

Waking up to the potential

INTERVIEW WITH SIR JULIAN HORN-SMITH

PRO-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF BATH



SIR JULIAN HORN-SMITH

was a member of the founding management team of Vodafone Group Plc and is considered to be one of the principal architects in the development of Vodafone's International Strategy. He retired from the Vodafone Board in July 2006, where he held the title Deputy Chief Executive Officer.

Sir Julian remains in the global telecom sector as a Senior Advisor to UBS Investment Bank, in London, Senior Advisor to CVC (Telecoms and Media), a Member of the Board of Digicel (the leading Caribbean and Pacific Operator) and eAccess (Japan's Data Network).

How did you come to be the Co-Chairman of the British-Turkish Business Council?

When I was Vodafone's Deputy CEO I took the company into Turkey. I first went there in early 2005, and my eyes were opened to the fact that Turkey really is a hub, and at the same time a link between Europe and Central Asia. I was impressed by its young, highly educated, sophisticated, hard-working people. Equally surprising to me was the lack of awareness in the UK of Turkey's economic success. The UK's level of trade with Turkey was running at less than half of its global share of trade and so to me it seemed a very significant opportunity that was being overlooked.

Given my enthusiasm for the country, and my experience, when I retired from Vodafone I was asked by the Foreign Office if I'd like to get in touch with some people at the Middle East Association to chair the Turkish-British Business Council, which I readily agreed to do.

What have you done to deepen the relationship?

Although there were some big British companies, like Vodafone, HSBC, British Aerospace, Rolls Royce, BP, GSK, and Diageo operating there, I felt that we should broaden our activity by establishing deeper relationships with Turkey: not merely at the very top between Prime Ministers and between Foreign Ministries, but at a more practical working level between business leaders, a broad range of opinion leaders, academics, senior journalists and newspaper editors, and people in public life.

We decided to copy the sort of things Britain does with other major European countries such as France, Germany, Spain, and Italy with whom we hold bilateral conferences every year which are non-governmental but are attended by senior political figures. So this year we held the inaugural meeting for two days where we had senior figures from the worlds of industry, academia, media as well as politics. Indeed a number of Cabinet Ministers as well as Kathy Ashton of the European Commission attended. We very much hope that this will become an annual event.

How do you feel about Turkish membership of the EU?

I thoroughly endorse and support the concept of Turkish membership of the EU, either directly or in

a series of stages. I am very disappointed about the way that there have been delays implementing the various stages and chapters that require negotiation in order to help Turkey to enter the EU.

The EU and Turkey need each other for a number of reasons: Firstly, Turkey has a highly educated, hard-working, sophisticated and young population that can make a major contribution to Europe. Secondly it is a regional hub and it is a hub which I would much rather be part of the European Union, given its geographic location between the East and West.

Thirdly, I think that Turkey's view on regional issues has been given insufficient attention. Those who overlook Turkey's regional perspective do so at their peril. Finally, Turkey is already a G20 country: on its current growth trajectory in less than 20 years it will become comparable to the UK as a G10 economy. It is a serious, sophisticated, energetic and relatively young country that has implemented sound financial policies.

What about European fears of mass emigration from Turkey if it joined the EU?

I completely and firmly reject arguments that Europe will be "flooded" by Turkish immigrants if Turkey joins the EU. Over the last three years there have been more UK citizens who have gone to live in Turkey than Turks who have come here. Turkey has much higher levels of employment and more career prospects for young people than in the UK or in the rest of Europe. We need to wake up and realise that we need Turkey more than Turkey needs us.

Are you concerned that an Islamist Party is in power in Turkey?

They are an "Islamic" Party in the same way that the Christian Democrats in Germany are a "Christian" party. Above all, it is a moderate party. As with all parties, there are people on the fringes that are more extreme, but the best way of actually addressing that issue is not by making uninformed comments about it but by deepening relationships and understanding, indeed pulling from underneath them their credibility.

President Gül is a highly distinguished world statesman; his views are moderate and carefully thought through.

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