

JOHN TIRMAN: Welcome to the Center for International Studies. I'm John Tirman, and I'm really delighted today to have my old friend Mario Zucconi to present today pm Turkey and the migration crisis, a crisis that I think you all know is getting worse by the day with what's happening in Syria.

He has a new book about Turkey and the EU, which includes [INAUDIBLE] pertaining to refugees and migration, and that's what he's going to talk about today. Mario taught at Princeton for many years. He has taught at a number of Italian universities. He is from Rome. He has been involved not only with academic life, but also public policy and think tanks, advising governments, and so on.

We've actually done a little work on Turkey together, which was fun in its own way, with the Ebert-- the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

MARIO ZUCCONI: Right.

JOHN TIRMAN: In Istanbul. And I think we share a lot about Turkey, but he has really focused on those for many years, and I think he really brings a very knowledgeable perspective to these very complex issues. So without further ado.

MARIO ZUCCONI: Thank you. And thank you to the Center of International Studies and the [INAUDIBLE] International Seminar on Migrations for inviting me here to talk.

Let me start by-- I talk about Turkey, because I want to talk about the European Union, and the problem and the connection between the two is that it's probably the European Union's done something which is extremely important, probably the most important national development after the end of the Cold War, which is the enlargement of the European Union, but a missed enlargement to Turkey.

It's an incredible missed opportunity. And what I'd like to discuss tonight-- tonight is the beginning-- is that we can list a hypothesis that what's going on now in that part of the world, and so to Turkey especially, this tragic situation in Syria. And it's very possible to think that had Turkey continued on the way to be a part of the European Union, we would not be in the situation in which we are today.

This is extremely sad, of course. Let me start by reminding that Nicolas Sarkozy has, just before he was president, was a candidate to the presidency in France, once declared in 2007, declared that he was, of course, in fierce opposition by Sarkozy to Turkey entering the European Union. And he justified that by stressing that he could not tell French students that Europe's borders lie along Syria and Iraq.

Unfortunately for Sarkozy a few years after that, it was Iraq and Syria where the borders of Europe dressed like refugee. OK, and that is the situation that we have today. As I said, Turkey is playing a role, is playing a role of containing this massive flow of refugees towards Europe. And probably could have played a much bigger role for these people who are fleeing conflict and instability.

The flow of migrants from east and southeast of the Mediterranean that we have in the last decade, it was, let's say, biblical proportions. It had done extraordinary, in fact, the politics of the European Union countries. It really changed the politics of the European Union countries. It changed the relevance of different international actors, both in Europe and in the Middle East and North Africa region. It changed the hierarchy and the agenda of political parties, of course bringing to a major expansions some right-wing, xenophobic, nationalist xenophobic parties.

Just to remind you, Poland in 2015, the right-wing party, Law and Justice Party, immediately went up at the end of that year, producing a big problem within the European Union, absolutely moving away from their commitments to certain principal values, the way it came into the European Union.

Austria Freedom Party doubled its votes because of 2015. The same happened in Germany, in France. In Italy, we had the Northern League government. Matteo Salvini went from being around 10, 11, 9% to 34% suddenly, because of this situation. Even the Brexit campaign in the UK was full of xenophobic rhetoric about immigrants.

The academic literature has found that the anti-immigrant vote is proportional to media coverage of immigration-related topics. The same literature has established a correlation between the public's attitude towards migrants and the perception of economic condition in a country. It has established a relationship between increases in immigration and the absence from ballot, low participation in ballots, protest vote and blank ballots in Europe.

The problem is that the migrants are very visible. And so offer a simplified explanation for difficulties that different countries in most of Europe. Let me remind you, we're talking about

2015. And it's the moment in which Europe was just recovering from the Great Recession that started in 2008 and this slowdown of economic growth that we still ahead in Europe.

Facing this migration tide of 2015, Angela Merkel said "we will manage," but she paid a terrible political price for that. For the far right, the migrants became the key issue around which to mobilize public opinion. Expansions of the far right, of course, meant a shrinking left. And somebody like Matteo Salvini in an interview recently two weeks ago, by an Israeli newspaper, related recent episodes of anti-Semitism in Europe to the arrival of migrants from Muslim countries.

I mean, this has become very easy to take the migrants, especially of Muslim countries, as a scapegoat of a complex, very complex situation. Even more terrible for Europe, I mean, for what Europe has come to be, which is 26 countries, where you don't have borders anymore, is that borders are being reestablished, Between France and Italy, between Italy and Germany and Austria, and increasingly in different Places

Then the European Union and the Commission tried to do something like an agreement for relocation of migrants in 2017, but after the agreement, that was rejected by seven, eight different countries. Of course Austria is always there, but most of the Eastern European Union members of the European Union.

Also, the anti-migrants position is connected, and is very bad, with the euro skepticism. Matteo Salvini in Italy is very ambiguous, but said we do like England. They don't behave in Brussels. We live in the European Union.

While this problem, most intensive movement I'm talking about came from the broader Middle East. The conflict in Syria caused the displacement of half the population. The beginning of the war, there used to be 22 million people. Half the population. Half of those displaced people have moved abroad, which is an incredible phenomenon.

Only what's going on in this moment, in this very moment in the province of Idlib in Syria has produced between 1 million and 1 million and a half displaced people. And one million and a half is exactly half of the population of the province. It's incredible, the dimension of this problem.

And even more the problem is that about one third of that million and a half, it's on the fence with Turkey. They're camping, hoping to find a way of escaping a tragedy.

The region south of Turkey and east of Turkey has turned at this point, gradually turned into the most unstable and rife with conflict in the world. Turkey has been among the causes before being part of the solution, as far as Europe is concerned, among the problems producing all this situation.

Only months ago, I mean at the end of 2019, Ankara decided to invade northern Syria with a declared objective of resettling there two million people, but also because Turkey has an old problem, which is the big preoccupation that there is an independent entity with a Kurdish ethnic population, be that the Turks of Syria or Iraq, et cetera. And this has produced, of course, a huge problem also of international law.

Ankara, you don't have probably to say very much on this. Conflict in Syria has brought to again of what's going on in the Middle East. Again, Russia, Iran, they were, yes, influential, but influential through part of the Islamic world, in places like Iraq has found an opportunity to move all the way, especially in the Syrian situation.

In other words, we have a very complicated situation. Let me also remind you that it's a situation in which we don't have-- not only we don't have-- certainly I'm not going to say "well, how beautiful it was during the Cold War." It was a system that tended to crystallize, to freeze the situation, because of the blocs.

Now not only you have more state actors, but you have sub-state actors a lot, and much more difficult to control. Only think what happened in Central and Eastern Syria with the problem of ISIS and how Erdogan himself exploited what remains of these jihadist groups that were moving around, especially in Syria.

More than half of Syria was occupied by what remained of Al-Qaeda, ISIS, creating a huge problem. So we have this incredible, different array of actors. And the point I want to make, it's a much more complex situation to control. Again, the good old times, when it was Russian states is gone.

Let me talk about-- make a difference from the situation that we have today and the conditions that existed in the previous decade, the first decade of this century, in which Turkey was coming as being a major, major actor in the region.

Besides being extremely important for the Turkish people, Turkey's economic expansion in that first decade of this century also gave to Turkey for a while a critical economic political role

in the vast region around it.

In that decade, the GDP of Turkey tripled. For a number of years, the economic expansion would generate authority and respect for the country in a very vast region that goes from the former Soviet republics all the way to Morocco and to the Gulf countries, of course.

In the vast region around itself, Turkey grew to be the only wage earning economy sitting in the G20. The other two economies from the region in G20 are there because of oil. And so it's an extremely different and important for Turkey.

The character of Turkey's output is also very relevant, as the manufacturing sector of Turkey was larger than that of all the Middle Eastern and North African countries together. This is the economy, and trade is extremely important for Turkey.

With a critical economic mass, relative of course to the region, Turkey developed to be a major trading economy and one indispensable partner in a vast area around itself. In 2000, the overall volume of foreign trade of Turkey was \$60 billion. At the beginning of the next decade, that means in 2011, 2012, it was six times that amount.

I want to talk, to elaborate for a moment about the importance of this position of Turkey. The great expansion of trade of Turkey, of course, Turkey traditionally the partners, the trading partners of Turkey are the European countries, Germany number one. But this trade expansion was toward the region, and so it's very important for the influence that Turkey developed in that region.

In the 10 years after 2005, Turkey opened 27 new embassies in Africa, moving from 12 to 39. I can give you very quickly some example. Trade with other neighbors grew enormously, grew enormously. 7, 6, and 5 times in Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece. 5 times 2 in Georgia and Egypt. 3 times with Israel. 2 and 1/2 times to Syria, et cetera, et cetera.

I mean, it's a multiplication of the amount of the trade with this country that took place in that Decade most important was the trade with Iraq that started very late, and it was almost not in until 2005 or even later. And it became actually the first trading country with Turkey. Iraq, and of course, in Iraq I include the autonomous region, Kurdish region.

Turkey was the only country in the region to be with the Western industrialized countries among exporter of financial services, of constructions, of telecommunications. That means

very advanced, also, technological trade.

Also, it's important to keep in mind that Turkey, since 1999, but especially after 2004, was in the access process to become a member of the European Union, and this gradual adoption of rules and standards of the European Union guaranteed the trustworthiness of Turkey as a partner.

Academic studies supported the positive correlation between trade and peaceful relations, of course when trade becomes very intense. More trade between two states produces the possibility of militarized-- I'm sorry, reduces the possibility of militarized disputes, as the growing interaction between the two countries mobilizes interest groups and brings into the foreign policy decision making of our country multiple non-state actors. So the foreign policy making becomes much more complicated.

And so in the end, the position that Turkey acquired because of its economy had a very strong transformative impact. I would go as far as to say that what the European Union was going, that was doing to Turkey, Turkey was doing to some extent to some other countries around itself, but especially in countries like Syria.

We can even say that Turkey, for a while, it looked like it was a game changer in the region politics, because of this economic capability. Securing economic growth is a major component of the policy makers what [? Antonin ?] here at Harvard called "performance legitimacy." And that is for everybody, not only in democracies, but also for autocrats.

And this trade becomes a crucial condition for that growth, and a main factor shaping a country's external relations. Of course, it has an impact also on domestic politics of different actors.

Let me suggest an example. European countries are trading. They have China as a trading partner. Always, all of them, all of them number two or number three. Well, that has also an impact on what you can do with China and on their relationship in general, and the adaptation to one another.

And this is the same thing in those years, in the years around 2005 to 2010 and '11, between Turkey and the countries surrounding Turkey. Specifically in the Middle East, this increase in economic interaction centered around Turkey had a very strong, for a while, critical political impact.

Take Syria. In the '90s, when Syria was hosting PKK camps Abdul Ocalan, the secretary-general of the organization, Ankara came very close to initiate large scale military operations against Damascus, but as soon as Ocalan and the PKK left Syria, the opportunities afforded by Syria's international isolation and Turkey's contiguity began to reshape the relationship.

There are a lot of problems between Syria and Turkey. The use of the water, of the Euphrates, Tigris just a tiny bit. Euphrates, of course, it's a huge amount of water that goes through Syria after Turkey. And a major, major problem. If you look at the map, there is a stripe, a little piece of Turkey that comes down strangely along the Mediterranean. Great archaeology.

And it's a very contentious issue between the two countries. The Hatay province. Well, and as this economic interaction grew between the two countries, the regime in Syria accepted the idea of bringing everything around the negotiating tables. The water issue, the Hatay issue.

And as trade with Turkey began to produce more legitimacy also for the regime in Syria, the regime felt that they could accept, give Hatay up and accept completely Hatay as being part of Turkey, which is not a little thing.

Turkey's trade with other countries pushed other countries similarly to compartmentalize the interaction with Ankara. In other words, many countries, for instance Iran, were able to say, OK, let's put this problem in the room. Meanwhile, agreements after agreements about trade.

An interesting case, of course, is Israel, more interesting than every other case. Even after the 2010 Mavi Marmara incident with the killing of Turkey's sailors, bilateral trade expanded by 50% in two years. In 2013, the growing importance of the political and economic cooperation with Ankara made Prime Minister Netanyahu follow US President Barack Obama's advice and apologize on the phone with Erdogan about the loss of Turkish life in that incident. Netanyahu didn't like the idea, and it was Obama who put the telephone in his hands, literally, and he called Erdogan.

The Syria case also illustrates the way in which trade expansion impacted on the very evolution of Turkey's domestic politics. Before 2011, the two countries were reframing their relations and trading in diplomatic terms. It was the growth of commerce between Aleppo and Gaziantep. Poor Aleppo. When it was still a city. And Gaziantep is just inside Turkey. Gaziantep growing suddenly in two or three, to 2 million people, a huge metropolis, and the

building of a highway between the two cities, Gaziantep in Turkey has been a producing center of industrial production for Syria.

And it was the political pressure and actual lobbying from the Anatolian entrepreneurs and merchants that pushed Ankara to take a series of liberalizing steps, and to finally sign the 2009 free trade and visa free travel agreements with its neighbors, with Syria.

By 2010, Turkey had established free trade agreement with 15 countries in addition to a customs union, of course, with the European Union and before with the European Economic Community and the EFTA countries, countries north of the European Union. Between 2003 and 2010, they also signed-- Turkey also signed visa free travel agreements and visa border status agreements with some 30 countries, including most of its neighbors. There is a lot to talk about. Let me make a point.

I mean, the transformative, politically transformative impact of that interaction reached even deeper. As they found trade with Turkey to be critical to them, these countries were willing to accommodate pressures for reforms. Beginning with reforms related to transparency, banking regulation, and the judiciary. Because what you need in commerce, you need this kind of reliable institutions. So the transformative impact is extremely important.

Additionally, as Turkey was coming to the relationship with strong credentials because of its relationship with the European Union, increasingly its regional trading partners look at it as a normative source and as a model of successful practices.

The Kurdistan Regional Government imported Turkey's business know-how, while Syria copied from Turkey banking practices as it tried to liberalize its economy. Business operatives from the Black Sea countries approached TUSIAD, Turkey's most influential business association, seeking help in setting up a regional umbrella organization to represent business in the region.

In other words, there was an overall fast desecuritization of the relationship, of the foreign affairs of Turkey and their relationship. It was different. The region was moving. As I said, that includes everybody from North African countries, Israel, to the Arab countries in the gulf, and to the east, to former Soviet republics. It was an incredible situation.

The view in the Arab world since the foundation of the republic as a westernized authoritarian state, in early 2002, Turkey still was-- early 2002, remember, the AKP, the Justice and

Development Party, came to power away in November. Still was with Israel and the US among the countries toward which Arab public opinion had the most negative attitude until 2002, I'm saying.

Remember the 1997 military coup in Turkey against the Islam inspired party in power, the Welfare Party, Necmettin Erbakan, confirmed to the Arabs the cultural estrangements of Turkey to the region. In the same year, the country's failure to secure from the European Union the candidate member status was taken as evidence both of the country's low international standing and of Turkey's cultural distance from the Muslim world.

The AKP's electoral victory in November 2002 changed all that overnight. When in March 1, 2003, Ankara's national assembly voted against allowing the US to invade Iraq from Turkey, influential Arab commentators reacted enthusiastically. Turks were now more Arab than the Arabs. That was the title of an Arab paper. Turkey was now perceived as being back into the region culture and politics. And in 2005, a Turkish scholar was elected as secretary-general of the organization of the Islamic Conference. Very influential.

Because of the AKP in power, issues that had been major liabilities in Turkish relations with the Arab world turned into assets suddenly. Turkey's participation in Western institutions like NATO, OECD, OSCE, Council of Europe, and others, was now a source of pride, also for the rest of the Muslim world.

Its military capabilities and NATO membership were key elements of a stabilizing role now expected of Turkey. When the Saudi Arabian king visited Ankara in 2006, a pan-Arab newspaper commented, quote, unquote, "The value of the summit in Turkey now becomes evident. Turkey is an important regional power, a member of NATO, and it's on the doorstep of the European Union."

All that was negative before, but now they were Islamic, they were part of the culture of the region, so [INAUDIBLE] everything [INAUDIBLE] The point I'm trying to make is how much Turkey grew to be extremely influential for a number of elements in this moment, because of what Turkey was itself, economic power, et cetera, and because of what Turkey was already because of its foreign policy and its participation in international organizations.

And Turkey itself at some point came out with a slogan for its foreign policy-- zero problems with neighbors, which is a little optimistic, because it doesn't depend on you. It depends on the neighbors. But it expressed an intention, a way in which they wanted to operate.

So for a number of years, Turkey's trade center influence was a key factor in the evolution of a vast region, international interaction and politics. "Turkey is day by day becoming an important political and economic power, both in a regional and at the international level." This is a comment by Moroccan foreign minister Saad-Eddine Al Othmani still in 2012.

Shadi Hamid, now in Brookings in Washington, at the time at Brookings in Doha concluded an analysis on Turkish-Egyptian relations by saying that Turkey has become the effective leader of the Arab world, even though it is not Arab, of course.

When Turkey started to have a huge problem with Israel again, because of the Mavi Marmara, but also because of Erdogan walking away from a debate, you may remember, with Israeli president Shimon Peres at Davos in January 2009. That of course increased appreciation of what Turkey was in the Arab world.

Before that, even the relationship with Israel was appreciated in the Arab world, because they expect Turkey actually to take the role that the United States was not performing anymore of bringing peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

So what I'm saying, that there were incredible expectations about the importance of Turkey in that moment. In 2010 and 2011, polls in Turkey indicated Erdogan is the most respected and admired world leader among the Arabs. In the surveys of the TESEV, the institute, the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundations, the perception of turkey in the Middle East for 2011, Turkey foreign policy was attributed a level of sectarian-- a lower level of sectarianism than most other countries included in the study.

So there was a real appreciation for the way Turkey was developing, was moving, the importance of Turkey. I can give you as many details as you want, but the favorable opinion in these polls, the favorable opinion of Turkey was higher for Turkey than for any other countries in the region. It was 86 in Egypt, and 81 in Jordan, 89 in Palestine percent of the times. 89 in Saudi Arabia, and so on and so forth.

Contrasting Turkey with the political and cultural stalemate in their world, Arab intellectuals and liberal politicians from the very beginning of the AKP's rule began pointing at that country as a model, which is a lot, thus indicating that Turkey's ability to offer cognitive elements critical to the political evolution of the region.

Again, I'm making the comparison to the role that the European Union was playing with Turkey, Turkey was playing in the region. And so it had a huge stabilizing effect. Those intellectuals and politicians were pointing to Turkey's democratic character to explain its economic success and foreign policy achievements. "Turkey is a model for us with its economic and democratic success." This is the prime minister of Tunisia in 2012.

Egyptian very influential academic columnist, Nader Fergani used Ankara's standing up to Washington in March 2003 to stress the importance of democratic politics. Very interesting. I mean, you've proposed models because of what happens. As Fergani said, "the contrast between Erdogan's stand and that of the Arab leaders," in that case when Erdogan did not allow-- I mean, it was actually Ankara's national assembly did not allow America to invade Iraq from Turkey-- "the difference between Erdogan and the Arab leaders lies in the fact that Erdogan was democratically elected, and therefore accountable to the nation that put him into office."

This is on an Egyptian newspaper. And I can give all the evidence that you want.

OK, let me another point, and probably time to start to discuss and come to my conclusion. The decisive conditions for the evolution of Turkish politics and the democratic direction, if only for a while, for the country's extraordinary international influence was Turkey's being on its way to become a member of the European Union.

I don't know much you know. Turkey was knocking at the door for decades, and was excluded in '87. It was accepted as a candidate country finally in 1999. And finally, it was the decision to start accession negotiations in December 2004.

The basic transformation of Turkish society during the post World War II decades is a transformation into a urbanized society. OK, very easy. I mean, the ratio of 25% to 75% of urban to rural population after World War II at the end of the century was exactly the opposite. It was about 70% of people in the cities.

That meant that the people came from the south, mostly from the southeast, from villages, from the [? inhospitable ?] mountains in that area into the big cities. From 1980, Istanbul itself went from being 2 million and a half inhabitants to almost 10 million at the end of the century in 20 years.

And these people, of course, were-- the people were coming from the mountains, living in

shanty towns, [INAUDIBLE] and in very precarious condition. But the point is that-- the most important point is that these people came and developed a different political position.

I mean, a few problems [INAUDIBLE] in Turkey, [? scholars ?] in Turkey, because the easiest potential for this development is the reconciliation thesis between Islamism and secularism. Absolutely not in the sense-- let me be blunt. In the sense that these people, as pointed out by a great Turkish scholar, Ergun Ozbudun.

Actually, when he was at Princeton in the '70s, wrote an essay, a short book about the fact that these people, when they were in the mountains, were voting for the Kemalist party, because they were dependent, of course, for their living from their landlords from the tribal chiefs, et cetera, et cetera.

Because the theory of reconciliation says that these people moved to the city, came down with their religious culture. Well, maybe they were religious, but religious culture doesn't mean that they voted for the religious party.

Erbakan's party itself was there since the early '70s, but still in '87 it was 7% of the vote. The problem is that in the '90s, it went suddenly up in a few years to 21% and to be the plurality vote in the national-- the plurality party in the National Assembly, and of course to lead a government-- coalition government.

This is the opening of a new page. Of course, everybody talks about 2002 as being the beginning of a new kind of Turkey. No, the beginning you see already in 1995, in the election 1995, when Erbakan's party becomes the prime minister party.

But the model that you have in Turkey is that, now what they called Islamist was very moderate Islamist. They are in power. What follows is a military coup, 1997.

That means what happens in Turkish politics, total polarization. I should have prepared, of course, some [INAUDIBLE] figures to project. But anyway, if you look at the elections in 1995, you still have in the parliament-- not in parliament-- after the election, around a dozen parties, with some different five or six of them represented in the National Assembly.

If you go up back to 2002, you have practically only polarization in two directions, the AK party, 34%, and the Kemalist, and the nationalist, which is, they work together.

So total polarization. This is, to be very simple about it, is exactly the model that we had in

Egypt in 2011. The first democratic election, the Islamists came to power, very sectarian. And you have the other side of the polarization, which is the military performing a coup in 2013.

The point I want to make about the importance of the European Union, not because I come from the European Union, as a political analyst is that the arrival of the European Union after 1999, because of the candidate country status that was given to Turkey was extremely important.

Going towards the December decision about the candidate status, it was one of the biggest developments of the postwar history of Turkey, which is the capture of Ocalan, the Secretary General of the PKK.

And of course, they expected to hang him right away, try him in the state security court. But the Turkish state, and it was a military practically kind of state at that point, accepted, because of the credential they wanted to build with the European Union, and the idea of performing a fair trial for Ocalan, and eliminating gradually the death penalty, not only for Ocalan. So it was suspended for Ocalan and then, in 2001 and 2004, eliminated completely.

The point I want to make is that thanks also-- or because, let's say, to another development, fairly tragic, actually, so it's no thanks, in 2001, there was a very deep economic crisis. Just to give you one element, Turkish lira losing 50% in a few months against the dollar.

There was a dramatic drop in credibility of the legitimacy of the ruling class. In that situation, very soon the European Union became what I called in my book a substitute, a surrogate authority. Everybody was looking at the Europe Union, hoping that giving elements, cognitive elements, normative elements, would put the country back on track. And it was extremely important.

So the point I should make very quickly is that the European Union was extremely important in this respect. I mean, the entering gradually into the process of accession to the European Union, because it gave a new substitute, cognitive elements, and elements for mobilizations of the people to a large part of the republic in Turkey.

I have another quotation I can give you of different people, which is extremely important. Let me just-- a little anecdote say. After a lot of interviews in 2003, I think I was walking-- taking a walk in the evening along the Bosphorus in Istanbul, and I saw a man coming against me, clearly wanted to talk.

So I stopped and introduced myself. He was a truck driver. Three words in German, two in French, three in Spanish, two in Italian. He managed to say something which I appreciate a lot.

He said, we are never going to make it into Europe, but this is very important for us. The transformation that the country was going through. And the transformation, to be very-- to conclude this aspect of what I want to say, was that the AKP, the former-- the party with an Islamist background, actually took what the European Union was asking Turkey to do, and turned that into its own program.

We can discuss-- a lot of people are discussing the sincerity or the opportunism of this, Wikileaks and everything, but the transformation was incredible. Shortly, I'd like only to, very quickly, to mention that the role that the European Union in this moment, being present in the politics, in the politics, becoming part of the politics of the country, was one of giving additional cognitive elements for mobilizing masses of people.

From 56% of people in favor of entering the European Union in the late '90s, in '71 and '72, it was 75% of the people in Turkey in favor of joining the European Union. But the point is that we also the alternative in the polarized politics of the '90s, means the secularists represented all the times by the military accepted the fact that there was the European Union.

So in power, there was not only the AKP. It was also the European Union. It's also a combination when you have certain people. Certainly the probably with having a general, Hilmi Ozkok, as chief of staff, that was very important. He was a moderate, very democratic in his approach.

And to any interviewer, in 2004, clearly trying to provoke him about the AKP, he said, this is what a lot of people have decided in this country. And for that decision, I have respect.

At the same time, the military felt guaranteed that the problem, that it was the European Union. Guaranteed that the country was not going to become, because the AKP was perceived and considered to be an Islamist party, felt guaranteed by the presence of the European Union.

Let me come to a conclusion very quickly. That means the point that I need to make, that we [? adhere ?] from having this model of polarized politics and zero-sum game, I mean, who is in power tries to exclude the other side, we start to have a model of a stool with three legs, and

one leg is the European Union.

Let's turn very quickly to after the decision to open negotiations with Turkey, negotiation for the accession to the European Union. Well, there were too many doubts in many countries in Europe, too many reservations. We are in 2004, and that means that immediately after the opening of the negotiations, we started to have leaders from France, Germany always hiding behind somebody else. And it was the Cyprus issue, of course, saying "partnership instead of membership," et cetera.

In other words, little-- not little by little. In a matter of, I would say, one year, between 2005 and 2006, the European Union disappeared beyond the horizon of Turkish politics. In other words, the third leg on the stool was no longer there, and the system collapsed again. And the system goes back to be a polarized politics. The difference from before is that the second pole, the polarized politics is in charge instead of the secularists.

And we have the progression that I will want to discuss now and qualify, but certainly not really encouraging where Turkey has gone ever since. But the point I want to make is that with that, the great influence that Turkey projected in the region, in a very vast region, and in different ways in different countries, but just to tell you, the Muslim Brothers in Syria were saying, we are looking at Turkey as a model.

Ghannouchi, when he came back to Tunisia, said "our model is Turkey." Ghannouchi himself, of course, in '12 or '13 was to say, I renounce. We renounce the majoritarian model of Turkey and other countries, because Turkey was, of course, moving in that direction.

So the point I'm making is that-- I know there are so many points, but let me finish by saying, Turkey, from being a model, became a problem, one of the problem in the region. It has its own reasons. But instead of projecting this kind of influence that creates stability, because of what the great scholar in Berkeley Rosenkranz has called the trading state model. Through trade, you influence and change other countries.

Went back to militarize everything, and to become part. And I'm not certainly accusing Turkey. I'll go as far as not accusing Turkey for something very bad they are doing about oil exploration in the Mediterranean, but you know it's a retaliation. It's a response to what Turkey had to take, because they miss the reunification of Cyprus in 2004.

And again, that's to conclude, because we have to talk about migrations. That is because of

the migration that we have in Europe, and that we could have probably avoided to a great extent, if, if the European Union-- be very careful. It's not the member-- The problem is not membership. The problem is being part of that process.

Macron recently vetoed the opening of negotiations with Northern Macedonia. He is very right that we need to reform everything all the time. That's right, especially the process of enlargement. In my view, he was very wrong to say veto to the opening, because that means that the screen becomes blank.

And in Northern Macedonia, the model is, we are Europeans right here. Below that level, we are Macedonians or Albanians. And the two communities were on each other's neck in the early 2000s. So polarized politics is what the European Union was good at overcoming, and transforming a country, and making the country, because of the importance, geopolitical importance of Turkey, a great actor.

Let me say, another problem with the European enlargement, it sounds like Europe is doing a favor to the people who want to come into Europe. You are not doing a favor. You are creating a situation which is very convenient for you, very important, extremely important.

And this is what we have, the world that we have today. And again, let's go back from where we started. The problem of migration has been issue number one in European politics in this moment. That's [INAUDIBLE] better stop.

JOHN TIRMAN: Thank you. What about Turkey's negotiation with the EU, the refugees? That seems to be the crux of--

MARIO ZUCCONI: Right, right. No, no. The negotiation is an agreement that was reached because of 2015 and 2016, and the Europeans care about that enormously, because of this problem.

Imagine that we have only one arrangement among the European Union, which is everything, all the processing of the so-called illegal migrants should be done in the point of arrival. Poor Italy. Poor Hungary.

So that created an enormous tension. France closed the border after [INAUDIBLE] and you go down to around Marseilles. Changed the life of the European Union.

So Turkey moved from being a candidate country, like it was in 2005, to being very important partner. Partner in what? Partner in keeping-- *The Economist* had the [? title ?] of doing

Europe's dirty work of keeping the migrants there. And it's extremely important to the European Union.

Can we go back to rebuild something more important, more profound? I don't think. I think we've really lost it, because we created-- we're so-- that's the reason my title was "Turkey plus minus the European Union." Because plus the European Union was going very well, but not because of the European Union. Because of the importance of Turkey as a geopolitical central kind of entity.

Turkey minus the European Union went to being this semi-authoritarian state that it is today, and we certainly miss another Turkey in this moment.

As far as trying to condition again Turkey. It's part of the agreement in March 2016, about the immigrants. I mean, the one that Turkey accepted to stop. And Turkey, which is more than 2 million and 1/2 people, a huge amount of people. And there were [? so-called ?] political conditionality.

Ankara has mind your own business. To the Europeans, it was so important, because what happened in 2005 was a shock to the politics in Europe. It was so important that for the first time since the 1997, there has been a regular report published by the Commission on the candidate countries. Turkey was not a candidate country, but in '98, Brussels started to publish the regular report also on Turkey. Because Turkey was too important. I mean, there was a sense that it was so important.

For the first time, in 2015, Brussels suspended the publication of the regular report, because Erdogan, he didn't like the election in June. He wanted to rerun the election in November. And we didn't want to put our fingers, the Europeans, into Erdogan's business in the moment, risking to compromise the acceptance of this deal by Erdogan.

JOHN TIRMAN: What's the consequences for Turkey, of negotiating this refugee agreement with the EU?

MARIO ZUCCONI: Well, some amount, among billion of dollars from the European Union. Not substantial, but I think it's probably a fourth, a fifth of what actually Turkey has to spend. You can tell it's probably better, but I mean, it's not really covering the whole problem. It's a huge problem, of course.

You give Erdogan also a lever in his hand, because he keeps saying, I'm letting these people come to Europe, if you don't do this and that. So it's very important, also because for Erdogan,

it's relatively important to keep this idea that Turkey is formally a candidate country with open negotiations.

But [INAUDIBLE] is [INAUDIBLE] also officially suspended. So there is basically-- I mean, you can open a number of chapters, and you cannot close any chapter in the negotiation. There are 35 chapters, different matters.

So it's important from the point of view of saying, we are in this negotiation. Still both sides are playing ambiguity on this issue, and not giving up the idea of Turkey being in the accession process. But clearly, both sides know that the accession process is not going absolutely anywhere.

JOHN TIRMAN: But is the possibility of Turkey essentially facilitating movement of people into Europe a leverage, why isn't it a stronger lever for the accession process?

MARIO ZUCCONI: Well, that would be too much, to try to use that as leverage. No, no.

JOHN TIRMAN: Any they're not?

MARIO ZUCCONI: No, because I mean, they have wonderful diplomats, very knowledgeable people, and they know exactly how complicated this system of enlargement. And unfortunately, there is veto power of any of the members on any single chapter for opening and closing the chapter.

So much that when Papadopoulos [INAUDIBLE] said to his people before the referendum in Cyprus in April 2004, said don't vote yes to the Annan Plan for reunification. He said, I've had 70 occasions, 35 plus 35 opportunities for vetoing Turkey into the European Union. But they, too, it's the European Union. If the European Union wants to tell Papadopoulos at that time to keep quiet, then they could.

Actually, they did. I mean, I don't know if everybody has ever heard that in the big meeting of December 2004, Papadopoulos kept saying "I'm going to veto. I'm going to veto. I'm going to veto."

And they took upstairs, five of them, they took him, and it was Chirac. He kept looking at his watch. At a certain point burst and said. [INAUDIBLE] "we don't do these kind things around here." And he shut up. In other words--

JOHN TIRMAN: Let's get some questions.

MARIO ZUCCONI: OK.

JOHN TIRMAN: Let's see if anybody has a comment or question.

AUDIENCE: I wanted to pick up on John's question about the decision making [INAUDIBLE] behind first the very clear blind eye that Turkey chose to turn initially on the flow of refugees from Syria through Turkey and into the Greek islands, and across the land border between Greece and Turkey, followed by an agreement to suspend that and reporters told about rubber boats being loaded with impunity on beaches, followed by suddenly patrols showed up, life jackets being fabricated that were not going to save anyone's life. They would drown them, followed by a stop to that.

Clearly, the Turkish government was making powerful decisions about how to use the flow of refugees as a negotiating tool. And I wonder what insights you have about what will happen now, because there are stories of an increased flow.

It's clear that Turkey has a lot of control over people movements. It's not that Turkey can't if it wants to.

MARIO ZUCCONI: Yeah, to some extent, you can't avoid that you use as political leverage something. But certainly the agreement of March 2016 was something that the Europeans get a lot of, because of the trauma of the year before, that actually lasted the first three or four months of 2016.

I don't know in this country, but I don't know how many people know that we talk every day about Turkey. Turkey is also a country of over 80 million people. And in proportion, if you go to Jordan and to Lebanon, Lebanon is a tiny country. It has almost a million and a half refugees from Syria. Jordan. I mean, everybody can make a point in saying, asking this and that.

I am not aware of we asked you, we're asking that there has been really use of leverage of the refugee issues on the problem of-- I think they would not dare to try it, actually, because it's too delicate, the problem of enlargement to Turkey.

AUDIENCE: I think Turkey--

MARIO ZUCCONI: No, no. I think then I don't know much. I hear like you do about every kind of game being played with the rubber boats, et cetera. I know that we have a little island in Italy, which is below Tunis, in parallel. And the arrival, it's an island of 5,000 people. The arrival of these

people with this rubber boats, with usually tiny onboard engines, because they expect to be rescued as soon as they leave the coast of Libya.

It's an incredible situation. I mean, there is a huge, huge, huge humanitarian problem. Matteo Salvini, the rightwing Lega in Italy, for 10 months, 11 months, he was the Minister of the interior, which is not like here. A minister of the Interior in Italy means the police, of course, the borders, et cetera.

He's under trial now. His parliamentary immunity has been taken away, and he's under trial, because he stopped some of these rescuing organizations, so the rubber boats outside the Italian ports. It's a huge, huge problem.

AUDIENCE: Well, in Turkey, what I was going to say is that Turkey deserves enormous credit for the million plus refugees it has housed.

MARIO ZUCCONI: No, I know, I know, I know.

AUDIENCE: And actually, I would say also for the tolerance of people who have left the camps and are working and have become part of the Turkish economy in the cities that they've moved to.

Now I'm concerned about what lies behind the decision not to admit the latest stream of refugees who have camped on the border. But per capita, technically, has fewer refugees than either Lebanon or Jordan, but still the absolute numbers are enormous.

MARIO ZUCCONI: Yeah, the absolute numbers are enormous, but as you just mentioned, [INAUDIBLE] think about Boris Johnson in England. Now he wants only immigration of people already high level professional, et cetera. And you read *The Financial Times*, and *The Financial Times* says this is exactly what we don't need. We need low skill people, and it's what we are missing.

So the Syrians are playing, I understand the more than have-- I mean, two million people in Turkey are in these camps, and the rest are around the country, finding jobs and competing with Turks. Of course, so it is a huge problem.

But my point is that the new commission that we have now should try to build a general policy, because this problem of migration and the instability of the region, thanks to what the Europeans have done on missing the opportunity of that Turkey in the first decade of this century, we are going to have this situation going on for a while.

We don't know for how long, certainly, yeah. So it's going to be-- OK.

JOHN TIRMAN: Yes?

AUDIENCE: Well, yes, I'm a Turkish diplomat. I'm with the consulate general of Turkey, so I can't discuss every point that you make. For hours, it would be 100 hours.

MARIO ZUCCONI: I'm sure.

AUDIENCE: So we don't have that much time. Just I can give you numbers, of course, about the refugees and the number of operations that Turkey has undertaken from the outset of the refugee crisis and what happened in the Mediterranean. By the way, the number of Turkish embassies in Africa is 42, the last time I checked.

MARIO ZUCCONI: Yeah, then it grew. It grew further. I was talking 2012.

AUDIENCE: Turkey has one of the biggest networks of diplomatic services, 243.

MARIO ZUCCONI: After the United States.

AUDIENCE: I want to use just one of them. So I have this-- I mean, I would like to, if you'll allow me, [INAUDIBLE] the first point that you made, where is Europe heading, actually? Because, yeah, so the way we see it, especially after 2008, when there was a global financial crisis and the Arab Spring started at the same time, and Europe was clueless about what to do.

And Turkey has been warning, calling upon Europe, like you know, you cannot be inward looking. We have to produce solutions together. And we also need support from our European friends and partners in combating our own terrorism problem.

But Europe became more and more and more inward looking. And Islamophobia, and xenophobia, and turkophobia--

MARIO ZUCCONI: Part of it.

AUDIENCE: That you mentioned. And now I'm not an EU expert, but the commission produced a paper called "maintaining lifestyle strategy" or something like that. As far as I can understand, nothing to do with democratic standards. So how relevant is the EU going to be in the foreseeable future [INAUDIBLE]? Because the world is changing constantly. We have got all these global problems, displaced persons being one of them.

So how can the European Union make itself ready to confront all these problems as part of the solution rather than part of the problem? So this is my intellectual curiosity. I know everybody maybe would expect me to give some explanations about Turkey's policies.

MARIO ZUCCONI: Not at all. No, I'd like to discuss--

AUDIENCE: I would love to, but now that I've found you and you're looking at the issue from a--

MARIO ZUCCONI: No, my main concern is the European Union here. Because the European Union has a lot of potentialities. But if we have to talk in the way you're talking about the European Union, a demand for a greater presence of the European Union, we have to start talking about this country in which we are sitting.

Because what is changing from this country is changing the world order completely. It's not only Donald Trump. Before Donald Trump already, clearly, the presidency after what happened on 9/11, et cetera, and then the country started to withdraw, especially from that part of the world, and we are just realizing that is like, where is this building, backing gone? And the ground underneath is actually not there anymore. And the ground that was there used to be how much the United States, different policies and different presidents, but on much was still influential in creating a certain order in the international situation. Think about this country and Israel in this moment.

And so the problem is the European Union, what I'm saying. The problem is the European Union has not realized how much should have taken much more a front position in creating order. And the European Union had the tool that nobody else had. I mean, if we established stability in Europe, it was because of what happened in the late '90s, which is the bringing into the European Union of 12 countries, 10 of them from the former communist world.

And there, too, there was a problem, what I called a cognitive ideational problem. These people didn't have the alternative. It's like in the Middle East. The alternative to authoritarianism is Islamism. These people came in from communism, and they didn't have any alternative, any idea where are we going.

And the idea of having the European Union, and the European Union, if you'll go back to 1991, when Havel and this kind of people were saying "we need you," Europeans were scared of the idea of having these people.

The Brits, the famous 700,000 plumbers, Polish plumbers, they started the whole discussion about Brexit. So my point to react to you, and not an answer, of course, is that, yeah, sure.

There was a moment in which-- there was a paper that came out of the Commission-- it was very interesting-- in 2003 about the foreign policy of the European Union. And finally there was an intelligence statement.

The paper said-- yeah, it said-- I mean, there is intelligent people, of course in Brussels. But that was very smart to understand that the foreign policy of the European Union is not to build a more military center. They said the foreign policy of the European Union is the enlargement.

Because they realized in 2003 what that had created at the system level. But you know in my years interviewing everybody also in Brussels, I found in Brussels one time a very senior person in the enlargement directorate, who said-- this was in 2001-- he said the admission of Turkey is strategically as important as when we brought in the UK.

And it was very-- so I mean, not because it's an Italian, but certainly Romano Prodi, who came from the old Christian Democratic Party, very resistant to have Muslim inside the same kind of organization originally, but Romano Prodi, the man who managed the big bang enlargement of the early 2000s, and he was a man with high strategic thinking.

After him, you don't have another one, a kind of the law in the history of the European Union. So people count. People count, of course. You have some leaders.

And we started to talk in 2004 because also of Turkey. Enlargement fatigue all over the place. Then the failure of having the new constitution in Europe. And the whole attraction of the European Union started to go down by this. And you find it very discouraging, because now we have the Balkans, of course, six states which are asking.

And my point is a conclusion of this book. It is that we should much more, much more build the enlargement to the single characteristic of the politics of the individual country, not only-- enlargement is checking boxes 35 times and saying yes, yes, and yes.

No, there are also way of opportunistically following that. Look at Hungary. I mean, in my opinion, it shouldn't be inside the European Union. The place from the very beginning had a problem in the European Union, because, it was a diminution of their historical standing in the history books.

It's OK. Solved the problem finally. But and I'm very sorry, because I thought the European Union is a very successful operation and extremely important. In my view, I don't know if I look old enough, but I was born under Mussolini, so including the [INAUDIBLE] with my father escaping in the mountains, the Germans looking for my father, et cetera. And so I have a certain historical, let's say, preoccupation, understanding.

And yeah, I mean, I am disappointed about the European Union, that it doesn't play a role at a more systematic level.

AUDIENCE: This is a problem for all of us.

MARIO ZUCCONI: Yeah, yeah. Again, you know. Look at this failed accession of Turkey, not understanding that the process should have been kept completely different. Erdogan, I can-- not swear, but I can offer the opinion that he could be a different man, even [INAUDIBLE] man, and dynamic, really as a character and [INAUDIBLE] himself.

JOHN TIRMAN: Any other questions or comments? We're going to wrap it up. OK. Thank you, Mario.

[APPLAUSE]