



Beyond the Headlines Event

Moderator:

Warren Hoge, Vice President of External Relations

Speakers:

Stephen Kinzer, Author of book *Reset: Iran, Turkey, and America's Future*

International Peace Institute
777 United Nations Plaza

Warren Hoge:

Good evening. I'm Warren Hoge, Vice President for External Relations, and I'm really happy you're here for this Beyond the Headlines event featuring Stephen Kinzer and his new book *Reset: Iran, Turkey, and America's Future*.

Let me say from the outset that Stephen is an old friend and cherished former colleague of mine from our days at the New York Times. I was even his boss at one point when I was the foreign editor of the Times and he was the Times' correspondent, the bureau chief in Managua. That was in the early 1980s when Central America was the site of guerrilla wars and had become the consuming concern of the Reagan administration in its struggle to contain what it saw as creeping communism in the western hemisphere.

About that time, I reviewed a book for the Sunday Times Book Review co-authored by Stephen, who at that point was still working for the Boston Globe, and Stephen Schlesinger, a good friend of a lot of us in the UN community. That book, *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* gave an early hint of what would become the focus of some of his later books -- examining American interventions abroad and their consequences.

Among those books are *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, an account of how the CIA caused the collapse of the nationalist government of Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran in 1953, an act that ultimately led to the installation of the autocratic Shah Reza Pahlavi, and since 1979, we all know what that led to.

Another book is *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*, an examination of 14 times that the United States has overthrown foreign governments.

Stephen had a distinguished career at the Times where he was, as I mentioned, the paper's bureau chief in Managua for six years, and then for another six years, the bureau chief in Bonn, and then, after German unification, in Berlin.

In 1996, Stephen was named chief of the Times' new bureau in Istanbul. A year or two later, the man who ran the historical Ciragan Palace Hotel on the Bosphorus came to visit me in London when I was there for the New York Times, and I, of course, asked him how Stephen was doing, and he answered with a story about Stephen that illustrates why Stephen Kinzer is the kind of foreign correspondent I like best. He's the kind who covers more than just a country and its politics. He goes deep into the societal and cultural aspects of the place he's writing about. The hotel manager told me that Stephen had learned so rapidly to speak Turkish that he was already hosting a Turkish language radio show in Istanbul on jazz. That's my kind of foreign correspondent!

A Washington Post reviewer once said of Stephen that he is "among the best in popular foreign policy storytelling." That's a good phrase, and that's the strength of his new book, *Reset*, which incidentally is on sale at the door, and copies of which, I'm sure Stephen would be happy to sign when we wind up here in about an hour or so. Stephen covers a lot of ground and a lot of history in the book, but he does it in such an accessible narrative fashion that you'll find yourself reading it for pleasure as well as for enlightenment.

As we noted in the invitation, Stephen likes to defy conventional wisdom, and he fulfills that mission in *Reset* by suggesting that Iran, a repressive state with an aggressively autocratic leader and a failing economy that is, today, a vocal enemy of the United States and a feared antagonist to many countries in its own region, in fact, could become a dependable collaborator with the West.

Turkey, a NATO ally and a vibrant democracy with a booming economy and a country that maintains relations with Israel is a more obvious candidate, and Stephen writes, quote, "Turkey qualifies as the best partner the United States can find in the world's most troubled region."

Stephen notes that Turkey and Iran are the only countries in the Muslim Middle East with experience in trying to become democracies, and the book is a highly readable account of the histories of how that occurred in both places. "From their long struggle," Stephen writes, "both peoples have developed an understanding of democracy and a longing for it that makes them good soulmates for Americans."

Iran, Turkey, and the United States as soulmates ?

Stephen, the floor is yours.

Stephen Kinzer:

Thank you very much. I always like challenging conventional wisdom, and you've certainly set me up to do that! Warren was a little generous to talk about the fact that we were colleagues, and then he was my boss. I've got some good Warren Hoge stories, but I'm not going to tell them tonight. Some would even not be suitable for discussion here. I'll just tell you, one thing that Warren did teach me that's probably a valuable thing for everyone to learn, and that is, how do you make your employees be loyal to you? It's by being loyal to your employees. And that was what Warren always did for all the correspondents that worked for him, and that's why all the correspondents that worked for Warren when he was foreign editor are willing to walk off a cliff for him right up to this day, so it's a thrill to be back on the same level again.

It's interesting also to hear you say that this book could actually be fun reading. Just the very phrase "Middle East" is kind of deadening. Even when I read, this is going to be an article about the Middle East or the Middle East peace process, even I'm thinking, oh, do I really have to go in here? It already sounds so off-putting.

I didn't use the phrase "Middle East" in the, in the title of my book. We have in journalism a phrase, MEGO, it's an acronym. Those of you that aren't journalists may not know that one, but those are words you're not supposed to use in an article. MEGO stands for "My Eyes Glaze Over." That's a word that when you see that word, like fiscal deficit reduction or something, you just go on to the next story.

"Middle East" is in danger of becoming like that! We have been involved for so long in what seems like such an endless and essentially fruitless search for peace in that region that just the name of the region itself, just the phrase Middle East seems to be kind of a byword for hopelessness, terror, violence, repression, and just endless conflict. We've sort of assumed that that's the only thing that can come out of that part of the world.

Now as Warren said, I spent much of my adult life living abroad, working as a journalist, and although I tried not to cover daily news, as Warren did, at one point, remind me -- we are a daily newspaper, you know! So I did have to do some of that.

After so many years of doing that, what I've done since I've left journalism is try to ask myself, what did it mean? I saw so many things happen close up. How can I put that together in a way that explains something that wasn't so apparent immediately? And that's what I'm trying to do in this book.

I don't believe that the West has only bad options in the Middle East. I think there are good options. The reason we don't find them is that in this area, even more than in other regions of the world, we really are trapped in old paradigms. We have a policy towards the Middle East that was shaped essentially for the Cold War, and the Cold War has been over for 20 years, so the strategic environment in the Middle East has changed tremendously.

New threats are emerging from the Middle East, but also tantalizing new opportunities as the geopolitics of that region changes in very fluid ways. If we can begin to look at that region in a new way, we'll see new opportunities.

But we don't do that, because rethinking our entire approach to a very important region of the world is something that the United States foreign policy establishment doesn't do well. We are very much trapped in patterns and paradigms of the past. Original thinking is often punished in our foreign policy establishment as if it were the germ of some frightful plague that needs to be wiped out before it begins to infect the entire foreign policy establishment.

You really have to stay within a very narrow paradigm in order to be taken seriously in many circles in Washington. Sort of reminds me of a great line that I believe Dorothy Parker once said when she was asked about what she thought of Katherine Hepburn's acting style. She said, "She runs the gamut of emotions from A to B!" That's sort of like our foreign policy toward the Middle East.

We're very much stuck in our old patterns. In those old patterns, traditionally, our principal allies have been Israel and Saudi Arabia. In Washington, the line has

traditionally been that what Saudi Arabia wants, Saudi Arabia gets; what Israel wants, Israel gets. That may have made sense during the Cold War, but the strategic environment is changing so much there now.

We need new policies, and that's why I start out my book with a quote from Albert Einstein. Some of you may know this one. Einstein defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over but expecting different results. That's our policy toward the Middle East.

Now how could we approach that region differently? How do we look long-term? This is something that we don't do very well in our foreign policy. How do we ask ourselves, what would we like to see the Middle East look like in 50 years, and what would we like our role to be there, then?

It may be a weakness of democracy that we don't think in those terms often enough. It may be that we have a very short history as a country and we are used to getting our way very quickly, but for whatever reason, we're used to thinking in a very short-term framework.

Our other shortcoming that cripples our foreign policy so often and is so vividly visible in our policy toward the Middle East is emotion. Emotion is a very bad guide for foreign policy. We're very caught up in emotions: positive emotions and negative emotions.

You're going to see them on display again next week when I come back here to have my now second annual dinner with Ahmadinejad. There's a tremendous amount of anti-Iran emotion and a tremendous amount of anti-Israel emotion coursing around the Middle East and coursing around the world right now.

Many countries would like to take steps that will help them redeem those emotions. In many cases, you could argue those emotions are justified or have a basis.

Nonetheless, Israel and Iran are two very powerful nations in that part of the world. There is not going to be a settlement to any of the major security issues in that part of the world without those two countries being part of it. And in this way, I think you can see them as being in a somewhat comparable situation. Those are two countries that are very unpopular with their neighbors and intensely disliked by many millions of people and many governments all over the world.

But, you remember Lyndon Johnson, if I can sanitize it a little, saying it's better to have somebody inside the tent spitting out than outside the tent spitting in. Policies that take countries that we perceive as disturbers of the regional peace and treat them as pariahs, policies that punish them and sanction them and force them into corners may redeem emotions, but they don't lead to long-term peace.

We are now in a situation where we're in a peace process that has been almost endless, but peace process has now become, in effect, the enemy of peace. The more we talk, the less we achieve. Without a conceptual breakthrough, there isn't going to be any substantial progress on any of the lines that we've begun, that we've pursued up to now.

Now I start, then, with this idea that our policy needs a complete reset. We need to rethink our whole approach to that part of the world.

My second conclusion is that it's time for the United States, as we readjust to realities of the world today to begin looking for partners. In various parts of the world, but in particular in the Middle East, we now maintain this view, as we have for many decades, that we get the Middle East. We get it. We understand it. Other people don't get it. They don't understand how to approach those people, including the people who live there. They don't get it. We have to explain to them the realities of what's really going on in the Middle East and what can and can't be done and how.

We have to get over that. We have to begin to think that maybe there are things that we don't get about the Middle East. Maybe we could have some friends in the neighborhood whom we trust who could counsel us.

We do have one long-term friend in the Muslim Middle East, and that's Turkey. Turkey, of course, has been a NATO ally for 50 years, has been beside us in many crises ever since the war in Korea.

When we are looking for partners, and I think this applies in other parts of the world, but particularly in the Middle East, I think we should be looking for two criteria. We're looking for countries that fulfill two qualifications.

One is, they should be countries whose societies are like ours. In the long run, a society like Saudi Arabia, for example, is not a logical partner for the United States. It's just so different from ours. One of the problems we've gotten into in many parts of the world is that we've built alliances and relationships that are just between governments, that are just between elites, that are just between ruling classes. Ordinary people feel no connection to those relationships, and they are not durable.

The other thing you look for in a partner country is a country whose long-term strategic goals are parallel to your own. So if you accept that second point, that we need to be looking for partners, then we come to the third question, which is, who would they be?

Look first at societies in the Muslim Middle East. You'll see that -- and this is something I spend basically the first half of my book talking about -- Turkey and Iran are two countries that are dramatically different from all the other Muslim countries in their neighborhood. These are two countries that have had constitutions for more than 100 years. They're countries whose people have worked towards democracy all that time.

This is very important, because I do believe that democracy can take hold anywhere, but it needs a few prerequisites. One is, it has to be the desire of people in a country that they want democracy. It can't be that somebody came with a gun and told them this is the system you should have.

And secondly, it takes time to develop democracy, because democracy is not just an election. Democracy is a whole way of dealing with life's problems. It takes generations to assimilate that.

The only two countries in the Muslim Middle East that have had that experience are Turkey and Iran. Those are countries where people understand what is a parliament, what is an election, how do you decide who to vote for? You don't vote for the person of your religion or the person of your race. You vote for the person who agrees with your views. What do you do after you lose an election?

How do you behave? These are things that come over time. Turks and Iranians have really learned that.

I just came back from Iran a couple months ago and was impressed, once again, first of all, by the amazing pro-American tenor of society there. You've heard this, I'm sure, from other people that have gone to Iran, but it's truly remarkable for an American to be standing on a street corner in some city in Iran and mention to the other people waiting for the light that I'm American, and the next thing you know, people are giggling, and huge crowds are gathering, and they're yelling out things like, as one woman said to me, "We know they say terrible things about us over there, but we love America so much!"

I don't know where in the Middle East or where in the world you're going to hear that. Iran is a country that is not only pro-American, but the society is eminently democratic. Now that society in Iran has not managed to produce a government that reflects it as Turkey has.

This is one of the biggest differences. Turkey's democratic society has produced a democratic government. Iran's democratic society has not. Why? Well, that's a subject for a long lecture, but I do think you could summarize the main point down into one word, and that is *oil*.

Iran is sitting on an ocean of oil. When you have something that's very valuable, and powerful people want to steal, you're going to have a lot of trouble, and that's what happened to Iran. Iran was pushed off the democratic path in 1953 because it sought to nationalize its oil resource.

Turkey has no oil. Turkey has nothing that other countries wanted to loot. You sometimes hear that countries are blessed with resources? This is an example, and there are many others in the world, that calls that phrase into question. I do think, frankly, though that Iranian society is, in some ways, even more democratic than Turkish society, and if somehow, the layer of repressive rule could be peeled off, you don't have this lingering ultranationalism that you still find in parts of Turkish society, heavy influence of the military and ethnic conflicts.

Iran has the potential to vault over Turkey and become the most democratic society in the whole Muslim world. All the pieces are there. And it's not just because of their fascination with pop culture in America, but that is really true, and I have to think of this story. A friend of mine accompanied Sean Penn to Iran recently and, Sean Penn -- now a colleague of ours as a foreign correspondent -- Don't get me going! -- anyway, they're walking around the bazaar in Isfahan, and they're going from one stall to another, and as they're at one stall where there's an old man and his little grandson, and as they finish, they're walking away, the grandson calls out, "Excuse me, could you come back for a minute please?" So they turn around and go back, and the little kid says, in English, he says, "My grandfather has a question he wants to ask you." So they said okay. So then the grandson and the grandfather, who doesn't speak English, are talking for a minute in Farsi, and the grandson looks up and says, "My grandfather wants to know, what was it like to be married to Madonna?"

I didn't even know Sean Penn was married to Madonna! So to think of Iran as we do, as sort of the face of the "hostile other," the dark society that's the opposite of everything we know and cherish is a great oversimplification. So these are two societies that are like ours.

Now I mention one other qualification, and that is long-term strategic goals. Let's talk just briefly about that. Now we can sell the idea pretty easily of Turkey having long-term strategic goals congruent with our own. Turkey is a NATO member, has been very much integrated into western security policy for decades.

Turkey is now playing a very interesting new role in the Middle East, as many of you know. As recently as 10 years ago, Turkey was hardly a factor, was almost invisible on the world scene, and even in the Middle East. Now Turkey is hyperactive and has lots of qualifications to play a very important role in the Middle East.

First of all, it has the credential of the cultural overhang of its Ottoman period. It has the fact that it's so successful as a country. It's a booming economy. You know its economy, the growth rate of its economy is second this year only to China. They are higher than every country in Europe and higher than the United States. That doesn't even need to be said.

So Turkey's economy is booming, and in the old days, Turkey was often rejected from influence in Muslim countries because the secularization process had gone so far in Turkey that many Muslim leaders in other parts of the world thought Turkey isn't even really a Muslim country anymore. They're infidels now.

You can't say that anymore, because Turkey is now governed by a prime minister and a president who pray every day and whose wives wear headscarves.

So Turkey's uniquely positioned to play a very influential role throughout that part of the world. In addition, Turkey projects the model that we would like to see projected, the model that disproves two fundamental orientalist assumptions. One is, Islam is not compatible with democracy, and the other is, Islam is not compatible with capitalism.

To counter those two fallacies, Turkey is the ideal country. In the last few months, we've seen moments where Turkey and the United States have been on somewhat different pages on foreign policy. This is not bad for us. It's actually good for us. It helps Turkey show itself in the Muslim world as a country that is not anybody's poodle.

Nonetheless, it is projecting the values that we so desperately need to project in that part of the world. Turkey is also trying to resolve problems through diplomacy. This is their message to the U.S. Essentially, they're telling us, we're on your side. We support you. We want the same things that you want. But, you're going about it the wrong way. You need to be more conciliatory. You need to use diplomacy more. You need to talk with people in this region more. You need to open up the spectrum of the people you're willing to talk to and the solutions you're willing to consider.

The U.S. is not yet at a point where it takes advice from anybody, but if we did start taking advice, Turkey would be a good place to start hearing it.

Now let's talk briefly before I finish about Iran. How it can be said that Iran's long-term security interests could be in any way congruent with ours? Actually, let's pull back from emotion a moment and look more clearly at facts, which show that Iran in many ways has interests similar to ours.

First of all, Iran has more ability to stabilize Iraq than any country in the world. Including the United States. Our big fear about pulling our last tens of thousands of troops out of Iraq is that the whole place will explode again in another cycle of horrific violence. One way to be sure that won't happen is to withdraw from Iraq in some kind of a regional context in which Iran is included. If Iran has a stake in stabilizing Iraq, Iran can be our ticket *out* of Iraq, and therefore, helping us to resolve one of our biggest strategic problems.

Number two, Afghanistan. Iran has a huge ability, if it's part of the game, to influence Afghanistan. Don't forget that Herat, the entire western third of Afghanistan, was part of Iran up until Iran lost a war back in the 18th century. That language they speak there, Dari, it's Persian 100%. It's just another name for the same language.

So Iran can also play a great role in helping us resolve an even bigger security challenge than Iraq, which is the mess that we're facing in Afghanistan. There's no resolution there without a regional solution, and without Iran, there can be no regional solution.

Iran is the bitter enemy of radical Sunni movements like Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Don't forget that when the Taliban was sweeping into power in Afghanistan, all foreign diplomats left the country, except for one group of Iranians, the 11 Iranian diplomats who stayed behind in Mazar-i-Sharif. The first thing the Taliban did when they got there is they marched to the Iran embassy, they took all the diplomats out and shot them.

That's when the Iranians were telling America, "Don't deal with these Taliban people! We had delegations of them in Texas negotiating with UNOCAL about a pipeline!" The Iranians were saying, "Those are bad people!" But we didn't listen to them because we didn't like Iran.

Those are movements that they are also eager to crush. Terrorism is a great concern in Iran as it is to us. Iran is eager to try to limit Russian influence in the Middle East. Iran is eager to assure the free flow of oil from the Persian Gulf to the outside world.

We have a series of long-term strategic congruences with Iran, and those are congruences that transcend regimes. Those are state interests of Iran. How can we achieve some kind of a new paradigm where we'd be able to take advantage of these possibilities out there?

Whether it's possible to do that with this regime, I don't think anybody knows. We haven't really tried. I think one thing we learned in recent years, however, is that when we use force to try to resolve pressing security problems, we often wind up creating worse situations than the ones that we set out to resolve.

Force is not an effective substitute for diplomacy, particularly in the Middle East, and particularly with Iran. Diplomacy cannot succeed with Iran if diplomacy is not given the chance to succeed. We don't know yet whether diplomacy could work with Iran.

The only way we would know is if we went to Iran with an offer like the one we went to China with in the 1970s. If you go back and read that Shanghai communiqué, it was a beautiful diplomatic concept. It was just three parts. There were no agreements included in that communiqué, because that was too soon. The three parts of the Shanghai communiqué were, first part, written by

China, everything we don't like about what America does. Second part, written by America, everything we don't like about Chinese policy. Third part, we agree to negotiate on all these issues and not resolve them by force.

That would be the way to start with Iran. It's a non-starter to go to Iran and insist on negotiations only on the one issue we care about. We have to have an open agenda so that Iran feels it's also getting something out of the negotiations. Until we broaden that agenda, we're not going to get anywhere. And I can tell you that some of the most experienced diplomats in the U.S. foreign service, including some retired ambassadors, are just chafing at the bit for the chance to be sent to Iran and see what kind of a creative deal might be made there.

Now one thing we have to bear in mind is that you don't want to be seeming to undercut the democratic movement in Iran. I think this is very important. Those are the people who are supporting what we like to think of as our ideals.

And I asked a lot of people in Iran about this question, and essentially, the answer I got was that the democratic movement in Iran is in a bad position now. It doesn't have any good options. The best of the bad options would be that somehow that regime could be drawn out of its paranoia and its fear by being brought into a new security architecture. Without that, we will never be able to solve our major security challenges in the Middle East. There will be no resolution to the Israel-Palestine issue, there will be no reduction of sectarian violence in Lebanon, there will be no prospects of a nuclear free Middle East, there will be no prospect of a stable democratic independent Iraq. None of that can be achieved without Iran.

Now we don't like the idea that we have to deal with Iran because we're still so angry at Iran! With much justification. They took away our Shah! They imprisoned our diplomats for more than a year! They have worked assiduously, and sometimes very violently, to undermine our interests all over the world. But we can't remain imprisoned by that.

So I'd like to see an attempt made to try to start a process with Iran that would begin like the Shanghai process did with China, that would also keep in mind the necessity that any agreement with Iran has to take into account the interests of the people of Iran. That it can't be just a government-to-government deal.

In fact, in that context, I would say another good example we could follow would be Helsinki. The Helsinki Accords were security accords with a strong human rights component. So if we ever get to the point when we are making a serious effort to negotiate with Iran, the slogan, maybe you could print that on the t-shirts, would be "From Shanghai to Helsinki."

If we could achieve that, we would be on our way to achieving a breakthrough that would shift our paradigm, shift our way of looking at that part of the world. There is nothing standing in the way of doing this except the cords that tie us to the past, and they bring up Rumi's wonderful line, "Why do you stay in prison when the door is so wide open?" Okay, thank you.

Hoge: Thank you, Stephen. Well, that was as good as I expected! Stephen, a couple of thoughts, and I'm intrigued to know, I had not known you had just been in Iran, so I really want to ask you a question that can trade off that experience. All the congruences you mentioned, I have no quarrel with, and of course, there's the other incident that you write about in the book that we all knew about at the time, where Iran actually tried to *help* the West in Afghanistan by linking us up

with the Northern Alliance, and Iran had an ambassador here before the current ambassador who was part of that process, and at just about that time, the President, President Bush made his "Axis of Evil" speech, and it just overnight put an end to what had seemed to be a promising relationship. Anyway, all those congruences, you have an American President who at least says he is extending a certain kind of outreach to Iran. It isn't as far as the one you're proposing.

But, and the response to that has been pretty absolute on the part of Ahmadinejad. What's going on there? By the way, I'm going to that same dinner with Ahmadinejad next week, so I'm looking forward to it. What is the explanation?

Is the explanation that you have the pro-American people in the streets, you have the congruences you mentioned, you have an American President who, at least is making much nicer noises than his predecessors had made to Iran, and yet you have Iran, the government, reacting in a completely absolutist rejectionist fashion to this. Is this just a testament to the grip that Ahmadinejad has, and if it is, do you see that grip being broken anytime soon?

Kinzer:

I don't think it's a testimony to Ahmadinejad's grip. In fact, I see his grip as being actually very loose. When he was here last year, he was complaining about the fact that he had written a letter to Obama, and Obama had never written back, but what I really liked was he said, "I sent a letter to Obama, and let me tell you, that was not an easy thing to get done!" That stuck in my mind, just for him to send a letter is a big project to get through his own different circles of power in Iran, because that is not, "president" does not mean there what it means here. It's just one of many power centers.

And actually, the back and forth in the last few days about the release of this woman hiker also suggested it to me. So Ahmadinejad announces she's getting out. Then the next day, the head of the judiciary says, "Who's this guy? / release people! The president doesn't do it!" And the next thing you know, you've got all this pushing back and forth. It shows me that there's a lot of factional dispute in Iran.

I think one of the results of the upheaval after the election is that now there's no democratic movement to beat on, so they're beating on each other. The ruling class is really fighting over the spoils here. So I actually think that an offer to negotiate might accentuate those differences in Iran with unpredictable but kind of appealing possibilities.

So I would just add one other thing. You talked about the Obama situation. After one of my speeches in Washington a few weeks ago, a guy came up to me from the audience. He is a person who works in the White House in the National Security team, and he said to me, "One thing you said we would probably all agree on, which is that our policies are not working. We need some new big idea.

But what we haven't figured out is two things. Number one, what would that big idea be, and number two, how would we sell that to the American public?" I see this as a tough sell. It would be a challenge for a speechwriter. "I think we should go negotiate with the holocaust-denying, Israel-hating, demonstrator-murdering dictator of Iran, because it's really good for us, it'd be a nice thing to do!"

Hoge:

You left out woman-stoning –

Kinzer: Okay, there we go! There's plenty of good adjectives! So it's a hard one to sell. It leads me to think this. People have suggested that the problem for the peace process in the Middle East in general is that as long as the United States is the lead actor, it's always going to be hostage to the vicissitudes of American politics. This opens up to me the question of whether there isn't a bigger role for something that used to exist, although I haven't read much about it lately, the European Union.

Could Europe, as, for example, Norway did earlier on in this process, in one of the few pieces of the process that actually produced a result, be the force that produces, first of all, growing understanding of what the Arab peace plan was, maybe even try to push the Palestinians together so that Israel has a real negotiating partner who represents the Palestinian people. It's not clear to me that an American President is ever going to be able to do this, and people have tried to pick apart my argument in various ways, and one way that they've picked it apart that I think I can kind of sympathize with is they say, "In order to do this, you have to have an American President behind it." It couldn't, something like this could not be done at a lower level. And we don't have the ability, because of the way American politics works for an American President to make this breakthrough. I'd like to think that may not be true forever, but the possibility of somebody else picking up that ball also might still be out there.

Hoge: By the way, full disclosure, I have to tell you, I did not tell Stephen ahead of time that the President of IPI was the critical person in the Oslo peace process in Norway in 1993, but that happens to be true. He is not here tonight to hear you say those praiseworthy things.

Kinzer: I found it out secretly, yeah!

Hoge: Turkey and Israel. I went to Turkey, thanks to Stephen Kinzer, in the summer of 2003 when I was still living in London. I took my family to Turkey, and we made a boat trip, and the boat owner and the boat skipper was somebody who Stephen put me in touch with, and so many impressions, but one of the impressions about that that really caught me by surprise was each night, when we would put in at a port, boats would come in by the side of us, and the majority of those boats on either side were flying Israeli flags. It's a stunning sight to see in a Muslim country, but it's testament to the relationship there, which is so important to Israel.

And my question is, how damaged is that relationship now in the aftermath, first of Gaza, and then in an ancillary fashion, of the flotilla? Erdoğan has said some very angry things. I know from talking to Israeli diplomats here, the Israelis and the Turks are speaking the way countries do at the UN in the corridors and behind scenes in a more helpful manner, but do you have an impression as to whether that relationship is going to survive? It's so important to the peace process and to Israel itself.

Kinzer: You're absolutely right that Turkey and Israel have had very good relations over many decades, and actually, Turkey and Iran had very good relations up until the time the Shah was overthrown. That's another way that Turkey and Iran differ from the Arab Middle East. You're right, of course, that Turkey and Israel have had some friction in recent months, to put it mildly. But I don't think this is part of a deep-seated anti-Israel feeling in Turkey. I think, my sense of it, and I travel to Turkey pretty regularly, is that a lot of it has to do specifically with Gaza.

You have to understand, Gaza might as well be on Mars for us, but these people in Turkey are watching TV clips from Gaza every day. Every abuse is played over and over. They have rubbed the Turkish emotions raw. And I'm sure this is true in the rest of the Muslim Middle East also. There's an intense anger and resentment in Turkey of specifically about what's been going on in Gaza. You remember when Prime Minister Erdoğan had his blow-up at Davos with the Israeli president. What they were arguing about was exactly Gaza.

The Turks felt quite betrayed, because they were in the middle of brokering a deal between Israel and Syria, and then one day, Erdoğan wakes up, and he finds out that this Gaza thing has happened. So I think that really intensified emotions. Naturally, the killing of Turks on the high seas was something that, in any country, would set off tremendous emotions, but I hope Turkey doesn't learn a bad lesson from us American friends, and that is make your foreign policy based on emotion.

I agree with you. Erdoğan has been a little bit intemperate in some of his public statements. He's probably gained a lot of prestige in Turkey and a lot of prestige throughout the Muslim Middle East because of that. Actually, the time that he came home from Davos is the only time I think I've ever heard of spontaneously thousands of Turks showing up at the airport to greet Erdoğan. I've never heard of that happening any other time before.

Nonetheless, Turkey's greatest interest in the Middle East is America's greatest interest, which is stability. That's why I favor reconciliation with Iran, because any policy that is going to help stabilize the Middle East is in the long run good for Israel, even if it's a policy that Israel's leaders of a particular moment might not support. So I would, my hope is that the -- and I think you're quite right that the Turks and Israelis, the relationship has not really been blown up yet; there's a lot of business still going on on both sides, and there's a lot of diplomacy being conducted, so it hasn't been a real break.

Nonetheless, Turkey wants a stable Middle East. There's not going to be a stable Middle East without some resolution of the Israel-Palestine issue. At some point, Israel is going to need a bridge out of its isolation, a Muslim partner that it can work with. Turkey is the only country that can play that role, and if Turkey responds to its emotions by getting really angry at Israel and doing to Israel what we do to Iran, pushing it into a corner and denouncing it all the time, it removes that bridge that is essential to future peace.

So if Turkey cannot contain its emotions about Israel, it's going to hurt itself, and I think there's a lot of understanding of this in governing circles in Turkey now. I think you've got both of these things, both of these forces waging war against each other. The emotion, which is very intense now, and the realization that for Turkey to play its big role, the Turkey-Israel relationship has to remain strong.

Bear in mind, if I could just add this parenthetically, Turkey is now the 16th biggest economy in the world. It is the mantra of Erdoğan that he uses in almost every speech, "I will make Turkey one of the ten biggest economies in the world." That's sort of the unifying theme of everything he does: make Turkey one of the world's ten biggest economies. If there's upheaval and violence in the Middle East, that's never going to happen, and I think Erdoğan is aware of this. So I don't think that relationship has strayed to the breaking point, and I very much hope that it will be rebuilt, because that is in the interests of both countries, and there's no other relationship in the Middle East that can replace it.

Hoge: One last question, and then we're going to go to the floor. Obviously, Turks feel snubbed by the reaction in Europe -- by the way, the United States, I think, is on the right side of that one, always trying to persuade the Europeans to accept the Turks. I ran across a figure that is interesting that Turkey's per capita income has roughly tripled since 2002, and Turkey right now is closer to fulfilling the requirements for adopting the Euro than many of the European countries --

Kinzer: - that already have the Euro! That's right!

Hoge: So my last question to you is, is joining the European Union still this gigantic ambition of Turkey? Has Turkey been, are they miffed, do they feel rejected and snubbed? Is that one reason why they're looking East now and not West anymore? What do you see of the future of that particular movement? Because it seems to have lost some of its intensity.

Kinzer: Well, there's two aspects to that, as you point out. One is, what's happened up to now? I think you're right that miffed would be a nice word to put it. Essentially, the Europeans have slammed the door in Turkey's face, for reasons that I think have partly to do with Turkey, but have partly to do with Europe.

Really, Europe is very moribund, and Europe is filled with a deep identity crisis. Europe doesn't know what it is or where it wants to go or what it wants to be, and they're plagued by increasing social divisions. Meanwhile, Turkey is young and vibrant and dynamic.

It didn't really show up in the news, but a huge event happened in Turkey just on Sunday. By an overwhelming vote, Turks adopted major sweeping reforms to their constitution that are going to reduce the role of the military and strengthen democracy there. No country has ever been admitted into the EU with a military-imposed constitution. Spain, Portugal, Greece, they all had to change their constitutions. So Turkey is on the way.

Now, if Europe had behaved differently, would Turkey now be off on this whole swing of trying to become a big Middle Eastern power? Maybe not. Maybe Turkey would be devoting its geopolitical energy to anchoring itself in the European project. But that didn't happen.

Now, as to the future. I do think that it is a long-term goal of Turkey. The number of people in Turkey who place it as a priority has now slipped below 50%, according to public opinion polls, and Turks are emotional people, but I think anybody would react this way. It's like, when I was single, I used to have a rule. After a girl would tell me three times that she was busy, I wouldn't call anymore. I got the message. I think Turkey's somewhat in this position now.

And many people in Turkey will now answer that question by saying, what do we need them for? We're doing so much better than they are, why should we drag ourselves down to their level? In 2023, Turkey, the Turkish republic will be 100 years old. If you want to place a semi-realistic goal on Turkish membership in the EU, I would say maybe 2023 would be a good starting point.

Hoge: You tell good stories in the book. Before we go to the floor, I just want to make you tell one quick one now, and that is about the flight from Tehran to Istanbul, the behavior of the women on the flight. Just tell that one, and we'll go to the floor.

Kinzer: You know, Turkey is the only country in the world -- although Malaysia has now joined -- where Iranians can go without a visa. So the only country nearby Iran where an Iranian can go without a visa, it's Turkey. So naturally, there's a lot of traffic that way. And actually, this is yet another way, President Abdullah Gül told this to me, too, just by the fact that everybody in the Arab world and the Iranians are coming to visit us, and they're looking around, that has an effect. They go home and say, why can't we have this? So Iranian tourism in Turkey is very big.

And the first time that I made the flight back from Tehran to Istanbul, I had a remarkable experience, and now I've seen this repeated several times. You get on the plane, of course, you're in Tehran, and the women particularly in the airport look the same way the women look everywhere else in Iran. You go out of the exit door, over which there is a sign that says "This revolution is not recognized anywhere in the world without the name of Imam Khomeini! Have a nice trip!" I didn't get the connection there, but anyway, you go through, and then when you get on the plane, and it's the middle of the night. These planes are leaving about, like, 2:00 in the morning to go westward in order to catch the connections.

So I'm getting tired, and I'm starting to notice that there's a line for the bathroom. There often is in the plane, but this one was unusually long. You've got 8-10 women waiting in line, but I didn't really think anything of it. And then a little while later, I'm waking up, and I see one woman coming out of the lavatory, and she's got like a halter top and tight shorts on. And I'm realizing, and she's *carrying* her chador! And then I'm realizing what's happening. It's like that phone booth with Superman. You go in as a veiled, chadored Iranian woman, like Iranian women look in Iran, and you come out looking super hot like all those *Vogue* magazines that they smuggle in under the suitcase bottoms! So that really showed me what's beating, how strongly that heart is beating underneath that chador.

Hoge: Ann, Phillips.

Ann, Phillips: Good evening. Welcome to IPI --

Hoge: Just wait for the microphone, Anne, please.

Phillips: Oh, sorry. Well, I will repeat my welcome to you! My name is Anne Phillips. I'm on the board of the International Peace Institute, and I don't know how to use a microphone, obviously! I was fascinated with your presentation, and I thank you very much. I look forward to reading your book. I have two questions, if I may --

Kinzer: Please.

Phillips: The first is, I would like to know your, what you, the election that was held in the last few days in Turkey altered how they choose their judiciary, and there's a great deal of apprehension about that, because some are fearful that it will diminish the military, which has been a means of maintaining the secular aspect of Turkey, and also that it will enhance the possibility of having Sharia in Turkey. So my first question is, what do you portend for the future of democracy as a result of this election? My second question, if you will indulge me, is, you spoke about having Iraq be part of the resolution --

Kinzer: Iran.

Phillips: I mean, Iran, I beg your pardon, with Iraq, that it would help to stabilize Iraq, that they are apprehensive, or I don't remember the adjective you used, that they are

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fearful of terrorism the way we are. Now one of the biggest unintended consequences of our going into Iraq was to enhance the power of Iran and make them a much more fearful power than they were before, and as I understand it, they are suppliers of Hezbollah and Hamas or terrorists, so this business about them being so apprehensive about terrorism, I don't know. They may not like Al-Qaeda, but they certainly are supportive of terrorists, and they are very much feared by the rest of the neighborhood, if you will, the Middle East. So is that really wise to enhance their power even more by making them a part of the resolution?

Kinzer:

Very good. Two very good questions. First of all, let me talk about the Turkey referendum. The referendum covered 26 different constitutional amendments, but the key ones are the ones that you referred to. They have to do with the judiciary.

The judiciary in Turkey has traditionally been the means by which the military controls civilian politics. That's how they close down political parties. If they don't like what a political party believes, the party gets closed down by the court. Or, if they don't like what some politician says, they can throw him out of office and throw him into jail. Actually Tayyip Erdoğan, the current Prime Minister, is a former prisoner, because one of these courts sent him to jail because he read a poem that was misinterpreted, or maybe was correctly interpreted, but anyway, he himself has been a victim of this, and the prosecutors are part of the system also, judges and prosecutors. Under the new agreement, I'm sorry, under the new amendments, the number of judges on the constitutional court will be increased, and parliament will have the ability to name some of them. And Erdoğan is now, his block is now the dominant force in parliament.

Now is this going to diminish the role of the military? Certainly. There's no doubt about that. That's the point. But will it also have the effect of diminishing democracy and leaving open the door to more religious society? This, I think, is a great concern in Turkey. I wrote a column in the Guardian about a week ago encouraging, saying that these referendum questions were positive, and that Turks should vote for them. I got a lot of emails from my secularist friends and Turkey that didn't like that column. There's, during this campaign, Turkey became even more polarized. Erdoğan did not behave himself very well. He got too emotional again. He started threatening the people that were against it and insulting leaders of the opposition. He did not convey the sense of democratic politics that he said these referendum questions were all about. In other words, in promoting a referendum package that he claims, only going to intensify democracy, didn't seem to be doing it in a very democratic way.

Now these amendments could be used to increase the power of the presidency. Erdoğan may then seek the presidency. Would that result in a broad, in a larger role for religion in public life in Turkey? I'd say not necessarily, but Erdoğan has not done enough to reassure people that that's not going to happen. This, I see, is his challenge now. He made a wonderfully conciliatory speech on the night of the election, on Sunday. But now it's time to translate that into action. Many people in Turkey are terrified that they're on the way towards a more religious society. You've had the most opposite of that.

Don't forget that, really, it's been illegal for 80 years to express your religious belief in Turkey. You cannot really be openly religious in Turkey. So now, people are just expressing their beliefs as they wish, but in Turkish terms, this is quite dramatic and shocking. Erdoğan needs to calm down the minority. I think he's done a great job of bringing the majority of Turks to power, but he hasn't

always realized that democracy is not just about majority. You have to guarantee everybody's rights. So I think he's got a big test ahead.

As to your other question about Iran sponsoring violence in Iraq, that's definitely true. Iran is a sponsor of Hezbollah in particular, Hamas to a certain degree also, but in particular, talking about Iraq, they have been the sponsors of some of the principal anti-American violence there. In fact, the principal anti-American militia there, the Mahdi army run by Muqtada al-Sadr, is almost directly, I wouldn't say under their control, but Muqtada al-Sadr actually lives in Iran! He's the head of this Iraqi militia. And let me tell you that many of Iraq's leaders lived in Iran all those years during the Saddam dictatorship. You are absolutely right. By overthrowing Saddam, we essentially handed that country over to Iran!

Now if we negotiate with Iran for more stability after we leave in Iraq, Iran would be able, maybe to achieve that. But would we also be increasing their power? Would we be handing them some authority over Iraq? Yes. I regret this, but I see it as an acceptance of reality. If you look at a map of the Middle East, Iran is the big country right in the middle! You cannot get anything done without them. We may have to compromise and not get everything we would want out of Iraq if Iran is going to have influence there. But trying to create an Iraq free of Iranian influence is a non-starter. It's never going to happen. It would probably be better, but that's not going to happen. And I'm really a hyperrealist in world affairs. I see Iran as a country that is going to have influence in Iraq, and the question is, are we going to accept this in a way that can stabilize Iraq and help us get out, or are we going to fight it because it will leave some influence by a country we don't like? I think that's a decision we still have to make.

Hoge: I saw other hands. Please, in the front row here. If you would identify yourself, please.

Levent Gümrükçü: Sure. Levent Gümrükçü, from the Turkish mission to the U.N. Thank you so much for this event. If reading your book is as fun as listening to you, I think it's going to be a bestseller everywhere! Definitely in Turkey, but everywhere!

Kinzer: They're publishing it in Turkey.

Gumrukcu: In Turkish, or in English?

Kinzer: In Turkish.

Gümrükçü: Wonderful! In fact, I had in my mind most of what you said, and really didn't leave much for me to say, and you said it much more elaborately than I did, and I'm not saying this only for Turkey as a Turkish diplomat, but I mean, as a Turkish diplomat who stayed in Iran for two years between '96-'98. I agree with much of what you said about Iran, about the dynamism of the society, about the democratic aspirations of the people and everything, so I think you have it right there as well.

But I have two questions about the name of the book, and also what you said in response to one of the questions by Mr. Hoge. I think *Reset* for both Iran and Turkey does not really capture the nature of the relationship between these two countries and America. Indeed, there is a reset needed maybe between Iran and America. But between Turkey and America, I think it's more re-energizing the relationship. It's more, better recognizing and knowing each other and what we bring into this relationship, especially the added value that Turkey brings into this

relationship in our part of the world with our emerging soft power and newly-found status in the world.

So I think, this is a challenge, maybe, because I mean, you're right. In every part of the world, in every country, the foreign policy establishments are really somehow fraught with some constructs, with ridges. So I think it's really difficult for us, for diplomats, to come out of the box and to think out of the box. But I think between Turkey and America, there's a big potential if we see that, I mean, despite some difference of tactics, time to time, we had, we had the ultimate strategic objectives, and we have so much to complement each other, so that's definitely that.

The second thing is, I mean, whether Turkey reached out to the Middle East, and now becoming more and more active in that part of the world is because we are somehow rejected by the European Union, and it's kind of a revengist, or just seeking another way out. I don't think that is the case. I think this is very natural. Because, I mean, at the end of the Cold War, Turkey discovered those geographies around itself, and we also felt much more powerful because of our economy, because of our political stability, but because of our social and cultural attributes as well. So I think, I think it was just natural that Turkey started reaching out and finding, and finding a good response back from those countries as well. So of course, I mean, the European Union have somewhat, not performed well in its relationship with Turkey, and it's not doing well as well, but I think, I think it's not really this or that kind of a zero-sum game, and my question would be rather, I mean, I could be wrong, but I mean, what do you think, between Turkey and the United States, is going to be the issues that will take us to where I just put out? I mean, that new kind of relationship? Iraq and Afghanistan are the two areas where we are already cooperating well, but I mean, can Iran also be one of those areas that Turkey and U.S. can learn to cooperate better and for the joint good? Thank you.

Kinzer:

Well, thank you. When I talk about reset, I'm really talking more about a reset of mindset from the United States point of view. We've got to reset the way we look at the world, and particularly the way we reset this part of the world. And you know, you've seen it in your own foreign ministry. I can remember when Tansu Çiller was foreign minister. Now you have Ahmet Davutoğlu, so you've had quite a leap! Hyperion to a satyr! So that, those kinds of changes can happen. I didn't mean to suggest that Turkey had to make a choice between turning towards Europe or turning towards its own region.

You're absolutely right that, with the Cold War, everything changed for Turkey. During the Cold War, Turkey was way off on the edge of everything. It was off on the edge of Europe, and it was sort of near the Middle East and kind of next to the Balkans and close to the Slavic World and near North Africa, but it wasn't really *in* anything. Once the artificial boundaries of the Cold War evaporated, Turks looked around and found themselves right in the middle of everything, which is where Anatolia has been ever since the Trojan War, long before the Turks got there! So it is a natural that Turkey would be taking this interest in that part of the world, given what Turkey is and what Turkey has been.

Nonetheless, I do think that Turkey would be behaving differently if it felt more need to cooperate in security matters with Europe. For example, the Turkey-Brazil deal with Iran. I don't think Turkey would have gone off and done that on its own with Brazil if Turkey were anchored in the European Security Project.

And that brings me to your final question, what role could Turkey play? I've been a little bit troubled and somewhat startled to notice that since the Gaza flotilla episode, there's been kind of a mini project by neocons in Washington to denounce Turkey. Turkey's now our frenemy. Turkey has flipped. Turkey's on the other side. It's Turkey and Iran now against us. This, you never heard this before. This is a new little project going on, and it's having, in the little, certain little echo chambers in Washington, it's having a little resonance.

Hoge: You did hear it when Turkey would not allow us to invade Iraq –

Kinzer: That was the beginning! 2003. Here, we spent so many years telling Turkey, "You're so military dominated! Why don't you become more democratic?" The very first time they *really* had a democratic election, and their first democratic, *real* democratic parliament had its first big vote, and it was whether to allow the U.S. to invade Iraq from Turkish territory, and they voted no! And we were very upset with this, and we wanted them to be democratic, but not at *this* moment! We wanted to know how come the generals hadn't stepped in and done what they've always done for us in the past! That was a little bit frustrating, and then we had one leading American official complain on television that we were disappointed that the Turkish generals didn't step up and play the role we hoped they'd play. In other words, overthrow the government or demand that the parliament overlook people's will.

Turkey is playing a positive role in Iraq and a positive role in Afghanistan where they have actually headed the security force for part of the time we've been there. Nonetheless, I think Turkey needs America to recognize that Turkey can be more of a partner. I think Turkey's at the upper limit of what it can do with the U.S. until the U.S. develops a new idea of what Turkey can be and what Turkey can do. One thing that I think the world would be interested to see from Turkey would be some original approach to repairing the relationship with Israel. Turkey made its point. Everybody understands what Turkey suffered and what Turkey believes. It's time to move on past that, and I think one thing that would further increase the global respect for Turkey would be for Turkey to act in a mature way towards Israel now and realize that putting our emotions aside, the Turkey-Israel relationship is very important, and this is something we can do, which will be good for us, good for Israel, and good for the United States.

Hoge: Okay, last question in the back.

Haider Rizvi: My name is Haider Rizvi I write for many publications, but on a regular basis, I write for the Interpress Service at the United Nations. Warren knows me perhaps. Sir, I read your books, and I loved your work on Iran, *All the Shah's Men*. Do you think, this is the question, and I will be very brief. Do you think, what you are talking to us right now, people in Washington D.C. at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue would take it seriously? That's it.

Kinzer: I'm actually not able to answer that question any better than anyone else in this room, but I finish by telling you this story. Just about 24 hours ago, I received an email from the Office of the National Intelligence Director saying that the National Intelligence Director in charge of Europe, and some of the people around him have been passing my book around, and will I be interested in coming to Washington to discuss some of the ideas that are in the book.

Now one of my friends told me, "This is a trap! Don't do it!" But I think I might take them up on it, and I don't know where it will lead, but I would say this. It goes back to what this White House guy told me a few weeks ago. There's a

wide understanding that we're not getting anywhere in the Middle East this way. And I think there's a growing appreciation that this is not a frozen conflict that we'd like to solve, but if it doesn't solve, it's not so bad like Nagorno-Karabakh or Cyprus, those are not going to blow up the world if we don't solve them. This Middle East crisis is intensifying. It is spreading hatred, violence, resentment. Seeds of terror are being sown every day in that part of the world. It's urgent! We need to do something different. We can't just lean back anymore, and I hope that that urgency maybe was part of what was behind them, somebody sending me a crazy email like that.

Hoge: Stephen, I hope they listen to you in Washington. We've listened to you here. Thank you very, very much!

Kinzer: Great to be here! Thank you, Warren!