

**ORSAM MINUTES OF THE MEETING, No: 12,  
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# **FULL TEXT OF THE TURKEY-BELARUS ROUNDTABLE ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS AND THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY**

**BELARUS CUMHURİYETİ VE TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYETİ  
ARASINDA DİPLOMATİK İLİŞKİLERİN KURULMASININ 20. YILI  
MÜNASEBETİYLE DÜZENLENEN TÜRKİYE-BELARUS YUVARLAK  
MASA TOPLANTISININ TAM METNİ**

**النص الكامل لإجتماع المائدة المستديرة التي ضمت تركيا وروسيا البيضاء  
المنعقد بمناسبة الذكرى السنوية العشرينية لإقامة العلاقات الدبلوماسية  
بين جمهورية روسيا البيضاء والجمهورية التركية**

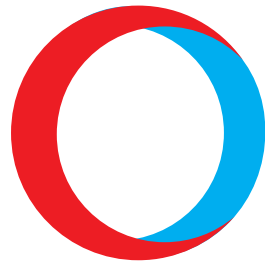
**ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ  
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES**

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## CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES

### **History**

*In Turkey, the shortage of research on the Middle East grew more conspicuous than ever during the early 90's. Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM) was established in January 1, 2009 in order to provide relevant information to the general public and to the foreign policy community. The institute underwent an intensive structuring process, beginning to concentrate exclusively on Middle Eastern affairs.*

### **Outlook on the Middle Eastern World**

*It is certain that the Middle East harbors a variety of interconnected problems. However, neither the Middle East nor its people ought to be stigmatized by images with negative connotations. Given the strength of their populations, Middle Eastern states possess the potential to activate their inner dynamics in order to begin peaceful mobilizations for development. Respect for people's willingness to live together, respect for the sovereign right of states and respect for basic human rights and individual freedoms are the prerequisites for assuring peace and tranquility, both domestically and internationally. In this context, Turkey must continue to make constructive contributions to the establishment of regional stability and prosperity in its vicinity.*

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*ORSAM provides the general public and decision-making organizations with enlightening information about international politics in order to promote a healthier understanding of international policy issues and to help them to adopt appropriate positions. In order to present effective solutions, ORSAM supports high quality research by intellectuals and researchers that are competent in a variety of disciplines. ORSAM's strong publishing capacity transmits meticulous analyses of regional developments and trends to the relevant parties. With its website, books, reports, and periodicals, ORSAM supports the development of Middle Eastern literature on a national and international scale. ORSAM facilitates the sharing of knowledge and ideas with the Turkish and international communities by inviting statesmen, bureaucrats, academicians, strategists, businessmen, journalists, and NGO representatives to Turkey.*

\* ORSAM is a member of the The Middle East Studies Association (MESA).



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بين جمهورية روسيا البيضاء والجمهورية التركية

6 March 2012, Bilkent University-Ankara

Organized by  
Bilkent University Department of International Relations Center for Russian Studies  
The Embassy of the Republic of Belarus in Ankara  
Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM)

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## Opening Remarks

Valery Kolesnik  
The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the  
Republic of Belarus to the Republic of Turkey

Prof. Dr. Vladimir Klyunya,  
Vice Rector of the Belarusian State University

## Presentations (Surname Order)

Vis. Prof. Mark Almond  
Bilkent University

Dr. İlyas Kamalov  
Turkish Historical Society

Hasan Kanbolat  
Director of ORSAM

Dr. Hasan Ali Karasar  
Bilkent University

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hakan Kırımlı  
Bilkent University

Prof. Dr. Vladimir Klyunya  
Vice Rector of the Belarusian State University

Nadezhda Kunets  
Head of Department of International Marketing

Asst. Prof. Dr. Sean McMeekin  
Bilkent University

Prof. Dr. Viktor Shadursky  
Dean of International Relations Department,  
Belarusian State University

Prof. Norman Stone  
Bilkent University

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Oktay Tanrısever  
Middle East Technical University

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Taşansu Türker  
Ankara University





## HASAN ALİ KARASAR:

First of all thanks for coming. We have only Dr. Kamalov, who is not able to come. Prof. Kırımli is joining us in fifty minutes. It is my pleasure to host our guests from Belorussian State University, Prof. Klyunya, Prof. Shadursky, Mrs. Kunets. Actually, almost five years ago, we had another Belorussian event here. We had a great exhibition in the library of pictures and books from Belarus, during which the Embassy of Belarus donated quite a number of books printed in Belarus to our library. If you go to our library you can find books in Belorussian language as well. Three of our guests have come from Belarus to join us for this event. His Excellency, Ambassador is here to make the opening remarks and this organization is realized thanks to the support of the Belorussian Embassy in Ankara, ORSAM (Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies, and the Center for Russian Studies, which is active now for more than ten years. Although we do follow a low profile, our organizations are always high quality in all respects. I would like to pass the floor to His Excellency for opening remarks.

## VALERY KOLESNIK:

Thank you very much. Before we start, I would like to thank all of the people, who are here round this table, and deliver special thanks to Dr. Hasan Ali Karasar for his input to prepare this event. We might know that Belarus and Turkey will also celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations this year. I would like to underline that Turkey was among the first countries, who recognized independent Belarus in 1991. For these period, the two countries have been developing their relations. A solid basis has been created. For twenty years, we signed more than thirty agreements. These documents were in different fields, political, economic, military, humanitarian, scientific and cultural. We also created effective partnership mechanisms among them, the Joint Economic Commission, other political and economic bodies, working groups in different fields, also in science, transportation, culture, and tourism. In 2011, by an agreement that is signed, Turkey and Belarus expanded its diplomatic relations and we opened a consulate-general in Istanbul. To be very short,





I would also like to draw attention to the economic relations. Our trade developed in recent years. For instance, our trade in 2004 has increased seven times and reached four hundred forty seven million US dollars. Our export to Turkey was one hundred and twenty nine million US dollars and Turkish exports to Belarus is more than three hundred million US dollars. Turkish investment in the economy of Belarus also shows positive dynamic. Only in 2011, investment exceeded thirty million US dollars. The number of Belarusian and Turkish citizens visiting our countries is increasing every year. For the last few years, the number of Belarusians visiting Turkey increased up to one hundred and fifty thousand. The figures from Turkey is not so important, but also exceeded ten thousand. In my opinion we have reached a lot in all fields of common interest. Today, we have an opportunity to discuss the history of bilateral relations among our states as well as to outline future perspectives. Following the presentations, the floor is open to pose questions. I encourage all of you to engage in open discussion. Thank you.

### **HASAN ALİ KARASAR:**

Thank you very much your excellency, I would like to pass the floor to Prof. Vladimir Klyunya, the Vice Rector of the Belarusian State University.

### **VLADIMIR KLYUNYA:**

Ladies and Gentlemen. Greetings in the name of the Belarusian State University. Thanks for the invitation to participate in this roundtable. Our university is the best in the post-Soviet Union. The most intellectual people are educated here. More than seventy thousand students study in different specialities in our university. More than fifty three specialities are chosen by our young people and they are happy. These are human sciences and natural sciences. Last autumn, we celebrated our ninetieth anniversary. More than two thousand foreign students are taught in our university. We have bilateral agreements with more than two hundred universities in more than fifty countries. We have some material in our university. You can have some of those materials in



the table if you like. You will get all information you need in these brochures. You are welcome in our university.

### **HASAN ALİ KARASAR:**

Thank you very much. Actually I have an interesting experience in Central Asia, in Kazakhstan last year. I was in a roundtable and three Kazakhs that were attending the roundtable were graduates from the Belarusian State University. They were very proud of that. I've seen something similar in Ankara University, the Faculty of Political Science. There was a solidarity between them different than being at the same school. There was a different relationship between them. Thank you very much. Actually, the Ambassador of Uzbekistan has just joined us. Would you like to say a few words? Just listen? OK, thank you for coming this early morning.

### **ÜLFET KADIROV:**

I would like to thank the Belarus Embassy. I believe that meetings such as this have benefits, not any harms at

all. This is important. We need to have dialogue. We always should have dialogue. That's how we get to know each other. I want to thank Turkey that I and the Belarusian Ambassador, because we both have been working here in Turkey for a few years comfortably. The Turkish diplomacy extends back to a thousand years. The Turkish diplomacy is experienced. I believe that the future of Turkey is brilliant. I hope we will all carry on as brothers. This is my perspective. I believe that Belarus thinks the same. I extend my gratitude once again. I believe that this meeting will be beneficial. I hope there will be a meeting like this between Turkey and Uzbekistan. I congratulate these beautiful people from Belarus here in this meeting. Thank you.

### **HASAN ALİ KARASAR:**

Thank you, your Excellency. I would like to start with my presentation first in the absence of Dr. Kamalov. My presentation is going to be about my election observation experience, especially in Belarus. I've been working as a semi-professional in election observations in several different





countries. My last mission was in the Russian Federation in Vladivostok. For the last fifteen years, I have done more than twenty five election observation missions all over the former Soviet Republics. Actually, in these days, when there is a lot of debate is going on between Belarus and the EU, I would like to share with you my election observations in Belarus in two different missions. The first mission, I was in the countryside of Belarus. I had experienced the real countryside of Belarus in the southern city in the Ukrainian border called Mozyr on the Pripyats River. Actually, when you go to the countryside of Belarus, you feel two different things. The first thing you feel, that might be the Soviet Union at its happiest time, probably the best times of the Brejnev years. The most important thing is that it is a working system. Kolhoz is working, agriculture is superb. It is a functional economy. There is no poverty in the countryside. Of course, I don't want to draw a picture of heaven in that respect. It is the reality that Belarus had achieved something that the other former Soviet Union countries had failed to achieve actually. It was suc-

cessful in keeping the socio-economic system in the countryside intact and working. From the history books, I remember the creation of the Kolhoz system after collectivization. They were all formed as private companies. Actually they are the real private companies right now in Belarus. They do function as private companies, different than all other privatization projects in the rest of the Soviet Union. I think Belarus has done quite a good job in keeping the countryside much above the poverty lines and as a functioning economy. The second thing, when you go to the countryside Belarus, is that, especially Mozyr, it doesn't look like a real countryside. Some of it is industrialized, there is a working class. There is a medium class in the cities and in the towns, even in the remotest villages. You have a cultured strate of people all around. In Mozyr, actually one of the most interesting things I had experienced was the still going on because I have been on the other side of the border in the Ukrainian city of Chernygiv. It is very close to Chernobyl. People still suffer from the Chernobyl radiation. On the other side of the border, in Belarus, usually



we don't know much about how Belarus suffered from Chernobyl, but in Mozyr, you go to forest, you pick up some mushrooms, still there are centers you need to go and measure the rate of radiation in these baskets of mushrooms and the suffering for the last twenty five years from the Chernobyl event. About the OSCE election observation mission, within all five missions I have achieved, the OSCE and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights usually come to the missions with pre-prepared reports. So, whatever you observe in the country, you cannot change things. For example, in the lastest elections, were were like four hundred people in Belarus, in all different places. I know many of them from the previous election observations. At the end of the election, we get together for a couple of drinks and we do exchanges of our experiences in th countryside and cities. As a result, usually, especially in the Belarusian case, in the last elections a year ago, we said everything was ok in Minsk, in the countryside, there were few irregularities just like in all elections. We were not expecting a very harsh report from the OSCE. Suddenly in the press conference, the OSCE had put up a report to the table and almost more than half of the observer, who worked on the ground protested, because they haven't seen such irregularities on the ground. We have seen other things in our election observation experience in Belarus. For example, in a little bit more than a year ago, I was in Minsk. Suddenly we have received a telephone call from our OSCE bosses. They told us to go to a particular station, where there were some problems. We went

there in fifteen minutes. We were amazed at what was happening in this particular station. The members of the station were trying to sort out the votes and count, etc. There was a very small, 7-8 person, militant group. They were basically sabotaging and stopping the working of the poll station. They were protesting. They were filming. They were doing everything possible to make a big chaos out of that. I approached them and asked them why they are doing that. They said the usual stuff: "They are not letting us see the votes", but the members of the station were very cooperative with the international observers. They were cooperative with the local observers. But these guys were not local observers. They didn't have necessary accreditation to enter and monitor the procedures of vote counting. They were so militant and were attacking basically. They were filming everything. They were filming us as well: "Look at these international observers, they are keeping silent to the irregularities". Of course we felt very embarrassed in that respect. however, the very night, just like something happening in Russia right now, in the very night of the election, in the central squares of Minsk, there were few protests and clashes with the police. Although it was forbidden for the international observers to go and observe that I went there as usual, because there was a story. We have seen basically again a very small but very determined group, trying to trigger a bigger event in the streets, as it has been in at least two other former Soviet countries, Ukraine and Georgia. But they were not able to do so. They lacked the social base for

that. They lacked enough votes. They lacked enough number of people supporting. They lacked the support of the people walking on the side streets. As a result, let me conclude by saying that Belarus is different, from my perspective, I've been there only twice as an election observer and once more, so in total three times, when compared with other former Soviet countries, it is quite different with its social dynamics, and its strategic and geographical location between Russia or the Grand Eurasian landmass and the European Union. It has got quite difficult neighbors as we all know. I think, Belarus, if it continues as stable as this for quite a while, will be an important third way, let me say, as an example among the all other former Soviet republics. Of course, if you would like to ask questions about my election observation missions and my experience in Belarus, I'd be more than happy to answer. I would like to pass the floor to one of our guest, Prof. Victor Shadursky, the Dean of the International Relations Department of the Belorussian State University. He will have a short presentation for us. Thank you.

### **VICTOR SHADURSKY:**

Thank you for the invitation and opportunity to present our approach to the evolution of Belarusian-Turkish relations during two past decades. I will give you some pictures of the history of Belarusian-Turkish relations. I will give you a general approach to that. As our Ambassador told that Turkey was the first state to recognize the independence of Belarus in 1991. Why the recognition of the independence of Belarus among the former

Soviet countries was important for Turkey? We know the recognition on September 23, 1991, meant that Turkey was carefully following the situation in the former Soviet Union and aimed to strengthen its presence in this vast region. On March 25<sup>th</sup>, the two states established diplomatic relations. Despite differences in cultural, religious traditions, and significant geographical distance, the Belarusian-Turkish relations developed in an ascended line. The history of relations between the two countries can be divided into three stages. We can discuss this classification. The first stage 1992-1995 is the establishment of the relations and direction of the cooperation between the two countries. The second stage is 1996, the resolution of the contradiction with Turkey through political dialogue and the expansion of the relations in the economic sphere. The third stage is from 2000 to present. Especially, political contacts and support of the international contact, and development of the economic relations were seen in this stage. In the first years of the establishment of diplomatic relations of the sides, we started looking for mutually beneficial spirit of cooperation. The initiative in establishment of relations was shown by Ankara, by opening a Turkish Embassy in April 1992. In 1992, the Chairman of the Turkish Parliament visited Belarus in July, and the Belarusian-Turkish Business Cooperation Council was created. We can frankly say the importance of the initial stage of diplomatic relations. At the end of 1992, two Turkish Embassy attachees were accused of activities incompatible with diplomatic status and were sent out of Belarus. The



Turkish side did not take accusations and considered the actions of Belarus to be unreasonable and unjust. The Turkish Government announced the cancellation of all visits to Belarus at the highest level and stopped the working of the bilateral agreements and suspended the loan of 100 million US dollars to Belarus, and the action of the Business Council. However, in 1995, the Belorussian-Turkish relations was normalized. The fact of normalization was founded by the visit of Foreign Minister of Turkey in Belarus in August 1995. The first in the history of Belorussian-Turkish relations, the official visit of Belorussian President to Turkey in July 1996 can be considered as a starting point of the second stage of bilateral relations. The main outcome of the visit was signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Belarus and Turkey in July 24, 1996. All these are very important for development of relations between countries. In accordance with the agreement, the Belorussian Embassy started working in Turkey on July 1997. However, you should also note that Belorussian-Turkish relations in the second half of the 1990s were not very stable. It was first of all due to the contradictions in the relations between Belarus and the EU and the USA. In 1997, the members of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey did not support the initiative to create a friendship commission in the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus. The ratification of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Belarus and Turkey was delayed. The beginning of the third stage is the significant improvement of the relations. It refers to the beginning of

the 2000s. In my opinion, this is connected with many political events including the preparation of the massive expansion of the EU. Despite the fact that Turkey had declared its desire to enter the EU, and aimed the follow the criteria for candidate countries, this process was delayed for an indefinite period. The changes in the political life of Turkey continued to search for new paths. In 2002, the Justice and Development Party won the Parliamentary Elections. Turkey is a responsible and active member of the international community in today's globalized world. It aims to play an effective role in all regions is south, north, east and west. Its central geographical location in Eurasia as well as its historical and cultural ties form a catalyst role for dialogue between cultures. Several qualifications of the foreign policy also took place in Belarus. In the second half of the 1990s, Belarus started a more active presence in the new regions, in the principle of multi-vector policy. In the beginning of the 2000s, this policy was getting stronger. The relations between the two countries in the new millennium were officially different from the previous decades. You can see the difference between the 1990s and 2000s. The Belorussian-Turkish dialogue between governments, parliaments and foreign ministers have become more intensive and have been characterized as smooth and friendly. Consultation of foreign ministers at the level of deputy ministers have become an important mechanism for bilateral cooperation. The most recent development in the relations happened in May 17<sup>th</sup> 2011. After consultation, the both sides adopted a



plan. This plan lays actions for the second half of 2011 and the first half of 2012. The two sides have consolidated the agreements on the developments of the relations between Belarus and Turkey in the field of mutual benefit. One of the important initiative was the mutual abolition of short terms visas for the citizens of the two countries. In the 2000s, the inter-parliamentary ties between the two countries started to develop. In April 2002, a group of friendship and cooperation with Belarus was founded in the Turkish Parliament. The members of the Belarusian Parliament formed the group for cooperation with the Turkish parliament. An important event in the recent years was the working visit to Turkey of the President of Belarus in October 2010. He came to Istanbul, where he met with the Turkish President and Prime Minister. Lukashenko said, "Belarus aims to reach the level of strategic partnership ." Researchers discussed what that means. Belarus is ready to promise for joint activities. The Belarusian President drew attention to the high level activities. Belarus and Turkey successfully interact not only at the highest level but also they interact in the sector of bilateral commissions. They have regular meetings. This is certainly very important for both countries. Significant place in the bilateral relations is taken by tourism. Turkey is the most important and the most famous country for Belarusian tourists. Some Turkish citizens visit Belarus, but not so many. It is about five thousand, I don't know the latest statistic. Due to the abolition of visas, tourism will take a good momentum. As a result of long term

cooperation, Belarus and Turkey has been able to create a well developed legal framework, forty bilateral agreements. Certainly this process is going forth. One of the examples for the Belarusian-Turkish relations is clearly noticeable from the way that stable political contacts transforming the effective economic ties. Certainly, the level is not so high, but it is going forward. We know that certainly our relations in the economic level will be very successful. In the present year, Turkish imports takes the fifteenth place in the trade of Belarus, and Belarus takes the eighty sixth place. It is not so high, but there is place for development. Turkey is one of the three countries in terms of investment in the economy of the Republic of Belarus. There are very recent examples. Turkish business participates very actively in construction of hotels and complexes. Certainly, Turkish presence in Belarus is very visible. Turkish visibility is very very high, because Turkish business participate. You see there are five star hotels are famous, and they are constructed by a Turkish business. Some short conclusions... First, multi-sided interactions between Belarus and Turkey in the political sphere remain highly dynamic and evolving at different levels. Many international issues show that the position of Turkey and Belarus are close. Second, Turkey enters Belarus because of growing political and economic weight in the region, and in Eurasia in general. A country that is more than nine million people is of interest to goods and services of the Turkish business. It is located on convenient routes from East to West and from South to North. Also, Belarus,



Russia and Kazakhstan are members of the Customs Union, which is very important for Turkish business. Third, an important factor is that the relations between the two countries are built mainly on pragmatic basis, free from ideological obstacles. The pragmatic basis is very productive for the relations between the two countries. Fourth, not so positive but it is reality. You know that Belarus is not a very well known country for the vast majority of the Turkish society. Belarus is often associated with Russia. We need maybe decades to restore that situation. The attitude of Belarusians towards Turkey is also not free from stereotypes frankly speaking. This is an echo of the era of wars between Russia and Turkey empires in the past, in which Belarusian natives also took part. There are some stereotypes, some comparison. Lastly, welcome to Belarus and thank you very much. We are ready to invite you to our country and our faculty to discuss all interesting topics for both sides. Thank you for your attention.

### **HASAN ALI KARASAR:**

Thank you very much Professor Shadursky for your very explanatory presentation. I should also add that, when I was in Minsk, a number of casinos are run by the Turks. I would like to pass the floor to Prof. Norman Stone, who is the chair of our Center.

### **NORMAN STONE:**

Thank you, I should perhaps begin by confessing that a long time ago I used to write speeches for Margaret Thatcher. Not many, but some... I

told her the European Union sometimes positive. I think its reaction to Turkey and to Belarus has been very strangely negative. I wondered how do we explain this. Belarus comes up as Hasan Ali said, it is a country that works. Its electricity, agricultural system work. Its education system has not collapsed. I've been very interested to hear this. It is possible to advance human rights in such a way that seriously damaged by it. the way the Europeans have been handling this is something, which damages Turkey and Belarus. Someone suggested that yesterday or the day before. It was Davutoglu I think. He hinted that Turkey might annex North Cyprus. Why not? It has existed for nearly forty years. How did the European Union get into this mess, doing damage. The Russians in Latvia are oppressed in any standard. Why does the EU speak up about it? I just feel all the way through the double standards. I will speak with some venom here. There is a certain human right for children for being protected from being made to learn useless languages. Scottish Gallic is a useful museum piece but no more than that. With the Copenhagen criteria, Scottish and Welsh is being artificially pumped up. It is like Jurassic Park. You take a fossil. You spend a hundred pounds and you create a monster. Why the EU let itself get into this state and what can be done for it? It affects Turkey of course very badly. For professional Turks, trying to get a visa for Western Europe is humiliation. I've often wondered whether the time has come when Turkey is seriously on the map again. It is time to start doing consulting to force the Western Europe to change their ways.

I'll end up with this. I know that in Lithuania, there is privatization of land. The Dutch, whose speciality has been since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, has been depriving the vegetables of taste, have taken over the Lithuanian agriculture and more or less ethnically cleansed the region.

### HASAN ALİ KARASAR:

I'd like to pass the floor to Assoc. Prof. Taşansu Türker from the Ankara University.

### TAŞANSU TÜRKER:

Mr. Ambassador, dear colleagues. First of all, I want to begin with similarities. It is a habit. We always begin with similarities between two countries when we are talking about the twentieth anniversary of founding of the diplomatic relations. But let me say that we cannot find so many similarities between Belarus and Turkey. Moreover, we have differences actually. Let me say, the Ottomans were not only a regional power, but with a Roman heritage, they were a universal power. Anatolian Turkish is the main body of the Turkic world. When we come closer, we can say that Turkish Republic was in the Western camp and it chose a capitalist development model, which created a national sovereign democracy and national sovereign self-sustainable economy. When we look at Belarus. It really has a very peaceful history. Belarus was never invaded. It didn't found empires. We cannot say that Belarus is bigger part of the Slavic world. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Belarus was in the socialist camp, it benefited from the planned economic

development of the Soviet Union. Those are all the differences. Like Hasan Ali just explained how well the Kolkhoz system is working in Belarus. Now it is a heritage of the Soviet Union. It was in last May I think, I was in Minsk and I was so surprised. Accidentally, I visited the defense industry fair in Minsk and it was very exciting. It was showing that Belarus had a new technology, which it used for production. It was really a big lesson for me about Belarus. What is more different is that Turkey is the member of the European Customs Union since 1994, and Belarus is a member new Customs Union with Russia and Kazakhstan since the beginning of this year. It means that there is another difference here. When we talk about Customs Unions, we see a similarity, because there is not a Eurasian Union yet, and Turkey is not a member of the European Union yet. But Belarus and Turkey are members of different Customs Unions. If you let me I will dare to ask some long scale questions about these customs unions. Those unions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, will be the models of a new world system in a way. It was like three or four months ago, again in Bilkent University, I was participating in a roundtable about Kazakhstan. At that roundtable I was asked to speak about a title "Is a new Eurasian Union emerging or not?". I cited a newspaper article, it was arguing about the future of Europe: "Will any sovereign states exist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?". He was very pessimistic: "Sovereignty is just given to Brussels, which is a pseudo-capital for Berlin, and democracy is given to the market mechanisms in the European Union". He was really doubtful about the democracy and sovereignty



in the European Union in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I cited because I needed to speak about the Eurasian Union. I don't think that there are so many big differences between the unions because 20<sup>th</sup> century was the model of nation states. When we look at the post-Soviet countries now, after 1990s, they chose a path, which was the model of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But now we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and new unions are emerging. Under these circumstances, what will be the future of Turkey and Belarus. We both are at the spheres of two unions. That should be argued. For Belarus, I don't want to say so many things. We have a minister for European Union relations. A few days ago our Minister for EU affairs said that "ok we are fed up with Cyprus debates and maybe Cyprus can be annexed to Turkey". It is weird. A very good friend of mine is one of the five important businessman in Turkey. He told me that, "We don't want the European Union because of economic needs, political or strategic needs, we want the EU for only one reason, the choice of civilization". So, two weeks ago I spoke with him and he said, "Maybe we should not talk about civilizations anymore." Norman Stone said, "If Turks wants so much to be a part of the EU, let us, the Brits, give our membership to them". I'm telling all those things because we have so many questions about the European Union. It is not about the EU in case. It is about the new century. It is about our ideological heritages.

It means that we believe national sovereign state which is a democracy and our model is liberal economic capitalist system and the national sovereign

state. But in 21 century we have questions about that. After the custom unions with Russia and Kazakhstan, I think that our Belarusian friends and academics should ask that what kind of Belarus identity can survive in 21 century. There will a sovereign state and there will be a chair in Brussels or there will be a new Belarus idol?

### **HASAN ALI KARASAR:**

Thank you Prof. Turker. Actually I feel a little bit weird because Turks, Russians, and Belarusians are talking about EU and you present a different approach for us. I would like to pass the floor to Prof. Palm Albert from Bilkent University.

### **PALM ALBERT:**

Thank you very much. When I went firstly in 1994 the British Embassy was puzzled by the candidacy of Alexander Lukashenko. They expected the former communist leader could not stay in the election in the office convincingly they have two things to say about him. One is that he is the only deputy in the Belarusian Supreme Soviet to vote against the break of the USSR and the other ones is his anti-corruption campaign. These seems conflictingly if we think about the development of corruption by many of the parliaments in the breakup of USSR, perhaps it is not surprising that the corruption should have been a one of his hallmarks and one of his source of popularity. If we remember the controversies about President Lukashenko who has been in power such a long time since 1994, despite the efforts of critics on regime that



corrupt, there is not a clear evidence of corruption in the sense of speak level that you find in former Soviet countries. So that I think that it is important when somebody raises the question how he could win the election. We have to mention about the idea of national identity. Alexander Lukashenko has also been the great guarantor of Belarusian identity. In western newspapers sometimes it is often told that he is some kind of Russian stooge. But many ordinary Belarusians feared the economic problems which put end the Soviet Union and lead the collapse of state in Russia in 1990s. In countryside you would find peasants who said that we don't want to see that what happens to Russian agriculture happens to us, more importantly coming to relations with EU, they don't want to see what happens not just to Lithuania but also Polish agriculture also happens to them. In 2006 I was in far west of Belarus, and many people are Poles by ethnicity and they know this. And also they know that in Eastern Poland the agriculture had collapsed as one of the prerequisite of joining the EU. EU wanted to reduce subsidy for agriculture. The expansion of membership of EU to East Europe is great but it means a change in common agriculture policies also. All members of EU would be equal but some would have get 25% of subsidy paid to French and Dutch farmers. So it is both reduce the expenditure of West European tax subsidy in agriculture but also get rid of the competition potential in Eastern Europe. For instance some people surprised why Milenkovich, the main opposition candidate for Presidency in 2006 did not place his

Polish roots, but many Poles said that what he wants to do for us is what has been done for our cousins across the border. If you drive to Eastern Poland, you can see that there is no street light in the roads, but when you came to Belorussian villages, there are street lights. The collapse of the societies in Eastern Europe, dispatch of people from agriculture to other areas of economy is a striking phenomenon, but actually it makes these countries less like Western Europe but more like Third World. The people who lost their jobs not just in agriculture but also in the industry services; the population moved to big cities and to Western Europe as being cheap labor to West. I think the people in Belarus are aware of that and the problems faced by Russia in 1990s. This was a big source of support for the government.

It should be mentioned the cost of the Western European observers to Belarusian tax payers. The observers from Holland, German or Britain are paid large cash daily amount by their government to be observers. So if we ask why so many observers don't see the problems. The simple explanations for that is that if you were a EU observer in 2006 and you noticed and contradicted the official version; somebody might ask you the provision of money that you are paid because Belarusian tax payer pay your hotel bill. So there are technical problems. They never had a delegation from West Europe who paid their own bill. They assume that Belarusian paid for the privilege of having people from West who says that their elections are inadequate. But I think there



are apparent and probable reasons behind the high score of Lukeşenko in 2006 elections that one could see. I watched a discussion with Milenkovich on BBC, he announced that he wanted to full integration of Belarus to Western Europe by ending import of cheap oil and gas from Russia. If we look at the politics of any country accepted as democracy, and if you stands on high energy prices, your chance of winning is quite low. It happens in recent years in relations with Russia, energy have become more important. Russia began to say that their energy is a source to keep Russia rich, and all other countries whether they have friendly relations or not should pay the market price. This obviously causes problems for Belarusian economy. But I think that we have to go back some of these elections before focusing on the role of the prices of oil and gas on the candidacy race and the reason of why a candidate who stands for cheap oil and gas would do better than candidate who stands for high prices.

One other aspect that we have to talk about is the question of political situation. Having been also a prison visitor, I have visited many prisons not just in Belarus but many countries. It is quite striking to me that the cleaning in prisons of Belarus is very well ordered. The conditions are better than for instance prisons in Georgia or Moldavia that have high rates from Western European countries and US. This shows us the irony of Western perception. The assumption of that communist roots lead to dictatorship, the communist economy is bad

and abolishing everything about it is good has very wrong points. I think that the collapse of whole Soviet system brought the collapse of functioning basic services of society including hospitals and prisons in many former Soviet countries, whereas the evolution of system in Belarus have avoided many crisis as crisis in health system or mass immigration that happened almost all former communist countries. The problems of trade balance and the problems of economy are not because of regime problems. But I think that a caricatured picture of Belarus has been created, but Belarusian people have not impressed this Western picture because they have enough knowledge about outside world via their visits to other former Soviet countries. The important point is that a real dictator does not allow their people to travel to other countries. The people of Belarus can travel and follow the developments in Turkey or Tunisia. Maybe the political developments in Tunisia and Egypt because of political problems are less attractive but there are many features of Western picture of dictatorship exaggerate and mislead, and frankly these are not true. Thank you.

### **HASAN ALİ KARASAR:**

I would like to pass the word to Prof. Hakan Kırımlı.

### **HAKAN KIRIMLI:**

I want to talk about the link between Turkey and Belarus. The people who are called themselves Livka Tatarları, Livonian or Belarus Tatars are Mus-

lim and Turkic people. They immigrated to these areas at the end of 14<sup>th</sup> century during the collapse of Great Empire of Golden Horde. Actually most of these people were soldiers, and so male. They had been indeed welcomed and served in the army for Lithuania. It is very notable that in the famous battle of Grunwald in 1410, the Tatar forces had played very important role against German knights and they have a very serious chair in eventual victory of Lithuanian victory. In the early 16 century according to the records. Their numbers are 200 thousand; there were knowledge 4000 mosques in their territory. And they continued to play the role of very interesting and mighty elements in the army. Since they are mostly males, inevitable they married with Slavic women. This led their integration for local population. Within several centuries they lost their languages. I think that this happened in late 17 and 18 century. They also constitute the only Turkic population who lost their mother language. But to this very day, they have protected their religion and identity. There is no discussion about their identity. Their privileges and rights in 16-17 centuries they had such privileges and right which no other Muslims minority ever in the world had enjoyed under Christian rule. Few of emigrate to Ottoman Turkey but most of them stayed and they continued to live until today. After the break of Grand Duchy of Lithuania, then Russian Empire and then Soviet Union they have lived in a certain area. But this area is divided between Poland, Belarus, and Lithuania. So their population was divided. That is what they were called Polish Tatars, Lithuanian or Belarus Tatar.

It is also remarkable that during the times of Russian Empire they continued to play very interesting and important roles in both Russian political and military life. In fact, the military word, ulan is a contribution of Polish Tatars to Eastern European languages. Ulan means a special noble class. They have produced so many generals to the Russian army. The first decade or quarter of 20th century they constituted the most important Muslim groups in New York, they build a Lithuania-Belarus Mosque in Brooklyn. This is still there. Unfortunately it is functioning something like a museum. The famous American actor Charles Bronson is a Polish Tatar belonging to a Muslim family. Unfortunately the number of Belarus Tatar is only few thousands. Their total number in Poland, Lithuania and Belarus is at most 15 thousand today. It is very interesting intellectual community. Some of the cultural heritage was there until the communist era, but most of them demolished during communist rule. Nowadays they are tried to restored and rebuild again. They constitute a bridge between Belarus and Turkey, but unfortunately in Turkey, despite their great roles Belarus Tatars are not well known, but I hope such academic, cultural and political initiatives help to increase knowledge about this remarkable community. Thank you.

### **HASAN ALİ KARASAR:**

I would like to thank Prof. Kırımlı for his very interesting presentation and to pass the word to Prof. Oktay Tanrısever from Middle East Technical University.



## OKTAY TANRISEVER:

I think that it is very important to focus on the developing relations between Turkey and Belarus and future potential in this regard. For this reason I want to focus on this topic in my very brief talk, because after listening very important speakers, most of the important topic have already been covered. I think Belarus played very significant role in the disintegration of Soviet Union. Belarus pushed a treaty signed by first Belarusian president as well as Ukrainian president and Russian president. I think that it changed the course of human history and it is really very important turning point. In the previous presentations it was noted that Turkey recognized independence of Belarus even before Gorbachov resignation. In 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their independence these countries became quite successful. They have applied different economic and political policies but at the end of the day what we have today is a kind of diverse potpourri with significant potential for comparison the rest of the world. Turkey and Belarus have a lot to offer to each other. Turkey and Belarus are different parts but quite complimentary. Turkey has own problems and particularity and Belarus has its own problems and characteristics. When these two countries increased cooperation they can help each other in many ways. When we look at Belarus what I see is a country a bridge between Russia and European Union. The treatment to Belarus is nor understandable as Prof. Norman said. There are other countries that have problems in democratization but treated better than Belarus. And also what I see is Lukashenko is

quite popular. Even the objective observers say that he can win around 50% percent. Belarus has been criticized mostly because of treatments to the opposition. Russian treatment to Belarus, we have some problems in economy and energy sector. So Belarusian economy is needs to develop and its dependency on Russia in economic fields makes things quite versa for country's economy. So it is quite isolated from the rest of the world. When we look at turkey, turkey has been globalized, have different different connection with different parts of world. And Turkey's economic potential and its global links could enable Belarusian authorities to deal with the pressing challenges both in the field of politics and economic much better. And turkey also could benefit from this cooperation especially in the education and technological cooperation. I remember 5 years ago, delegation of Belarusian state university is in my university and our ambassador in Belarus recommended that we should develop cooperation with Belarus, when I examined your brochure I realized that it is a good university. There are a lot to cooperate. We could think about the cooperation in these fields. Turkey could use its cooperation with Belarus as a bridge to extend his influence in Eastern Europe in other parts of Slavic countries because it is much easy for Turkish student to live in Minsk and other Belarusian cities. So this could be very important opportunity for Turkey. For Belarus especially economic ties are crucial. Turkey could contribute Belarusian economy very constructively. Belarus did quite well during transition. I mean that your strategy of gradual transition makes sense compare to cases of shock ther-



apy but you cannot really maintain this kind of economic model, it is not sustainable. Belarus needs to open up economy and establish new connections. Especially Russia has tried to bypass transit-route. Belarus has always been an important country for energy. In order to gain competitive and to be ready such economic steps, some new strategies and diversifications need to be done. Thank you.

### **HASAN ALİ KARASAR:**

Thank you, Mr. Oktay. When we look at Belarus, we notice that most of the industrial and agricultural infrastructure still survives in the post-communist era. I would like to give the floor to Prof. Sean McMeekin from Bilkent University.

### **SEAN MCMEEKIN:**

My experience on Belarus is quite limited. People are here talked about the element of Soviet Union which is survived. I think that one of the important is gate break which might have symbolic importance. Maybe gate break is served a kind of constructive example, not a full border or iron curtain but a border that link to tradition national identity.

I remember actually very different visit, Latvian Foreign Minister about six or seven years ago. His speech was about long struggle for independence and talked about non aggression pact of 1939 as a kind of dark day in the history of Baltic countries and marked 1989. At the end of his presentation of a struggle for independence, development and national identity, I asked him why they joined to European Union and let surround their independence by Brussels. One can

make different arguments; economic integration has some benefits obviously. I think that sometimes something is underplayed like cultural aspects. I have always been emphasized that it is not like o worldism but it is globalism that means all countries everywhere must all become the same, think the same and talk the same. I suppose with English language it is happening without any design. But the national identity remain more or less with their own countries and own traditions. I hope this for both Belarus and Turkey. It does not look like either country is about joining to EU.

### **HASAN ALİ KARASAR:**

We thank you for your symbolic and realistic presentation. Now I would like to give the floor to Mrs. Nadezhda Kunets.

### **NADEZHDA KUNETS:**

Dear colleagues, dear Excellency and ladies and gentlemen thank you very much. Most of us are working education field. We produce something better. We just teach students, this is our future generations, ambassador, ministers and so on and so forth that is why it is so important to develop international cooperation in field of education, because all student are small bridges between different countries. The more students we have the better life we have. We can learn different information from magazine and journalist from those who study at Belarusian universities. I think there are different opinions from different sides. If you don't mind I shall give you some figures of international cooperation in education. There are 51 agreements among them, 28



agreements bilateral governmental 26 bilateral between our ministers of education. It is a pity that we don't have such agreements between the ministry of education of Belarus and Turkish republic. But I think in the future we will have such developments. Besides I should say that more than 50 universities in Belarus teach more than 13 thousands international students. It is a pity that only 320 Turkish students started at main courses in Belarus. This is figure given to me by Ministry of Education. Cooperation in education develops according to governmental agreement. According to these agreements, a special program also was written and it is adopted. Between our governments and frameworks of this program seven Belarusian universities have only 11 agreements of cooperation between the universities of Republic of Belarus and Turkish Republic. But in general our universities have 1853 bilateral agreements between universities. So I think that the field of developments our two countries are big and we should do our best to improve this situation. Because the people in Belarus are ready and like to start to study Turkish language. We have linguistic departments and we have centers of Turkish culture and many voluntaries are eager to study Turkish language. We should develop this branch. Besides I would like to say that in last 2 or 3 years the amount of Turkish student is getting bigger in Belarus. Because 5 years ago we had only about 1000 students or even less now it is more 300 students. It is already starts. I should say that our universities do their best to provide all things. There is one question that I think it should be also solved in the future I,s recognition of diplomas between our two

countries. We have such agreements China, Poland, Ukraine and other countries. It is pity that we don't have with Turkish republic. Belarus had prepared such an agreement but it is pity that we don't have a support from Turkish side, it is because we are not a part in Bologna process as they said. But I don't think that Bologna process can make a cross between cooperation in this field of education between our two countries. Because there are different institutions and universities in Belarus and Turkey and we can choose most preferable universities, study and control our programs. I should say, even the day before yesterday we have a special meeting in Belarusian state university, a new reform is waiting for our high education. And for example to get a diploma of specialist will long four years and master degree two years. Now it longs five years and yes it is a barrier. One of the preventing things to come Turkish student to Belarusian is lack of Russian language. Again we can work together on that issue and do our best. Maybe we can give training course in here and maybe send specialist on Russian language to work in Turkish universities. We can exchange specialist on language because we also need Turkish language specialist. Welcome to Belarus and welcome to Belarus University. You are all our dearest and nearest quests.

### **HASAN ALI KARASAR:**

I would like thank Ambassador for support in organizing that event and I would like to thank to our guests from Belarus state university to join us and I would like to thank all of you for coming. Hopefully we would come together in other events.

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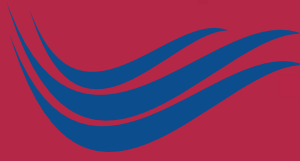
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