

Fifth Annual Turgut Ozal Memorial Lecture

Mar 15, 2002



Brief Analysis

On March 13, 2002, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz delivered The Washington Institute's Fifth Annual Turgut Ozal Memorial Lecture. The following are excerpts from his remarks. [Read a full transcript.](#) **[\(templateC07.php?CID=140\)](#)**

"It is the great good fortune of the United States to have in Turkey a friend and ally that has stood with us through war and peace, going back to the days of the Korean War. That is where American troops got their first look at Turkish courage -- a fighting spirit and self-reliance that is also legendary in the annals of history. . . .

"Only a nation of great courage could manage successfully to sit at the crossroads of so many contending international forces as Turkey has done through the crises of the Cold War and those that have followed. And only a nation of great tolerance could serve as a beacon to others.

"It is a long history, going back at least 500 years to 1492, when the Jews were expelled from Spain. . . . During the period of the Nazis, when Jews were being expelled from other countries in Europe, Turkey once again welcomed Jews -- and other dissidents -- into the country. And at a moment when communist Bulgaria made life unbearable for ethnic Turks and other Muslims in the late 1980s, Turkey welcomed tens of thousands of refugees without distinction to their national origin and offered them the equality that had eluded them in their homeland. More recently, the Turks welcomed more Kosovar refugees than any other country when they were fleeing Serbian attacks.

"Today, Turkey's strategic role in the world continues to challenge it with many contending forces. It is perhaps a misfortune to be strategically located, but it is our good fortune that Turkey occupies the strategic location that it does. Turkey is central to building peace from southeastern Europe to the Middle East and eastward to the Caucasus and Central Asia. Turkey is key to fashioning a Europe that is undivided, democratic, and at peace. And Turkey is crucial to bridging the dangerous gap between the West and the Muslim world. It is a challenge made for Turks -- and it is the great good fortune of the United States, of the NATO alliance, of the West, and indeed of the world, that occupying this most important crossroads we have one of our strongest, most reliable, and most self-reliant allies. . . .

"Those same views of courage and tolerance were characteristic of Turkey's late-twentieth-century leader, Turgut Ozal. The same broad view shaped Ozal's leadership, to the lasting benefit of us all. . . . Ozal strongly believed that everyone should have an equal opportunity to advance, without regard for race, religion, or ethnic background. . . .

"Ozal was a statesman who confidently took his place on the world stage, and as a close friend of President George H. W. Bush -- or 'Number 41,' as we like call him -- he understood that Turkey had a responsibility as a regional power to join with other nations in standing up for what is right. . . . When war did come, Ozal acted decisively and with great personal courage. He did not hesitate a moment in supporting the West to oppose Saddam's aggression. He bravely closed the border with Iraq, which was, before that, one of Turkey's largest trading partners. He demonstrated courage in closing the Iraqi oil pipeline to the Mediterranean, and deploying close to 150,000 troops on the Iraqi border when it would have been much easier -- and might have seemed far safer -- to turn a blind eye to

the dangerous neighbor right next door. That same courage led Ozal to grant the United States permission to operate from air bases in Turkey, something [they] have done once again recently in supporting our flights, including our humanitarian relief flights to Afghanistan. . . . I would add, appropriately at this point, that the United States . . . supports, now and always, the full territorial integrity of Turkey and Iraq. . . .

"Turgut Ozal will probably be remembered best for implementing a vision of a modern, democratic Turkey embracing the possibilities and benefits offered by a free economy. It took not only vision but courage to put Turkey on that course. . . . Turkey's coalition government formulated a reform plan that has stabilized the economic situation and corrected longstanding weaknesses in the economy. Although short-term impacts have made the going tough, Turkey has shown the courage to correct these weaknesses, and should be encouraged by signs that the economy may have begun to turn the corner toward growth. Over the long term, most experts believe that Turkey will come out much better through implementation of these reforms. . . .

"We want to help in Turkey's recovery; we want to help promote Turkey's economic growth, and we want to help Turkey become competitive in the global economy. As an example of this commitment, President Bush has largely excluded Turkey's steel imports from higher duties. Reforms to ensure effectiveness and transparency in regulations concerning foreign investment will make Turkey even more attractive to outside investors. There is no question that Turkey's continued economic success will serve as a model for other countries seeking to raise standards of living through private-sector-led growth. . . .

"In thinking about Turgut Ozal's lasting legacies to Turkey, the free economy is certainly one, which Ozal knew held out enormous promise. . . . [T]he second is Ozal's view of religion as fully compatible with a free economy and democracy. Turgut Ozal was a man deeply devoted to Islam, but also a man, as journalists have noted, who was 'as comfortable with Western leaders as in a Mosque.' . . . Ozal knew the tolerance inherent in democracy would offer the Turkish people a future that theocracy would deny them. And it was a vision for Turkey that very much included the women of Turkey. Ataturk also understood this, and, in the 1920s, argued that Turks would never catch up with the modern world if they modernized only half of their population. Accordingly, women in Turkey were among the first in Europe to win the right to vote. In the 1930s, Ataturk even put women into the Turkish Air Force -- including his adopted daughter -- and had them flying airplanes.

"Such courage to break from tradition and encourage new ways offers great promise for all Muslims today -- especially as we consider this struggle against terrorism. The fight against terrorism is not just a fight of the Western countries. It is a fight of all those who aspire to peace and freedom throughout the world and, most emphatically, in the Muslim world itself. . . . [T]he vast majority of the world's Muslims . . . have no use for the extreme doctrines espoused by such groups as al-Qaeda and the Taliban. To the contrary, they abhor terrorism and the way that the terrorists have not only hijacked airplanes but also attempted to hijack one of the world's great religions. They have no use for people who interpret their religion to deny basic rights to the women of the Muslim world. . . .

"Our goal should be more than just defeating the terrorists and eliminating terrorist networks. As President Bush said in his State of the Union message in January, 'We have a great opportunity during this time of war to lead the world toward the values that will bring lasting peace. . . . Let the skeptics look to Islam's own rich history, with its centuries of learning, and tolerance and progress. We have no intention of imposing our culture. America will take the side of brave men and women who advocate these values around the world, including the Islamic world, because we have a greater objective than eliminating threats and containing resentment.' . . . In the United States, we understand that Turkey remains on the frontlines of the war on terror. And we also understand that Turkey is a model for those in the Muslim world who have aspirations for democratic progress and prosperity. Turkey gives us an example of the reconciliation of religious belief with modern secular democratic institutions. . . . As Turkey looks to the West, across the waters of the Atlantic, know that your good friends are looking back. For we are good friends,

and we still must look out for one another."

Policy #613

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