

# A strategic partnership

By HE ÜNAL ÇEVİKÖZ

AMBASSADOR OF TURKEY TO THE UNITED KINGDOM



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holds degrees in English Literature and Political Science from the Bosphorous University and holds a Masters in International Relations from the Free University of Brussels. He joined Turkey's Foreign Service in 1978 and served in Moscow, Sofia and in Austria as well as at the International Secretariat of NATO in Brussels. From 2001 to 2004 he was Turkey's Ambassador to Azerbaijan and subsequently Ambassador in Iraq from 2004-06. Mr Çeviköz has served in various political departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and most recently was Deputy Undersecretary for Bilateral Political Affairs.

**“I** have two objectives in view in visiting this and other parts of Europe – one to see what still remains to be done in my own country to complete the work which we have begun; the other, to show my desire to establish between my people and the other nations of Europe, that feeling of brotherhood which is the foundation of human progress and the glory of our age.”<sup>1</sup>

This quote, which may sound similar to what our President might have said ahead of his visit to the United Kingdom this week, is actually a quote from the speech Sultan Abdulaziz of the Ottoman Empire made at the Guildhall in The City during his visit to Britain in July 1867. This was the first ever Imperial visit abroad by an Ottoman Sultan, and was made to a country to which in 1793 the first resident Turkish Ambassador was sent – after William Harborne, England's first official diplomatic representative arrived in Istanbul in the late 16th century to encourage trade. Turkey and Britain have an excellent track record of bilateral relations, only briefly marred by the World War I – after which in 1936 King Edward visited the Republican Turkey upon the invitation of its founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

Currently, our economic links are well-established and continue to strengthen with a bilateral trade volume of around US\$10 billion. British people are discovering Turkey too, not only the two and a half million tourists who visit each year, but also the 30,000 who have purchased property there. Approximately 400,000 UK residents of Turkish origin who contribute to politics, academia, business and all other walks of life in British society are also a part of the cultural bridge between our two nations. There are an increasing number of ‘Turkish Studies’ courses run by esteemed higher education institutions in the UK providing the opportunity to broaden understanding of Turkish culture, politics, interests and values.

However, the need to look beyond the bilateral realm of the relations and create a modern relationship is indisputable. There is huge scope for a stronger dialogue between our countries, a fact which was recognized by the current Government in the UK, leading to the signing of the strategic partnership document last July – only two months after the new British Government was established.

Turkey has a pivotal role in its region, is a vital NATO

ally, is in G20 and the biggest emerging economy of Europe (often referred to as the China of Europe), is a secular democracy, making her a valuable partner to work with in the quest to bring about solutions to regional and global issues. Turkey is advancing towards a bright future, guided by the principles set out by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. We are happy to see the UK as one of our staunchest allies, whose cross-party support for our European Union aspirations has long been appreciated. Turkey and the UK, two great powers of Europe at opposite ends of the continent, should exploit the potential to shape its future together, enabling it to remain relevant in global affairs.

More than 400 years after establishing diplomatic relations and nearly 150 years on from the first state visit, the visit of the President of the Republic of Turkey H.E. Abdullah Gül will build upon the commitment placed in our special and strategic relationship, glorified by the second visit to Turkey of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II two years ago. As the 54th Turkish Ambassador to the UK, I share the same enthusiasm and passion with my colleague and predecessor, Ambassador Musurus Pasha<sup>2</sup>, for our President's visit with the conviction that it will consolidate relations between our countries and carry the partnership forward. **E**

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 19 July 1867

<sup>2</sup> *Ottoman Ambassador to London, 1850-1885*

## The Republic of Turkey

- Government: Parliamentary Republic
- Area: 302 thousand square miles
- Population: 72.5 million
- GDP: US\$880 billion
- GDP per capita: US\$12,500
- Turkey is the world's 16th and Europe's 6th largest economy. The OECD estimates that Turkey will be the third highest growing country after China and India by 2017. Turkey grew by 7.5 per cent on average between 2004 and 2007 and it currently is the fastest emerging market of Europe. Turkey grew by 11.7 per cent during the first quarter of 2010. British FDI into Turkey was US\$2.3bn in 2009.