is to continue to support Turkey in its struggle against the PKK and not to stand on the sidelines as so many of Turkey's other partners in Europe have tended to do. Second, the next American President must continue the efforts of President Bill Clinton and George W. Bush to support resolutely and unequivocally Turkey's aspirations for EU membership. Now I find it ironic indeed that two of America's strongest friends in Europe, Chancellor Merkel and President Sarkozy, have slowed and weakened the EU's commitment to Turkey. In any administration in our country, our president must often make the toughest decisions on what signals to send to the rest of the world about our priorities. Among the hundreds, literally hundreds of issues on the US-European agenda, I hope the next American President will signal to Germany and to France that the issue of Turkey's accession to the EU is among the very highest American priorities. And the message that a President Obama, or President Clinton or President McCain should put to Chancellor Merkel and President Sarkozy is this: what a colossal, strategic and historic mistake it would be if Europe chose to close its doors to Turkey. If Europe chose to deflect Turkey's legitimate EU aspirations. Third, we should continue to support in our country, I think without involving ourselves in Turkish domestic politics, if that is hopeful and helpful, I think we should continue to assert publicly that we do believe in a modern, democratic, secular and civilian led Turkey for the future.

Because look at the enormous progress that Turkey has made under such governments in the past decade or so, and I think that's where America should be. Not equivocal, not sitting on the fence, but stating as a friend and partner that Turkey's vision for modernity, for secularism, democracy and civilian-led government many Turks is one that we can certainly support. Now Turkey is also responsible along with the United States for the health of our relationship. In that spirit I hope that the new American president can expect the following from the Turkish leadership. First, Turkey has one of the largest militaries in the Nato alliance and it is also one of the least reformed, and I say this with great respect, and least deployable, as are the militaries of many of the European members of Nato. We need a greater Turkish commitment to Nato's mission in Afghanistan. We need Turkey to continue to invest more in the flexibility and sustainability of its armed forces, particularly its land and air forces. Nato has learned, through some bitter recent experiences in the Balkans and Afghanistan that we all need to do much more to modernize our armed forces. Turkey's lead in this effort I think would go a long way to push the West European allies to make the same commitment. Where Turkey has done very well is in contributing a very high percentage of its gross domestic product to its national defense among the leaders of the Nato alliance and I think in that sense Turkey is a positive military example for governments like Germany and Italy and Spain and France who now are spending 1.2 or 3 percent of their gross domestic product on defence, Turkey is far above that, far above 3 percent. Second, Turks reminded me often, when I was in government, particularly in my last job as undersecretary, that their country has substantial influence in the Middle East. True, undoubtedly true. I would ask Turkey now to try to exert that influence more directly and more effectively than it has been willing to do, especially concerning two countries, Iran and Syria. It is to our decided advantage that the Turkish government can speak directly to those very difficult regimes in Damascus and in Tehran, it would be extraordinarily helpful to the efforts currently being led by Russia, China, Britain, France, Germany and the United States if Turkey would now join the sanctions effort against an increasingly recalcitrant and difficult Iranian government. And in Syria, Damascus should hear from Ankara and not just from Riyadh and Washington and the European capitals that the Syrian government's support for Hezbollah in Lebanon will have consequences for Turkey's relations with it. And finally while I understand full well the sensitivities surrounding, and the historical legacy surrounding Turkey's relations with many of its immediate neighbors, I think there are steps that President Gül and Prime Minister Erdoğan can take, to create a region of greater stability and a greater future promise. For instance if Turkey could make a bold opening to Armenia, my judgment is that the Armenian government and people would respond positively to that gesture. If Turkey could reach out to the ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in Istanbul and decide to re-open the Halki Seminary, it would be the most fair and judicious decision to heal the wounds and misunderstandings between the Orthodox Christian community in Istanbul and in Turkey and its government and I say its government. When I was in His Holiness' office, Bartholomew's office in Istanbul last year, I remarked that there was a photograph of Atatürk and the Patriarch reminded me that of course he is a Turkish citizen, loyal to the Turkish state. And that's a problem and an issue that we Americans believe can and should be overcome. And if Turkey can work with Greece, the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriot authorities and 2008 might be a year of breakthrough in a decades-long Cyprus conflict. 2009 could then be the year that the Cyprus problem is resolved once and for all. Now you might be surprised to hear me say that, you might think that's a bit positive and optimistic considering the length and difficulty and complexity of the Cyprus problem going back many decades. Well, we need sometimes to dream big dreams in international politics. We've all witnessed in the last two decades that the seemingly impossible can be accomplished. Communism met its downfall in Eastern Europe and the 350 million Europeans were liberated in 1989 and 90 and 91, the Warsaw Pact disappeared followed by the end of the evil apartheid regime in South Africa. Peace came to Northern Ireland and the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo, they were

stopped and peace has come to both of those places as well. So it is simply not acceptable in my judgment or tolerable in this day and age that Cyprus should be consigned to eternal division. Turkey should join us in calling for peace and justice and a final resolution for the Cyprus conflict, knowing that it is not just up to Turkey to make that peace. It's up to Greece, it's up to the Republic of Cyprus, it's up to the Turkish Cypriot authorities as well. Ladies and gentlemen, the United States and Turkey have weathered an unusually difficult time in our long friendship and long relationship. It is now time for us to resurrect that alliance. Turks can count on the United States, the current administration and the next one, to believe in this alliance, to support Turkey in its struggle against the PKK and Turks can count in our continued belief, strong belief that Turkey's place is with the future of Europe. And I hope that we Americans in turn will see a sustained Turkish campaign to join us in our efforts to bring peace and stability to an exceedingly troubled region in the Middle East and to transform that region through bold and creative Turkish diplomacy. I am not pessimistic, in fact I am optimistic about the future of this relationship. I admire Turks, I admire the energy of the Turkish people, the patriotism of the Turkish people and what the Turkish people have built, an extraordinarily successful country whose best days, we believe, are yet to come.

