

Where Is Turkey Headed? Gezi Park, Taksim Square, and the Future of the Turkish Model

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Ambassador Jeffrey is a former U.S. special representative for Syria engagement and former U.S. ambassador to Turkey and Iraq; from 2013-2018 he was the Philip Solondz Distinguished Fellow at The Washington Institute. He currently chairs the Wilson Center's Middle East Program.



Articles & Testimony

Ambassador Jeffrey addressed a Senate hearing on the fallout from the protests in Istanbul. The following is an excerpt from his prepared remarks; [download the PDF to read the full testimony](#).

"When Barack Obama made his 2009 trip to Turkey, his first bilateral visit as president, he did not single out Turkey as a model per se. Rather, he made the point that Turkey 'is not where East and West divide -- this is where they come together.' Along with this, he stressed America's willingness to work with Turkey and, above all, paid homage to Turkey's status as a successful democracy. Today, many inside and outside Turkey question whether it will remain the same successful democracy, open economy, and reliable security partner we have seen in recent decades. There is cause for concern, but there is also time for the Turks, and it is in the first instance their job to sort out the issues behind the Gezi Park demonstrations and tailor their political process as they see fit.

"The demonstrations that broke out in Gezi Park and Taksim Square in Istanbul in late May represent the biggest challenge to Prime Minister Erdogan's AK Party rule in the eleven years the party has been in power. The government has survived the turmoil and is now on the offensive with a campaign of rhetorical abuse -- and judicial action -- against those participating in or supporting the demonstrations. I see no risk of the government falling over its handling of this whole issue. But the government, particularly Erdogan, will now face serious opposition if he attempts to put in place his ambitious program to consolidate Turkey's presidential system through constitutional change and to have himself elected the first president under this new system..." ❖

Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on European Affairs

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