

# **BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD**

## **TURKEY**

**Weekly Report on Turkey's Political, Geo-Strategic, Economic and Social Issues,**

**Period: April 16– 22, 2010.**

**Submitted By: Aasia Khatoon khattak**

**Presentation: April 28, 2010**

**Report no.116**

---

### **News Outline**

#### **SUMMARY**

**3-4**

#### **Political News**

**5**

- PM Erdoğan takes up democratic initiative with prominent writers
- Council of State rules in favor of YÖK's latest coefficient system
- Families must play role in education of disabled, Gül says
- Turkish NGOs voice support for constitutional amendments
- Young Civilians stage protest of Renault headscarf ban
- Turkish energy minister's nose broken after attack
- Turkish navy commandos capture pirates
- Plot team categorized young non-Muslims as part of Cage plan
- Prophet Muhammad event draws crowd of top politicians, public

#### **GEO-STRATEGIC NEWS**

**11**

- Turkish NGOs join forces to break Israel's Gaza embargo
- Turkish Red Crescent brings humanitarian aid for over 140 years
- Will Syria come in from the cold?
- NATO, US face backlash over civilian killings in Afghanistan
- Turkey cool to Armenia's decision to halt ratification of protocols
- Turkey's PM says committed to peace with Armenia
- Nuclear energy not fit for Turkey, Greenpeace official says
- Turkey and Iran in talks on post-election Iraq
- Davutoğlu visits Brussels with 'proposal' on Iran row
- Spanish ambassador voices support for Turkey's EU drive
- Turkey, Serbia and the EU bolster bid to integrate Balkans
- Bosnian, Serbian, Turkish presidents to meet in İstanbul
- Turkish officials have talks in Abkhazia
- Poll: Approval of US rises worldwide, falls in Turkey
- Azerbaijan-US military drills cancelled amid tensions
- MEP: Isolation of Turkish Cypriots Flautre must end immediately
- Greek jets intercept Turkish jets in international air space over
- Turkey's relations with Iran very special, FM Davutoğlu
- Turkey vows unconditional support to Iraq
- Turkey, Azerbaijan willing for a new era with all borders open, Turkish FM

- New President of TRNC Eroğlu to take oath on Friday
- Eroğlu says could resume peace talks without any conditions
- Turkey to send humanitarian aid to Kyrgyzstan
- Armenians protest Turkish meeting in Beirut
- Greek Cypriots see problems from Eroğlu poll win
- Eroğlu becomes third president of KKTC, vows to continue peace talks
- Israel imposes partial arms embargo on Turkey
- US: Ratification of Armenia-Turkey protocols a difficult process
- Turkey will not approve sanction package against Iran in advance, Davutoğlu
- Papandreou-Erdoğan meeting key in arms race reduction
- Turkey faces tough task of balancing act in nuke policy
- Erdoğan, Medvedev discuss economic relations by phone
- Report: Israel searching for airspace for drills after Turkey's refusal
- EU should accept Turkey as member, says Estonian president
- Davutoğlu sees change in Iranian stance on uranium deal
- Baku, Yerevan divided over Turkish role in Karabakh
- Turkey demands details of Iran sanctions
- Turkey Pushes to Speed Karabakh Talks Between Armenia, Azerbaijan
- Turkey, China Sign Mou On Cultural Cooperation
- Turkey's top religious official meets Syria's Assad

#### • **ECONOMIC NEWS**

48

- Unemployment still plaguing economy, increases to 14.5 percent
- Aksa Enerji launches \$400 million IPO
- Turkish Petroleum Corporation Invests 4 Bln USD for Oil Exploration in Black Sea
- Turkey, China to increase flight traffic, destinations
- MÜSİAD declares support for PM's employment campaign call
- Turkey, China sign four deals to boost commercial relations
- Turkish contractors get large piece of pie in Turkmenistan'
- Türk Telekom on list of world's top 21 companies
- IMF raises forecast for Turkey's growth
- GIMF report says Turkish economy to grow 5.2 percent in 2010
- Auto industry picks up in first quarter, percent growing by 7.2
- İstanbul to begin hosting world's largest white goods expo
- Greek crisis at apex amid public discontent
- Syria eyes increased cooperation with Turkey in construction
- Turkey sells TL 1.51 billion at bond auction
- Turkey banking sector employment hits record high in March 2010
- Turkey sells TL 1.51 billion at bond auction

#### • **COMMENTARY**

58

- The Turkey-EU-Cyprus triangle
- Nuclear summit 2010
- Is There a Future for Turkey With(out) the IMF?
- RWE: A non-state player in the Caspian region, if it will be successful?

- Turkish Opposition to Rasmussen as the Head of NATO

### **SUMMARY-POLITICAL NEWS**

Erdogan met with the most Prominent Writers of Turkey in order to discuss and to get their support on the Kurdish democratic Initiative Program. The meeting had been keeping continue for six hours. The Writers shared their opinions, suggestions and questions regarding the issue. The Council of State rejected which made by the Higher Education Board's (YÖK) regarding to change a lower coefficient system that is used to calculate the university admission examination scores of graduates of vocational high schools. The non-governmental Organizations expressed their support to the Government Constitutional Reform Package. Turkey's Navy Commandos captured 13 pirates in the Indian Ocean. The Government, the Politicians including of Opposition Parties, the Public celebrated Birth week of the Holy Prophet Peace be Upon Him from 14-20 April.

### **SUMMARY-GEOSTRATEGIC NEWS**

A group of Turkish non-governmental Organizations will send aid ships to Gaza through a Humanitarian Aid Foundation Project (IHHI) just an effort to break the years long Israeli embargo on Palestinians. Armenia stopped the ratification Process of the Protocols which were held between Armenia and Turkey to normalize their relations. Over this Turkey's response is very cool. Erdogan regarding this has said that it is up to Armenia that what does she want to do but Turkey is still committed to these Peace Protocols. The Foreign Minister of Turkey Davutoglu paid visit to Iraq in order to talk over the Post election situation in Iraq. Regarding this he expresses that Turkey believed that all elected groups of the Iraqi Parliament should be involved in ruling the Country.

Davutoglu paid an unscheduled visit to Brussels for talks on an International dispute over Iran's Controversial nuclear Program with diplomatic Solution. He did not elaborate the contents of the diplomatic Proposal. Serbia, Spain and Turkey held a meeting in Belgrade in which they share common vision to integrate the Western Balkans States into the European Union. A BBC has conducted Survey in 28 Countries to judge favorable and unfavorable position of USA in these Countries. The results of the Survey reveals that in Turkey People view about the USA is much unfavorable than the other countries of the Survey. Currently unfavorable view is 79 Percent which was 70 Percent last year. Newly elected President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) Dervis Eroglu will take oath on Friday as the country's third president.

The newly elected Prime Minister of Cyprus Dervis Eroglu won the elections by getting 50.38 percent votes. While former Prime Minister Talat got 42.85 percent votes.

Turkish Cypriot president-elect Derviş Eroğlu said that he would begin Cyprus peace talks with Greek Cypriot leader in May without any preconditions. Turkey will send ambulance, medicine and medical equipment to Kyrgyzstan by a plane on Monday to help the Kyrgyz people who were affected by the Political unrest incidents in the Country. Israel intends to impose temporary embargo on her arm sails to Turkey due to her growing bad relations with Turkey and because of Turkey's growing intentions towards the Islamic States. Last week on the sidelines of the nuclear summit, Erdogan talked on Phone to the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. Both the sides discussed in particular the economic relations. It is being expected that Russia's President will soon pay visit to Turkey. Economy and Energy are the two most important segments of their relations. The trade relation of both the states has been reached to the level of \$100 billion which is expected to be increased in coming days.

There are few days left when U.S. President Barack Obama will deliver his annual speech on the 1915 killings of the Armenians during the last days of Ottoman Empire. While on the other side Turkey has increased its diplomatic efforts to speed up the peace process between Baku and Yerevan over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Foreign Minister Elmar Memediyarov on Monday to inform them about recent meetings on the reconciliation process between Turkish and Armenian officials in Washington. Turkey and China signed a memorandum of understanding on cultural cooperation on Friday.

#### **SUMMARY-ECONOMIC NEWS**

Turkey is recovering very well from the Global economic crises which affected her economy to some extent. She faced the Problem of unemployment, high inflation rates and down fall in different segments of Production sector. At Present her unemployment rate is 14.5 which is the highest figure and more than the December 2009. Erdogan in order to deal with the unemployment Problem launched an employment Program at Business Organizations level in which he requested to business groups to employ an additional member while making other employment. The 94 percent business related people did cast their vote against Erdogan's Program. While MUSAID expressed her acceptance regarding this. Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) has invested four billion USD for oil exploration in Black Sea. According to an estimate if TPAO get success to explore natural gas and oil in the Black Sea then Turkey's 40 years energy needs could be fulfilled. Turkey and China signed an agreement to increase passengers and cargo-flights and under the agreement both the states add new cities as new tourism destinations. Four agreements were signed between Turkey and China yesterday in the fields of tourism, construction and energy, during an official visit by a high-level Chinese delegation to Turkey. The International Monetary Fund said in her report that Turkey's economy might be expanded this year to 5.2 Percent. A recent report of the Automobile Manufacturers' Association (OSD) has shown that the Turkish auto industry enjoyed growth of 7.2 percent in the first quarter of the year and saw 107,195 vehicles sold compared to the same quarter of the previous year.

## Political News

### PM Erdoğan takes up democratic initiative with prominent writers

19 April 2010, Monday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan met with Turkey's leading writers and figures of the world of literature on Saturday at Dolmabahçe Palace to talk about the government's democratic initiative program, which seeks to expand the cultural rights of minorities, and particularly Kurds.

Fifty-three writers took part in the breakfast meeting at Dolmabahçe over the weekend. In his opening speech, the prime minister made a reference to Ahmed Arif's poem "My longing for you wore out my shackles." He said, "This country's Kemal Tahir, Orhan Kemal, Mehmet Uzun, Saidi Nursi, Musa Anter, Ahmed Arif, Rıfta Ilgaz and Nihal Atsız passed away wearing out their shackles longing for liberty just because they thought and wrote." He also named some of Turkey's brightest minds who were killed in unsolved murders, such as Uğur Mumcu, Bahriye Üçok, Abdi İpekçi, Metin Altıok, Muhlis Akarsu and Hrant Dink, saying these people had become targets because of their opinions and writing. "They all became victims of dark power centers and subversive plots. These conspiracies were hatched to play off members of our nation against each other, but this noble nation has held brotherhood high above everything."

He said he had not forgotten more recent incidents, such as various writers who were tried under the former Turkish Penal Code (TCK) Article 301 which criminalized a vaguely defined concept mentioned in the code as "denigrating Turkishness." He said: "Of course, I am not forgetting the more recent incidents involving Eşber Yağmurdereli, Şanar Yurdatapan, Fikret Başkaya, Şamil Tayyar and Hakan Albayrak. Of course, I am not forgetting the treatment of the only Nobel laureate writer of this country, Orhan Pamuk," he said. Pamuk was also a target of an Article 301 investigation and was threatened by an ultranationalist young man who is currently under arrest

as a prime suspect in the murder trial of journalist Hrant Dink. After that, Pamuk left the country and now resides abroad.

He also made an allusion to writer Elif Şafak, who once wrote: “You cannot easily make someone who is used to wearing black [in mourning] at all times love the rainbow. The rainbow would hurt the eyes of someone who only looks at darkness and gray scales.” Erdoğan said: “Yes, we want to show that this country is not black and white; that it is as colorful and joyful as the rainbow. We want to prove to Hilmi Yavuz that both cheerfulness and peace would suit the nation,” in a reference to a Yavuz poem that reads, “Sorrow, that which suits us most.” Writers shared their opinions, suggestions and questions about the government’s initiative in the six-hour meeting. Bejan Matur suggested the establishment of an equality or peace ministry. Erdoğan, who listened to the writers intently, took notes on his notepad, writing down everything that was said. There was a brief discussion between Etyen Mahçupyan and Alev Alatlı toward the end of the meeting, which Erdoğan attempted to ease, saying, “I still think Alev Alatlı and Etyen Mahçupyan love each other and trust each other.”

---

Council of State rules in favor of YÖK’s latest coefficient system

22 April 2010, Thursday

TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

---

The Council of State rejected an appeal yesterday for the annulment of the Higher Education Board’s (YÖK) recent decision to change a system that uses a lower coefficient to calculate the university admission examination scores of graduates of vocational high schools

The 8th Chamber of the Council of State, which had rejected YÖK’s previous attempts to end the lower coefficient system, this time ruled in favor of the latest change proposed by YÖK, which is supposed to make it difficult, but not impossible, for students to pursue an area of study that differs from their vocational training.

The coefficients previously employed were 0.3 and 0.5, putting vocational school graduates at a significant disadvantage when they tried to pursue other fields.

YÖK previously attempted to reduce the difference in the university entrance exam score coefficients used for regular and vocational high school graduates. After a series of decisions were blocked by the Council of State, YÖK decided on March 17 that the new coefficients would be 0.12 and 0.15 instead of the previously proposed 0.13 and 0.15. With the court’s decision, new coefficients will apply in this year’s university entrance exam.

---

Families must play role in education of disabled, Gül says

21 April 2010, Wednesday

TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

---

First lady Hayrünnisa Gül has said the education of disabled children is possible only with the support of their families, noting that efforts to educate children with disabilities are fruitless unless families make use of the opportunities available to them.

A ceremony was held at the Çankaya presidential palace yesterday on the occasion of the first anniversary of the launch of the “Education Enables” campaign. The ceremony was attended by many governors, artists and politicians. Delivering a speech, Gül said: “If families of disabled children deprive them of the opportunities provided by the state and nongovernmental organizations, all efforts for their education will turn out to be fruitless.”

Appealing to the families of children with disabilities, she said: “You cannot protect your disabled children by isolating them in your house. To the contrary, you will leave them desperate when you have to leave them one day. Trust your children. Encourage them to hold on to life. Let them receive an education, participate in social life and make you proud through their achievements. Also, do not put obstacles before your children. Don’t forget: education enables.” Speaking about the campaign, which aims to include all people with disabilities in the country and intends to better equip schools and other educational institutions to provide opportunities and make them accessible to the disabled, Gül said: “Thanks to this campaign, thousands of disabled students started school, and there has been a remarkable increase in the number of disabled children who are receiving an education at home. A total of 877 special education classrooms have been opened in secondary schools, and 14 new schools have been established across Turkey for the disabled.”

---

Turkish NGOs voice support for constitutional amendments

21 April 2010, Wednesday

TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

---

A group of Turkish nongovernmental organizations called a joint press conference on Tuesday to express their strong support for the government’s efforts to make major changes to the Constitution.

Among the participating NGOs were the Freedom Association (Özgür-Der), the Humanitarian Aid Foundation (İHH), the Association of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed Peoples (MAZLUM-DER), the Research and Culture Foundation and the Human and Civilization Movement. The NGOs said the existing Constitution, drafted under martial law in 1982, should be cleared of ideological content and its authoritarian and bureaucratic nature. The NGOs also denounced the opposition parties’ efforts to block a referendum on the reform package.

---

Young Civilians stage protest of Renault headscarf ban

19 April 2010, Monday

TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

---

The Young Civilians staged a protest against Renault on Sunday, highlighting the carmaker’s decision not to allow employees’ headscarved family members into its social facilities.

A group of members of the renowned pro-democracy NGO staged the sarcastic performance yesterday in front of Renault’s assembly plant in Bursa. The performance mocked the recently made corporate decision by the French carmaker’s Turkish subsidiary Oyak-Renault to ban headscarves.

The decision, which was made when an employee at the Bursa plant wanted to go shopping at the Renault facility with his wife, his mother -- who wears a headscarf -- and his father on Feb. 27, has angered Renault employees. While the employee and his wife were allowed to enter the facility, his mother was refused entry. The security guards at the gate told the employee that the company’s management ordered them not to allow anyone wearing a headscarf into the facility. The Young Civilians have become the voice of the public’s ensuing distaste for the company, of which the Turkish Armed Forces Assistance Center (OYAK) owns almost half. The group has prepared a “Renault Driver’s Manual” which urges the driver to remove all scarves from the vehicle in order to start the engine. Bringing the idea to life, a headscarved member of the group

tried to open the doors of a Renault car but failed to do so because the car would not let her in with her head covered, another member, this time one who did not cover her head with a scarf, managed to get into the vehicle but failed to start the engine because she had a scarf draped around her neck. It was only when she removed her scarf that she was able to start the car. Speaking on behalf of the pro-democracy group, Murat Fırat said they wanted Renault to add the standard of outfits required to drive their vehicles to their manuals and stop selling cars to the headscarved from now on. "We wanted to save them some time, so we prepared the manual ourselves," he said in a cutting message to the company. "Although we were able to highlight the stupidity of Renault's decision with such a sardonic protest, what we really want is for our friends and their families to be able to enter Renault's facilities with or without headscarves," Fırat said, discussing the motive for their protest. Oyak-Renault's record is notorious in terms of its respect for religious sensitivities. In December 2008 it was accused of having intimidated its pious Muslim employees.

---

#### Turkish energy minister's nose broken after attack

19 April 2010, Monday  
TODAYS ZAMAN

---

The Turkish energy minister's nose was broken after an attack by an assailant during a funeral in the central Anatolian province of Kayseri on Monday. An assailant punched Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yıldız in the face during the funeral of lieutenant Levent Çetinkaya, who lost his life at Gülhane Military Hospital in Ankara after getting heavily wounded in a recent armed attack in the southeastern province of Şırnak. After the attack, Minister Yıldız was taken to Erciyes University's Cevher Nesibe Hospital for treatment. The minister's "nasal bone was broken and nasal soft tissues were bruised", doctors said.

---

#### Turkish navy commandos capture pirates

18 April 2010, Sunday  
TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Turkey's military says navy commandos aboard a frigate have captured 13 pirates in the Indian Ocean

The military says the commandos aboard Turkey's TCG Gelibolu stopped the pirate vessel on Sunday as it sailed off the Seychelles on a route being used by a Turkish freighter heading to Mombassa, Kenya.

The commandos captured the pirates, destroyed their two skiffs and confiscated other pirate material.

The military says the pirates were photographed throwing weapons and ammunition overboard, but didn't say how close the pirates were to the freighter.

The Turkish frigate is part of an international anti-piracy force patrolling the area, which includes Somalia, where pirates are based.

The military did not say where the captured pirates would be taken.

18

---



Plot team categorized young non-Muslims as part of Cage plan

17 April 2010, Saturday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

-----

An antidemocratic formation within the Naval Forces Command categorized even the young children of Turkey's non-Muslim residents as part of a suspected plot to destroy the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) by assassinating prominent non-Muslim figures in Turkey, according to several Turkish dailies.

The plot, titled the Cage Operation Action Plan, includes a subversive military plan to kill prominent non-Muslim residents of Turkey and put the blame for the killings on the AK Party. The hoped-for result from the murders would be an increase in internal and external pressure on the ruling party, leading to its demise, according to the plan.

The additional folders of evidence related to the Cage plan suggest that the junta at the Naval Forces Command categorized the young children of Turkey's non-Muslim figures as well as their parents. The folders were distributed to defense lawyers in the case earlier this week. According to the folders, Cage documents showed that a young non-Muslim girl likes watching Pokemon and playing with dolls. Another document suggested that a 14-year-old non-Muslim boy likes cars, and a 14-year-old non-Muslim girl likes eating chocolate.

The full names, addresses and birthdays of the children are openly mentioned in the documents. The Cage indictment says the plot team was coordinated and led by retired Adm. Ahmet Feyyaz Ögütçü. Adm. Ögütçü's name appears in Cage plan documents as "the president." Ögütçü was implicated in the placement of blocks of TNT and other explosives at the bottom of a submarine exhibited at the Rahmi M. Koç Museum. The explosives were to be detonated while a group of students was visiting the museum.

The indictment points to Vice Adm. Kadir Sağdıç and Rear Adm. Mehmet Fatih İlğar as "number two and three men" behind the plot. The folders also contain detailed Cage documents on adult members of Turkey's non-Muslim community, including a 43-year-old woman who likes eating pistachios, a 33-year-old man who likes listening to classical music and a 44-year-old man who likes eating rice.

Categorizing Turkey's non-Muslim citizens makes up a large part of the Cage plan. The plan was divided into four phases: "Preparation," "Raising Fear," "Shaping Public Opinion" and "Action." As part of the "Preparation" phase, the names and addresses of the country's prominent non-Muslims would be determined. Then it would be ascertained which newspapers and magazines they subscribe to, which schools non-Muslims work for or send their children to, which associations or foundations they are members of, which places of worship they frequent and where they hold their religious celebrations and rituals.

Then the action plan would jump to the second phase, which consisted of posting information on the subscribers of a Turkish Armenian weekly, Agos, on a number of Web sites, especially "reactionary" ones. The editor-in-chief of Agos, Hrant Dink, was shot dead in 2007 by a young ultranationalist Turk. Letters that included threatening messages would be sent to Agos subscribers, and they would also receive threatening phone calls. Similar messages would be written on a number of walls of buildings in İstanbul's Adalar district, which is home to hundreds of non-Muslim families.

On Thursday, the Cage plan was added to the case file on the 2007 Malatya murders, in which three missionaries were brutally killed at a Christian publishing house.

The Taraf daily reported on Friday that civilian prosecutors questioned Vice Adm. Sağdıç and retired Adm. Öğütçü earlier this year about the four missing copies of the Cage plan.

According to the prosecutors, there were five copies of the Cage plan. One of the copies was retrieved from a CD seized in the office of retired Maj. Levent Bektaş, a suspect in the Ergenekon case, in April 2008. The whereabouts of the remaining four copies, however, are unknown.

Sağdıç and Öğütçü reportedly told the prosecutors that they had no knowledge about the plan or its copies.

A report drafted by the İstanbul Police Crime Laboratory suggests that the signatures found on the Cage document actually belong to Lt. Col. Ercan Kireçtepe and Maj. Eren Günay. The lab, however, failed to ascertain whether a third signature on the document belongs to retired Maj. Bektaş.

Doc brings together Cage, Poyrazköy, Sledgehammer suspects

The additional Cage folders also include a three-page document that brings together 54 high-ranking military officers who have suspected ties with the Cage plan, munitions unearthed in İstanbul's Poyrazköy area and a coup plan called the Sledgehammer Security Operation Plan.

The document bears short notes about how to "make use of" the officers and on what issues the officers would cooperate with the plot team. Among the officers are 12 rear admirals and six vice admirals.

The document mentions a division of labor among the officers. Retired Adm. Öğütçü, for example, was supposed to help "purify" the registers of suspected members of the Naval Forces Command. Vice Adm. Ali Deniz Kutluk was supposed to enable the sharing of intelligence at the command, according to the document.

The document also suggests which military officers would establish dialogue between the junta and illegal organizations, such as the left-wing Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C).

---

### Prophet Muhammad event draws crowd of top politicians, public

16 April 2010, Friday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Government and opposition politicians, religious leaders and hundreds of members of the public crowded into a congress hall on Wednesday night for the beginning of Turkey's Blessed Birth Week, which venerates the Prophet Muhammad.

The opening event for the April 14-20 Blessed Birth Week organized by the Directorate of Religious Affairs was held in İstanbul's Eyüp district with the attendance of hundreds, including top public officials. Among the attendees were Directorate of Religious Affairs President Ali Bardakoğlu, Syrian Orthodox Archbishop Yusuf Çetin, Parliament Speaker Mehmet Ali Şahin, State Ministers Hayati Yazıcı and Faruk Çelik, Grand Unity Party (BBP) leader Yalçın Topçu, İstanbul Mayor Kadir Topbaş, main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Deniz Baykal and singer İbrahim Tatlıses.

In his opening talk, Bardakoğlu extolled the ethics of the Prophet Muhammad, highlighting compassion as a key characteristic of the latter's dealings with adults and children, animals and even enemies. "We have a need for, as a door of hope for humanity, a refreshment of our awareness and our understanding of religiosity," Bardakoğlu said. "Our prophet was a leader of generosity and compassion and always encouraged us to be generous. The holy messages of his

will always be a healing for the difficulties of our age.” What the prophet brought to humanity, he remarked, was “not a theory of morals -- he personally lived, explained and demonstrated morality.” The religious affairs chief asserted that this code of morality dictated a stance of tolerance and love vis-a-vis people of different religions, understandings and lifestyles and emphasized that the Quran must be read properly in order to avoid misinterpretation and acting in a way contrary to its values.

Staunchly secular CHP leader Baykal was also among the officials who gave talks at the event -- and some of his remarks were contentious. Even as he praised the prophet, some of Baykal’s words seemingly contradicted both the purpose of the event and the talks given by the other speakers that night. “The Quran tells us that the Prophet Muhammad is the best example. Being an example does not mean to be imitated. The Prophet Muhammad does not need to be imitated, but needs to be understood,” Baykal said. Muslims believe that as a prophet, Muhammad was sent as an example of human behavior that is to be followed by the faithful in order to attain individual and societal betterment.

“Nobody can be coerced into being Muslim or living Islam because there’s no compulsion in religion,” Baykal continued, going on to assert that religion is primarily an individual affair. “The greatest disrespect of Islam that can be committed is for the religion to be used by people with an expectation of accomplishing a certain goal, attaining a means or gaining an advantage as if they have a monopoly over religion. Islam takes faith, responsibility and salvation into account on the individual level. ... Only those who deserve it will go to heaven. There’s no opportunity for members of a certain congregation to make a group reservation to heaven,” he remarked.

A message was read on behalf of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was not present at the event. Erdoğan said Blessed Birth Week also marked the day of the Prophet’s birth, noting: “On this holy day, we are illuminating our hearts and souls with the message of peace that he brought, and the mercy, love and compassion that he taught. We hope that today, when humanity has been encircled by blood, tears, pain and cruelty, they will recall that timeless message of love, peace and mercy that he brought.”

Following the talks given by political leaders, the program continued with the performance of poems and music about the prophet. Blessed Birth Week aims to encourage sentiments of national unity, togetherness, fraternity and mutual aid and solidarity by getting to know the Prophet Muhammad better, spreading information about his life and values and increasing love by his example. The Directorate of Religious Affairs has designated the Quran as the focus of its activities this year, and so Blessed Birth Week activities, organized nationwide under the title “His life was the Quran,” include Quran recitations, conferences and seminars explaining the Quran’s proper interpretation and meaning and programs focusing on the prophet and the Quran.

---

### **GEO-STRATEGIC NEWS**

Turkish NGOs join forces to break Israel’s Gaza embargo

18 APRIL,2010,Sunday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

A group of Turkish nongovernmental organizations are undertaking a joint effort to break the years-long Israeli embargo on Palestinians through a Humanitarian Aid Foundation (İHH) project to send aid ships to Gaza in May.

The İHH launched its project in early April, attracting strong support from other NGOs in Turkey, including the Freedom Association (Özgür-Der). The foundation plans to send two ships -- a cargo ship and a passenger ship -- to besieged Gaza toward the middle of next month. The project's motto is: "Palestine is our destination, humanitarian aid is our load."

The İHH's public relations representative, Salih Bilici, told Sunday's Zaman that the ships will carry more than 3.5 tons of humanitarian aid as well as a delegation of around 500 people to Gaza.

"We will take medical equipment and medicine to the Palestinians. In addition, we will take them food and clothes. We will also take construction materials, which will be used to repair schools and hospitals in Palestine. We purchased the cargo ship for \$850,000, and we paid TL 2 million for the passenger ship. We financed the purchases through donations," Bilici remarked. Israel has imposed a strict economic embargo on Gaza since 2006, drawing harsh criticism from the international community and rights groups in particular. Many human rights groups say people in Gaza have been living in an open-air prison due to the Israeli embargo.

According to Bilici, the İHH's aid ship project has garnered a great deal of support from the Turkish people.

"Huge interest is awakened when you say 'Palestine' in Turkey. Turkish people make the greatest donations to Palestine-related projects because they know the Israeli embargo on Palestinians is neither humanitarian nor principled. It also has no place in international law. Israel should retreat from its pro-embargo policies immediately and end its open-air prison policy on Gazans," he said.

The İHH is working in coordination with NGOs in 42 countries around the world, including organizations from the United States, Greece, Ireland, Indonesia and Malaysia. Bilici said six other aid ships would be sent to Gaza from Europe.

The İHH is, however, not optimistic about entering Gaza without problems. It believes Israel and Egypt will try to prevent the ships from delivering humanitarian aid to Gazans.

"We may face resistance from Israel and Egypt. Egypt attempted to prevent the entry of our aid convoy [in January]. We entered Palestine with the help of Turkish officials at that time. We are ready to face similar resistance. We are ready to spend months at sea. We will enter Gaza sooner or later. We have no other alternative. We have vowed to do our best to break the Israeli embargo," Bilici stated.

The İHH was part of a convoy of around 250 trucks carrying European, Turkish and Arab aid was hoping to enter the Gaza Strip on Dec. 27, 2009 -- the first anniversary of the start of a 22-day Israeli attack that left nearly 1,500 Palestinians dead and another 5,000 injured. However, the convoy faced major obstacles from Egyptian authorities, which refused to allow the convoy to carry the aid, both food and medical supplies, to Gaza via Egypt. The convoy was finally allowed to enter the Gaza Strip in early January.

Kenan Alpay, the vice president of Özgür-Der, said his association is a strong supporter of the İHH's aid ship project.

"Özgür-Der is working in parallel with the İHH on this project. We actively support its Gaza project. The İHH ships will be carrying an Özgür-Der delegation to Gaza in May. The delegation will include our chairman, Rıdvan Kaya, and other friends," he noted.

Alpay also mentioned his association's deep interest in Gaza and the Israeli embargo on the Palestinians.

“As an association, we attach great importance to the Palestinian issue. The İHH aid project is very important for us. It has had a tremendous impact in Turkey and on the Turkish people. The İHH is leading the project, and we are assisting it with side projects,” he said.

Among the side projects Alpay was referring to is the opening of kermes (fundraising bazaars) by volunteers, especially women. A wide range of handmade products, including food and handicrafts, are sold on such occasions. The money raised is donated to nongovernmental organizations to be forwarded to people in need.

On April 7, a group of NGOs convened in the central province of Çorum for a press conference to call on the Turkish public to lend a helping hand to suffering Palestinians. Among the participants were the İHH, Özgür-Der, the İhsan Association, the Müşfik Association, the Çorum Ehl-i Beyt Foundation and Çorum Derman Association.

The NGOs praised the İHH for its aid ship project and asked for public support for the effort. “The ships will take tons of humanitarian aid to Gaza. We want to fill these ships with lots of aid. This is an opportunity for us. If some people are daring enough to take our aid to Gaza despite Israel’s war ships, then we should fill these ships,” the organizations said.

The organizations also challenged the Israeli government’s expected refusal to allow the aid ships to enter Gaza.

“We are on a side. We are on the side of Palestinian people. We are right to stand by our Palestinian brothers. . . . We have the right to take aid to Gaza in accordance with international law. Humanitarian aid flowing to war-stricken areas cannot be blocked, according to international law. If they try to block the aid, they will violate this law. Our aid will reach the Gazans, God willing,” the organizations added.

---

### Turkish Red Crescent brings humanitarian aid for over 140 years

18 April 2010, Sunday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Established in 1868, the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay), a charitable organization known for its international aid efforts, has established itself as an agency that assists all people in need regardless of location for the last 142 years.

The Turkish Red Crescent provides humanitarian assistance to people who are in need due to natural disasters such as earthquake, flood, famine, drought, war, hurricane, tsunami or other reasons throughout the world. The biggest humanitarian organization in Turkey, the Red Crescent focuses on human dignity without any discrimination due to gender, race, color, language, religion, belief, ethnicity, origin, sexual identity or political perspective.

Turkish Red Crescent Director-General Tekin Küçükali said even though the charity organization dates back many years, it is not an old organization, but an organization that is continuously renewing itself. Speaking to Sunday’s Zaman, Küçükali noted that they are a conduit of compassion. “I participated in a conference in Balıkesir on Friday, addressing university students. The students collected TL 995 for the people of Elazığ, who were hit by a magnitude 6.0 earthquake in March. Some people may be thinking that TL 995 is a small figure; however, while I was accepting the money, I was very happy. As long as volunteers exist, we will continue to be the flagship of social solidarity throughout the world,” Küçükali noted.

Uğur Demirbaş, a psychologist working for the Turkish Red Crescent, said he understands what helplessness is and what difficult situations people are faced with through his work at the charitable organization. After Demirbaş graduated from the psychology department of Ankara’s

Hacettepe University in 2001, he started to work in a hospital in the Black Sea province of Ordu. However Demirbaş then decided to switch jobs to the charitable organization to help more needy people.

Demirbaş went to Haiti after a devastating earthquake struck the impoverished country on Jan. 12, to provide disaster relief with a Red Crescent rescue team under his leadership. Demirbaş says after they landed to Haiti they were shocked by the awful landscape there. The 7.0 magnitude earthquake killed thousands of people, injuring many more and burying many under toppled buildings. “Haiti was in terrible condition because of the earthquake. The streets were full of dead bodies, and many people needed help. National rescue teams were overwhelmed by quake victims. While we were providing medical support and humanitarian aid, I understood that taking people’s hands, giving them tissues to dry their tears and smiling are critically important for them,” Demirbaş said.

No matter race or language, pain is the same everywhere

Many experts believe that experiencing and surviving an earthquake turns people’s psychology upside-down. Demirbaş works with those who have been most affected by the earthquake, especially children. Demirbaş said singing songs and playing games with the children are the first steps in psychosocial support. Stating that they are working to prevent quake victims’ trauma from building on itself, Demirbaş noted that no matter people’s race, religion or ethnicity, the pain of all human beings is the same everywhere.

“While we were giving Haitian victims psychological support, we asked children to draw a picture. We think boys generally draw pictures of cars even though girls prefer to draw pictures of babies. However, nearly all children in Haiti drew pictures of houses, which is the best indicator of their biggest dreams,” Demirbaş pointed out. Demirbaş added that the Turkish Red Crescent has not left Haiti alone in its disaster recovery process, underlining that the organization will extend a helping hand to all vulnerable people throughout the world forever to protect human dignity.

İbrahim Balcıoğlu, from the psychiatry department at the İstanbul University School of Medicine, said trauma can be caused by a wide variety of events with a few common aspects. Balcıoğlu links psychological trauma to events including earthquakes, wars, droughts and famine. “Any person may experience depression; however, the number of people who have psychological trauma increases markedly when an earthquake, flood or war happens.” Balcıoğlu added that people need psychological support especially during these kinds of tragic events. Efforts being continued to improve blood safety

The Turkish Red Crescent first started its blood donation programs in İstanbul and Ankara in 1957. A campaign titled “One million good people are being sought,” launched in 2007, aimed to find 1 million blood donors in the country. Küçükali said the campaign had brought in 1,025,000 blood donors by the end of September 2009. The institution reports 2009 saw an increase of 30 percent in blood donations as public awareness has been increased via various campaigns.

The organization also collects money to sacrifice animals for the Feast of the Sacrifice (Kurban Bayramı or Eid al-Adha) and the charity donations that are obligatory in Islam from people to distribute this money to those in need. “We are an institution promoting compassion, social solidarity and humanitarian aid among all people in the world. Thanks to people’s donations we are able to go everywhere in the world where people are suffering from famine, poverty or other reasons. We give donations directly to those in need,” noted Küçükali, underlining that their efforts will be continued as long as they’re still breathing.

## Will Syria come in from the cold?

18 April 2010, Sunday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Will the recent rapprochement between the United States and Syria mark a new era in Syria's international standing?

Syria can hope for two major changes following the restoration of full diplomatic relations with the US. First, it will be removed from America's informal blacklist of "Axis of Evil" countries, which will substantially improve its chances to enter the World Trade Organization. Second, Syria will probably receive the go-ahead for a pipeline to bring Iraqi oil across its territory to Turkey. Such a link to Turkey's economy -- and thus possibly to the European Union -- would encourage Syria to open its economy even more to foreign investment.

But all of this will undoubtedly come at a price. Syria's side of the bargain will invariably need to include an end to its support for Hezbollah in Lebanon, for which it will likely seek the return of the Golan Heights. Israel would presumably resist this outcome, and Iran -- as leader of the so-called "Shia crescent" spreading from Lebanon to Tajikistan -- would strongly, and perhaps violently, oppose such a bargain as well.

During Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's visit to Syria earlier this year, he and Syria's President Bashar Assad reiterated their unyielding cooperation in the face of "Western manipulations." But Assad is under growing pressure from the ranks of his Baath Party to modernize the country and its infrastructure, which is impossible without improved ties to the West.

Syria's economy is a rust pile. With a per capita income of \$2,000, it has been closed to the outside world until recently. Rationing is pervasive. But, in order to secure public support, Assad's government has allowed for greater domestic consumption, so foreign imports are rising fast. Indeed, the country has run a trade deficit since 2005, with no path back to balance in sight. Supposedly "friendly" countries like Iran have been giving a helping hand, but almost always in the form of oil -- and not even refined oil -- rather than cash. The effort to liberalize foreign investment has not taken up the slack in investment from the regime's regional political partners. For example, the Foreign Investment Law of 2007, which fixed a 15-day deadline for projects to be authorized, has resulted in only \$200 million in new internal investment.

This lack of investment has left the economy, particularly the oil industry, in a shambles. A member of OPEC, Syria is now a net importer of oil.

The ruling Shia elite that surrounds President Assad -- and that, together with the military oligarchy, retains almost total control of the economy -- appears to be interested mainly in preserving the stagnant status quo. In opposition stand Syria's Sunni traders, who are joined in demanding a change in the rules of the game by the country's various minorities, composed of 2 million Christians, 1.7 million Kurds, and 400,000 Druze. The combined economic weight of the Christians -- Nestorians, Maronites, Catholic Greeks and Syriacs -- is greater than their actual number, and the Baathist regime has always sought to accommodate these minorities. But it was only with the accession to power of Assad that they were given more economic and political breathing space.

Assad has good reason to do so, because the unequal distribution of wealth, combined with an official unemployment rate of 15 percent, is fueling social pressure. The \$3 fare for a bus ride between Aleppo and Damascus might look cheap to someone from outside Syria, but given that a well-trained technician may earn only \$150 monthly it is almost prohibitively expensive.

A warming of relations with the US could set in play two types of dynamics: One originates with the OECD's development initiative for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), created in 2004. For the first time, the OECD became directly involved with non-member countries in the Middle East, and in 2009 Syria was included in its development cooperation master plan.

The second positive dynamic may come from improved Turkish-Syrian economic ties. Bilateral relations started to thaw 12 years ago, when Syria expelled the leader of the violent separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) movement, Abdullah Ocalan. A Turkish-Syrian business council was established soon after with the hope of developing economic relations but little impact has been felt owing to Turkey's lingering suspicion of Syria's political alignment. The only Turkish investment was made in the textile field by the firm Akteks.

Last year, however, as Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan pushed forward on strengthening Turkey's Middle Eastern ties, visa requirements between the two countries were eased, with cross-border car traffic increasing 22 percent in five months. Regular bus lines have been opened, and, according to a high-ranking Turkish bank official, "We were hesitating about opening a branch in Syria because of the US embargo, so the sending of an envoy is like a green light to us."

For Syria, the choice now is between seizing this opportunity to open its economy, or retreating back into its Baathist shell. The benefits of such an opening are clear. The question is whether Syria's rulers can make the political choices necessary to obtain them.

---

#### NATO, US face backlash over civilian killings in Afghanistan

18 April 2010, Sunday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

International forces have reached a critical point regarding the credibility of the operations they undertake in Afghanistan against insurgents as innocent civilians continue to be killed at their hands.

While nine years of military operations have largely failed to bring lasting peace to the country, Turkish civil society's reactions are building along with the rising anger in Afghanistan. Chairmen of renowned nongovernmental organizations that have focused on civilian casualties caused by US and NATO troops in the South Asian country have even demanded that Turkey immediately remove its soldiers from Afghanistan in order to no longer be an accomplice in those killings.

Forty-five nations including Turkey contribute troops to NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in the country. The US takes the lead with more than 50,000 soldiers, more than half of the total mission, while Turkey plays its non-combatant role with a force of 1,835.

According to the UN, at least 2,412 Afghan civilians died in fighting in 2009, an increase of 14 percent over the previous year. Almost 1,000 of them were killed at the hands of international and US forces, while the remaining deaths were attributed to egregious tactics employed by the insurgents, including ambushes, assassinations and roadside bombs. Nevertheless, civilian deaths not only enrage the local Afghan population but also people in Turkey as US-led mission operatives hit the headlines almost weekly with scandalous attacks.

Geneva Conventions being violated

"I wonder if the US, Germany or Canada would be that quiet if it was Western civilians who were being massacred in Afghanistan? This is an indication of how hypocritical the West can be



when the matter at hand is solely regarding Muslims,” said Ahmet Faruk Ünsal, chairman of the Association of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed Peoples (MAZLUM-DER), adding that international forces are certainly violating the provisions of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 with the way they treat innocent civilians on the land they occupy.

The Geneva Conventions are four treaties and three additional protocols that outline the standards the party states should comply with to protect civilians in times of war. All 45 troop-contributing countries including the US, the UK, Germany, France and Canada, the first five among them among in terms of the number of soldiers in Afghanistan, have ratified the conventions, which are very comprehensive with respect to their definition of the burden on the shoulders of the occupying forces.

“Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, color, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria,” states Article 3 of the Fourth Convention.

Chairman of the Freedom Association (Özgür-Der) Rıdvan Kaya labels those atrocities as NATO and US terrorism. “If we define terrorism as targeting civilians for political ends, then what has happened there is simply NATO and US terrorism,” he said, further arguing that the regret announced on the part of international forces does not translate into action. “The same thing happens after every civilian casualty. One of them takes the floor and says an investigation was launched into that particular incident. Nothing else happens after that. Innocent people simply keep being murdered in their homes, in public transportation vehicles and even in mosques.” He called on everybody with a conscience to speak up against those atrocities.

Who is right? Gates vs. Petraeus

A few recent incidents not only in Afghanistan but also in Iraq have stirred up controversy among US officials with regard to their assessment of the American way of handling the war, in particular.

US troops opened fire on a bus in Kandahar and killed four civilians while wounding more than a dozen others on Monday. Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who has often criticized the NATO force for endangering civilians, condemned the attack, adding that “it violates NATO’s commitment to safeguard civilian life.”

Another scandal, although not recent, was the discovery of video proof of civilian killings by US soldiers in 2007 in Baghdad. The video, released by a Web site earlier this week, shows a group of men walking down the street before being repeatedly shot by helicopters. The gunners can be heard laughing and referring to the men as “dead bastards.” The revelation sparked anger in both countries towards the US forces’ mode of intervention in establishing “security and peace.”

US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, however, reacted to the leaking of the video to a Web site, not to the murder of civilians, calling the posting “irresponsible.” When asked whether that and similar incidents have undercut the US position on human rights, Gates said “no” on Tuesday. “In Afghanistan, I don’t recall a single [incident] where someone alleges the US did it on purpose,” he said.

The commander of the US Central Command, the area of responsibility of which includes the Middle East and Central Asia, Gen. David Petraeus, however, said on the same day that civilian casualties in Afghanistan undermine the American and NATO mission there. “You cannot achieve your strategic goals, your strategic objectives, if tactical activities result in the loss of

innocent civilian life. It undermines all that you are trying to do,” he was quoted as saying by the Voice of America on Tuesday.

Coordinated efforts needed to compensate civilians

Sarah Holewinski, executive director of the Washington-based Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict (CIVIC), drew attention to another aspect of the issue, compensation for the victims and their families.

She told Sunday’s Zaman in a written statement that efforts shown by some are not enough to remedy the harm caused to civilians.

“We should always remember that there are families struggling to continue on in the wake of tragedy. When civilian casualties do occur, some ISAF members, including the US, Canada and Australia, offer monetary assistance when civilians are caught in their crossfire. But these individual efforts are ad hoc, slow and underused to the point that most Afghan civilians receive very little for their losses,” she noted.

Holewinski criticized the fact that civilians are still losing their lives because of NATO and US troops and also the attempts to cover up those tragic incidents, but she also stressed that one should not ignore the fact that a majority of those losses were Taliban victims, as UN data show.

---

Turkey cool to Armenia's decision to halt ratification of protocols

Thursday, April 22, 2010

YEREVAN/TALLINN - Daily News with wires

HURRIYAT

Yerevan’s call to halt ratification of an accord on normalizing ties has Turkey evaluating the possible legal and political repercussions, and prompted the country’s leader to reiterate his commitment to the normalization process.

“It is up to them to decide how they want to move with the ratification process,” Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan told reporters in Ankara on Thursday. “I have expressed our loyalty to the protocols on numerous occasions. We will press ahead with the process on the principle that treaties are binding.”

“It is up to them to decide how they want to move with the ratification process,” Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan told reporters in Ankara on Thursday. “I have expressed our loyalty to the protocols on numerous occasions. We will press ahead with the process on the principle that treaties are binding.”

The prime minister’s remarks came as Armenia’s ruling coalition announced earlier Thursday that it was halting ratification of the peace accord on account of Turkey’s refusal to ratify the text “without preconditions and in a reasonable timeframe.”

Soon after the coalition parties’ statement, Armenian President Serge Sarkisian confirmed his country’s freezing of the ratification of the protocols with neighboring Turkey.

The coalition, which holds the majority in the Armenian parliament, described as “unacceptable” recent statements by Erdoğan linking the process of ratifying the protocols to the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan, according to a report by Agence France-Presse. The declaration was made by the ruling Republican, Prosperous Armenia and Country of Law parties.

In Tallinn, a spokesman for the Turkish Foreign Ministry said the government had not yet received any official statement about the accords.

“What we are doing now is evaluating the content of this statement,” ministry spokesman Burak Özügergin told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review in the Estonian capital, where Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu was attending a NATO meeting. Özügergin added that Turkey is also discussing what steps it could take in the upcoming period.

Following the Armenian statement, Davutoğlu called Erdoğan to inform him about the developments. In Ankara, Erdoğan said his country’s stance concerning the ratification of the protocols is clear. “How the ratification process could move forward and how a comprehensive peace objective can be achieved in the region has been explained to the parties concerned.”

Turkey and Armenia signed a deal in October to establish diplomatic ties and open their border in a step toward ending decades of hostility over Armenian allegations that Ottoman Turks committed genocide against Armenians, a claim that Turkey rejects.

The deal, comprised of two protocols, needs parliamentary ratification to take effect. The reconciliation process has since stalled, with both sides questioning each other’s commitment to peace.

Three points

Early analyses made by Turkish diplomats on the ruling Armenian coalition’s decision are based on the timing of the announcement as well as its legal and political dimensions.

The statement came just two days before April 24, the day Armenians mark the events of 1915, which they consider genocide. On the same day, a number of countries, including the United States, issue annual statements to commemorate the Armenian deaths.

“The timing of the statement is important. They are trying to force Obama to be straighter in his statement,” a senior Turkish diplomat told the Daily News. Last year, U.S. President Barack Obama did not use the word “genocide” in his April 24 statement, but described the 1915 incidents as “one of the great atrocities of the 20th century.”

Following a meeting with Obama last week in Washington, Erdoğan said he was sure that the U.S. president would not use the word “genocide” in his statement this year.

A group of experts at the Turkish Foreign Ministry have already begun to look into the meaning of the statement and how it could affect Turkey’s legal position.

Political consequences will be felt in the ongoing normalization process, but the move could also be a tactical one to mobilize opposition parties to force the government in Turkey to withdraw the protocols from Parliament.

‘Right decision’

A senior official from the Dashnaktsutyun party, which left the ruling coalition over its opposition to the normalization efforts, hailed the move, saying, “the Sarkisian administration finally made the right decision.”

“Armenia will never yield to Erdoğan’s preconditions, and never back down on the Karabakh issue or the international recognition of genocide,” Vahan Hovanesian told the Daily News in Yerevan.

David Shahnazarian from the Armenian National Congress also criticized what he called Turkey’s “never-ending” pre-conditions. “Under the influence of Azerbaijan, Turkey cannot make progress on the protocols.”

Ruben Safrastian, the director of the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Republic of Armenia’s National Academy of Sciences, said the protocols had already come to a halt and put the responsibility for that on Turkey. “We have missed the historic opportunity between Turkey and Armenia. We must initiate a new process urgently, otherwise the Turkey-Armenia relationship will head to an irreversible period,” Safrastian told the Daily News.

Davutoğlu was scheduled to meet Thursday with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Tallinn on the sidelines of the NATO foreign ministers' meeting. A senior diplomat confirmed that Davutoğlu was planning to raise this issue during the meeting. "It is equally important to see how Americans interpret this statement," the diplomat said. "That will help us complete our own analyses."

---

Turkey's PM says committed to peace with Armenia

22 April 2010 Thursday  
TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Turkey's Prime Minister said on Thursday his country was committed to peace protocols with Armenia, despite a decision by Armenia's ruling coalition to suspend ratification of the accords by Yerevan's parliament.

We have frequently expressed our commitment to the protocols in word and in spirit and our goal to fulfil them," Tayyip Erdoğan told a news conference.

Christian Armenia and Muslim Turkey signed landmark accords in October last year to bury a century of hostility. The accords need parliamentary approval from both countries.

---

Nuclear energy not fit for Turkey, Greenpeace official says

Wednesday, April 21, 2010

ÖZGÜR ÖGRET

ISTANBUL — Hürriyet Daily News

---

World leaders may be making a big push for nuclear disarmament, but for Greenpeace the recent trend of government's returning to nuclear energy as a clean way to meet energy demand is as dangerous as nuclear weapons.

More than the dangers of another Chernobyl disaster, nuclear energy is unsuitable for Turkey because it will ultimately not solve the country's energy shortages, according to a Greenpeace official.

Turkish civil servants are short-sighted, since while building nuclear plants might seem efficient on paper, Turkey will continue to have energy shortages in the long term even with this new energy, Korol Diker, the person in charge of Greenpeace Mediterranean's Energy Campaign, told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review on Wednesday.

Diker is currently in Istanbul with the Rainbow Warrior II, the environmental organization's famous ship, on the first stop of the organization's "nuclear-free Turkey" tour.

During the 1,400-nautical-mile tour, the longest ever of the six made in Turkish waters, the ship will visit Sinop, İzmir, Antalya and Mersin.

Alternative energy options

Rainbow Warrior II will be in Sinop on Sunday to attend a rally of various nongovernmental organizations against pollution from energy production in the Gerze district. On Monday, the ship will be open for visits in Sinop in commemoration of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

Following these stops detailing the trouble spots in Turkish energy, Diker said the team would sail south to İzmir and Antalya to encourage work on the country's alternative energy potential.

Highlighting the alternative energy options in the scope of their Energy [R]evolution report, Diker said, "The aim is to draw a road map for how to transform the existing insufficient, central

and polluting energy dependant system to an energy system based on renewable energies and energy efficiency that is more local and, of course, much more cleaner.”

He said wind, solar and geothermal energies constituted alternative sources. “We do not have to consume 40 percent of the energy we currently consume in Turkey,” Diker said in regard to both personal and industrial use. “You do not actually have to produce your electricity at the Keban [dam in the eastern province of Elazığ] and transport it to Istanbul.”

Turkey’s outdated infrastructure is also causing energy losses of between 16 and 24 percent, according to Diker, a very high amount.

‘People would not support nuclear energy’

Asked if they thought they would find a receptive ear from the Turkish government, Diker said: “Anti-nuclear movements do not only oppose, they also offer alternatives. There are strong movements. I believe they are a bit tired after saying the same things for 30 years, but they will make their voice heard.”

On the subject of receiving public support for their initiatives, Diker said people would not support nuclear energy if they realized investing in the energy would not be cost-efficient for their personal budgets and that Turkey would still be dependant on foreign sources of energy.

Diker said many people within the bureaucracy have failed to keep abreast of global technological developments, believing that nuclear energy is still “space age technology.”

Meanwhile, in addressing concerns about an Internet “conspiracy theory” against the organization that was later shown to have originated with the major oil companies, Diker said the problems stemmed from a translation mistake in Turkish when Greenpeace bought Shell shares in the early 2000s to acquire the opportunity to speak at a shareholders meeting.

“The shares were sold the same day in order to not make a profit,” Diker said.

Turkish Cypriots go to polls today to decide fate of talks

Only two weeks after the Turkish and Greek Cypriot leaders held their latest round of negotiations on reuniting the island, the Turkish Cypriots are voting today in an election that could affect the fate of the talks.

Greek Cyprus, Turkey, Greece and the European Union are all keeping a close eye on the presidential election, bearing in mind the winner of the vote will also be the Turkish Cypriot negotiator in the reunification talks. Although there are seven candidates running for the presidency, the spotlight is on two of them, President Mehmet Ali Talat and Prime Minister Derviş Eroğlu. The polls show conservative politician Eroğlu is likely to win. To be elected as president, candidates have to secure 50 percent of the vote in the first round. Otherwise, the two top candidates will compete again in the second round.

Some analysts argue that President Talat would have the advantage if a second round is held. Eroğlu’s election will mean victory for the anti-solution camp both on the Turkish and Greek sides. On both sides of the island the dominant mood is that settlement cannot come in the hands of Eroğlu. This is already the expectation among the people who will vote for Eroğlu. When asked the reason why they don’t support the settlement efforts, they reply, “Did it make any difference with Talat being pro-settlement?” People can readily see that settlement does not hinge upon either Eroğlu or Talat being at the helm.

The policy that the Greek Cypriots will pursue in the event of Eroğlu’s election is obvious. They will launch a concentrated lobbying campaign in the international community, trumpeting that Eroğlu is against settlement. Eroğlu has already played significantly into the hands of the Greek

Cypriots. The Greek Cypriots will demand that negotiations continue where they were left. This means “bi-zonal bi-communal federation.”

By putting the emphasis on “the current process ... within the framework of established UN parameters and joint statements of leaders” in official statements, Turkey has made clear that the negotiations should be continued after the election. In placing particular focus on the “joint statements of the leaders,” Turkey is stressing to Eroğlu that he cannot backpedal from the points agreed upon during the negotiations. Since it is very unlikely for Eroğlu to run counter to Ankara, he has no option but to abide by this framework. Thus, it can be said that hard times await Eroğlu if he makes it to the top. He will have to run the gauntlet of continuing with negotiations based on parameters he does not advocate and at the same, not give the impression of being an obstacle to settlement.

If Talat is re-elected, negotiations will continue. This is also the option favorable to Turkey as the Turkish side will be able to champion the thesis that they “are always one step ahead for settlement.” Since Talat is known to be more pro-settlement than Eroğlu, this result will send an important message to the international community. While overall any settlement seems unlikely, the Turkish Cypriots and Ankara expect to maintain their gains.

Unemployment, not Cyprus issue, is decisive

While one may expect that the candidates’ visions about the settlement of the Cyprus issue should play a decisive role in voters’ preferences, this is not the case. Popular opinion is that the candidate from the ruling party would be more advantageous because the president’s sole duty is to conduct the negotiations and he has no inside influence. The government’s candidate, on the other hand, can attract more votes by recruiting personnel to public organizations, and so on. Supporters from both sides accept this. There is very little interest in the elections. People believe that whoever is elected, Turkey will still be in charge.

Greeks’ salvation plan: Eroğlu

The Greek Cypriots are intently monitoring developments concerning the elections. In the south of the island, there is visible panic attributable to the latest decision of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) establishing that the Turkish Cypriot authorities are authorized to deal with property complaints from Greek Cypriots, as well as the growing prospects for adoption at the European Parliament of a proposal calling for direct trade with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (KKTC). What will save Greek Cyprus from the dire straits they are in from having dragged their feet in the negotiation process is a win by Eroğlu. Indeed, Eroğlu will sit at the negotiating table with a different approach for peace talks from Talat. The Greek side is planning to say Eroğlu is an “anti-talk” leader. The discourse and phrases used by Eroğlu will be brought into the spotlight among European circles. According to the Greek side, the general perception in Europe is that Talat works towards a settlement while Eroğlu tends to stymie efforts to this end.

---

#### Turkey and Iran in talks on post-election Iraq

22 April 2010, Thursday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Turkey and Iran, two major powerhouses in the region with significant clout over Iraqi domestic politics, have been trying to reconcile their differences to bolster post-election Iraqi unity, diplomatic sources have told Today's Zaman. It may very well have been overshadowed by Iran's nuclear program, which has topped the international agenda in recent weeks, but the question of

what will happen in Iraq after the general elections was the second most important issue on the Turkish foreign minister's to-do list when he visited Tehran on Tuesday to have a series of talks with the Iranian leadership, including President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Iraq was the second most important item in our conversations with the Iranian leadership,”

Ahmet Davutoğlu told Today's Zaman after wrapping up his talks with Iranian officials.

In the joint press conference with his counterpart, Manouchehr Mottaki, on Tuesday, Davutoglu said, “The most important development in the region has to do with the elections in Iraq, the post-election status and efforts to form a government in Iraq.”

The message that all political groups in the country need to be engaged in setting up a new government was received well in Tehran's power circles. Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said Turkey has correctly read what is really happening in Iraq, in a meeting with the Turkish foreign minister on Tuesday, adding, “We believe that all elected groups in the Iraqi parliament [should] be involved [in ruling the country].”

Thanks to Turkey's persistent policy in engaging all groups in Iraq, the country's bitter Sunnis have become a part of the political system in Iraq today, paving the way for the withdrawal of US troops. Ankara brought major Sunni opposition figures and US envoys together to ensure Sunni participation in Iraq's national elections on June 30, 2005. For example, Tariq al-Hashemi, a prominent Sunni leader and vice president of Iraq, has met with former US envoy Zalmay Khalilzad in Istanbul in another initiative aimed at involving all groups in the political process. Al-Hashemi was in Ankara earlier this week, holding talks with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Davutoğlu. Speaking to Today's Zaman on Tuesday after his talks, al-Hashemi accused Iran of interfering in Iraqi efforts to form a government following the March 7 elections and warned that its attempts to create a Shiite-dominated coalition, backed by the Kurds, would lead to sectarian clashes, similar to those that erupted after Iraq's 2005 elections.

Officials from the two Shiite-dominated groups -- Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law Alliance and the Iraqi National Alliance -- have met with Iranian officials in Tehran in what appears to be an Iranian effort to unite the two parties in a coalition, preferably backed by the Kurdistan Alliance. The visits of the two Shiite blocs to Tehran were on the occasion of Nevruz celebrations, according to official statements.

But al-Hashemi sees the meetings in Tehran as an attempt to create an alternative Shiite alliance to block his al-Iraqiya's path to government although it won most votes in the election. “These Nevruz meetings seriously disturbed us,” he told Today's Zaman in Istanbul. “If the scenario debated at those meetings is implemented, that is, if we see a coalition of the State of Law Alliance, the Iraqi National Alliance and the Kurdistan Alliance, the results will be very dangerous. Then we will have a sectarian government,” he added. “We may then return to those days when people were killed because of their sectarian identity.”

Turkish officials worry that protracted negotiations on forming a government in Iraq since the March 7 national parliamentary elections have increased the risk of heightened sectarian violence. Lengthy coalition talks after Iraq's last election in December 2005 saw the country plunge into a bloody war.

Turkish policy makers believe all three major groups in Iraqi national politics should be able to draw lessons from the outcome of elections.

“Sunnis should come to grips with the fact that they no longer rule the country alone and ought to keep committed to the process of building Iraq. Shiites, though they are the majority in the country, should realize they too can't govern the country by excluding Sunnis and Kurds. Kurds

should shy away from showing huge greed and grand ambitions,” one senior diplomat said, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

Ankara had in the past privately warned Iranian officials that there was a thin line between helping Iraq to solidify its democratic institution and meddling in the domestic affairs of the country. It is no secret that most Arab countries in the Middle East with large Sunni populations are feeling uneasy over the prospect of Shiite-ruled Iraq and afraid the new Iraq may shift the precarious balance in the region into disarray.

In the press conference with Mottaki, Davutoğlu publicly reiterated that “Iraq’s establishment of internal stability and the support of its neighbors without interfering in Iraq’s domestic issues are crucial for a strong regional atmosphere,” stressing that Iraq is an important friend and neighbor of both Turkey and Iran.

---

### Davutoğlu visits Brussels with ‘proposal’ on Iran row

22 April 2010, Thursday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Paying an unscheduled visit to the de facto capital of the European Union, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu departed from Belgrade for Brussels on Wednesday for talks on an international dispute over Iran’s controversial nuclear program.

“I’m going to Brussels with a proposal” for a diplomatic solution to the controversy surrounding Iran’s nuclear program, Davutoğlu said on Wednesday, while speaking to a group of journalists on board a plane en route to Brussels from Belgrade. He didn’t elaborate on the content of the proposal.

Davutoğlu’s Brussels visit, during which he held talks with both EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton and EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Füle, was not previously scheduled.

The Brussels talks followed Davutoğlu’s visit to Tehran on Tuesday. Apparently stemming from his positive impressions in Tehran, Davutoğlu, on his way to Belgrade, had already decided that he should meet with Ashton, and the meeting was quickly arranged.

“These days we are observing the first movements on the Iran issue since October,” Davutoğlu said, apparently referring to the fact that a proposal by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to swap Iranian low-enriched uranium (LEU) which was put on the table in October. Davutoğlu, meanwhile, also said his Brazilian counterpart, Celso Amorim, will pay a visit to Turkey in the coming days. Amorim’s visit will focus on the Iran issue. Amorim will proceed to Tehran after his talks with Turkish officials. Turkey and Brazil are working on a proposal to resolve the dispute over Iran’s nuclear program peacefully.

While in Tehran, Davutoğlu also said Turkey is prepared to mediate with the West to defuse the nuclear standoff with Iran and revive a diplomatic solution to the dispute that would involve Iran sending some of its uranium abroad in exchange for higher-grade fuel.

In Washington, during a daily press briefing on Tuesday, US State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said the United States welcomed the constructive efforts by Turkey, but noted that Iran had “in no way, shape or form” indicated it was willing to deal seriously with international concerns.

“In order to play a mediation role, you have to have a country like Iran that is actually going to engage seriously and that’s what’s been lacking over the past several months,” Crowley said.



---

Spanish ambassador voices support for Turkey's EU drive

22 April 2010, Thursday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

European Union term president Spain's ambassador to Turkey on Thursday expressed his country's support for Turkey's membership in the European Union.

We hope that Turkey's accession negotiations will make quick progress in the near future. We want to see Turkey, which is home to a rich cultural heritage, as a member in the Union in the shortest possible time," Joan Clos told reporters during a visit to the southern province of Hatay. Turkey's accession negotiations started in October 2005 and the country has opened 12 chapters in talks over a total of 35 EU policy areas.

Eight of these chapters have been suspended following an EU resolution in 2006 pending Turkey's full implementation of an additional protocol to its customs union agreement with the EU.

Clos inaugurated an EU information center in Hatay, which he described as "a place of peace and brotherhood of different relations." He also held a meeting with the Hatay governor.

---

Turkey, Serbia and the EU bolster bid to integrate Balkans

22 APRIL 2010

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

On the eve of two back-to-back high-level meetings of NATO and the European Union, the foreign ministers of Serbia, Spain and Turkey came together late Tuesday night in Belgrade to deliver the strongest message yet on a common vision for the integration of the Western Balkans into the European system.

The tripartite meeting, organized at the request of Spain, which holds rotating EU presidency, aimed to push the issues of Western Balkan countries onto EU and NATO platforms. "I came to Serbia ... not only as the Spanish foreign minister but as [the holder of] the EU rotating presidency to share ... our vision of Western Balkans integration," Miguel Angel Moratinos, the Spanish foreign minister, told reporters after the meeting.

The meeting came just two days before NATO foreign ministers converge today on the Estonian capital of Tallinn, where both Turkey and Spain are expected to lobby hard for the approval of a membership action plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"We have been working with Spain to get a membership action plan for Bosnia in Tallinn. We've observed some positive developments to that effect recently, and we intend to follow up on that in the Estonian capital," Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said following the talks with his Serbian and Spanish counterparts.

Davutoğlu's remarks were reciprocated by his Spanish counterpart, who said: "We came to project a common vision for a full, secure and prosperous Balkan region. We will work to get a membership action plan [MAP] for Bosnia in the next [NATO] meeting." Both Madrid and Ankara back NATO membership for Bosnia and Herzegovina, saying international isolation could exacerbate the instability in the country, which could ultimately lead to the secession of the Republika Srpska by Serb nationalists.

Turkish diplomats said Davutoğlu later called current Bosnian Presidency Chairman Haris Silajdzic to update him about the progress made at the Belgrade meeting.

Stressing that both Turkey and the EU are critical players in the Western Balkans, Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic, who hosted the meeting, said the central strategic goal is to attain the prospect of EU membership for all Balkan states. He described the meeting as “an exchange of opinions among friends who share a common vision which is a stable, prosperous and integrated Balkans,” adding, “There is full agreement on this one.”

Jeremic conceded that there are some disagreements among the three countries, but emphasized the complete readiness on all sides to resolve these disagreements. The status of Kosovo’s participation in the upcoming EU-Western Balkans summit, which the Spanish EU presidency plans to hold in Sarajevo on June 2, tops the list of disagreements.

The issue was also discussed at the trilateral meeting in Belgrade. Serbia, which does not recognize the secession of Kosovo, objects to Kosovo’s participation as a sovereign member. Spain and Turkey, proponents of further integration of the Western Balkans in the EU, are trying to salvage the June 2 summit by working on a new plan for how Kosovo will be represented at the summit.

Turkish diplomatic sources, discussing the two-day NATO meeting in Tallinn, which will open today, sound hopeful that they will be successful in persuading NATO members to offer a MAP -- an essential steppingstone toward membership in the alliance -- to Bosnia and Herzegovina. “There is a high possibility that a MAP will be offered. The US has already given the green light, although there are still some glitches. If those glitches cannot be overcome, then we expect that a ‘conditional yes’ will be provided for Bosnia and Herzegovina’s membership prospects,” the same sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Today’s Zaman, reiterating that NATO membership would serve as a “guarantee” for maintenance of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s territorial integrity.

---

#### Bosnian, Serbian, Turkish presidents to meet in İstanbul

22 April 2010, Thursday

TODAYS ZAMAN

-----

Turkey’s long-running and intensified efforts to normalize relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia have yielded another concrete result as İstanbul will be the venue for the first trilateral presidential-level meeting of the presidents of the three countries.

The meeting in İstanbul will gather Haris Silajdzic, chairman of the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbian President Boris Tadic and Turkish President Abdullah Gül, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said on Wednesday while speaking to a group of journalists on board a plane en route to Brussels from Belgrade.

“This is the fruit of a six-month-long effort,” Davutoğlu said, referring to the fact that Turkey has been initiating trilateral meetings among the foreign ministers of the three countries since October.

Davutoğlu, meanwhile, also said that Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is planning to pay an official visit to Serbia in the near future.

---

#### Turkish officials have talks in Abkhazia

22 April 2010, Thursday

TODAYS ZAMAN

-----

Turkey has expressed readiness to help Georgian and Abkhazian authorities find a common platform on which to tackle their problems during a visit by senior Foreign Ministry officials to the breakaway region.

Foreign Ministry South Caucasus Department head Nurdan Bayraktar visited the breakaway region of Abkhazia along with Turkey's envoy to Georgia Levent Murat Burhan on Tuesday. The Foreign Ministry announced Burhan's visit in a statement late on Tuesday, saying it was aimed at keeping relations between Turkey and Abkhazia alive. Bayraktar met with Sergei Shamba, the prime minister of the self-declared republic, and discussed bilateral relations between Turkey and Abkhazia, the Abkhaz Apsnypress news agency reported. Noting that the Abkhaz community is very active in Turkey, Bayraktar said they can contribute significantly to developing Turkey's relations with Abkhazia.

---

Poll: Approval of US rises worldwide, falls in Turkey

21 April 2010, Wednesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

A BBC World Service poll that suggests that views of the US around the world have improved sharply over the past year notes that two countries saw a drop in positive views of the US: Turkey and India.

The latest BBC World Service poll of 28 countries, the results of which were announced on Monday, revealed that for the first time since the BBC started tracking in 2005, the United States' influence in the world is now seen as more positive than negative on average. The improved scores for the US coincided with Barack Obama becoming president, a BBC correspondent noted.

"Only two countries have a majority with a negative view. Turkey has 70 percent with an unfavorable view -- up seven points from last year. Pakistan has 52 percent with a negative perspective and just 9 percent with a positive one. Four countries continue to have a negative view: Russia (50 percent), Mexico (49 percent), Germany (47 percent) and China (44 percent). However, negative views have dropped in Russia (15 points), Germany (18 points), China (14 points) and Mexico (5 points)," the poll report said.

"Besides Turkey, views also worsened in India. India still leans positive (39 percent to 28 percent), however negative views have increased by eight points and positive views have dropped by four."

According to an earlier survey, conducted in August 2009 by the Ankara-based International Strategic Research Organization (USAK), the United States topped the list of countries which are regarded as a threat in Turkish public opinion. Nevertheless, USAK experts stated at the time that when the decrease from 29.80 percent in a December 2005 survey to 25.45 percent in the one conducted in August 2009 is considered, it is possible to say that Turks had been giving the new policies launched by the Obama administration a chance.

Interestingly enough, the same survey at the time showed that Turkish people have great confidence in support from the United States in case of major difficulties. A quarter of USAK survey interviewees replied "the United States" when asked which country would lend the most support to Turkey in the case of internal conflict or natural disaster.

---

Azerbaijan-US military drills cancelled amid tensions

21 April 2010 wenesday

Planned joint military exercises by Azerbaijan and the United States were cancelled on Monday against a backdrop of strained ties between Washington and the oil-producing former Soviet republic. The announcement by Azerbaijan followed its sharp criticism of Washington's role in its festering conflict with Armenia over the breakaway mountain region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Diplomats say the criticism reflects Azeri anger over US support for a deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan's close Muslim ally Turkey to mend ties and reopen their border. Azerbaijan, a supplier oil and gas to the West, fears the deal will weaken its hand in talks over the rebel territory.

Azerbaijan did not specify who cancelled the exercises planned for May, or why, but the US embassy said it suggested "that the question be posed to the government of Azerbaijan."

An Azeri Defense Ministry spokesman told Reuters, "The exercises are cancelled, but the reason is not known."

In an interview with Reuters on Friday, a senior aide to Azeri President Ilham Aliyev accused the United States of siding with Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and warned that Baku could "reconsider" its relations with Washington.

The cancellation announcement coincided with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's visit to Baku, where he had talks with both Aliyev and Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov. His talks mainly focused on the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute between the two, which complicates Armenia and Turkey's efforts to normalize their relations. The United States, along with France and Russia, is one the three co-chairs of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which has striven to resolve the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, where ethnic Armenians backed by Armenia threw off Azeri rule in the early 1990s in a war that killed 30,000 people. A peace deal has never been signed.

Speaking at a joint conference following their talks, Davutoğlu and Mammadyarov reaffirmed on Monday that the two countries share the same vision regarding Caucasian affairs.

Noting that the co-chairs of the Minsk group were schedule to arrive in Baku on Tuesday, Davutoğlu reiterated Turkey's eagerness to see progress in efforts by the group.

"There is a very big window of opportunity around the Madrid principle, on which there has been agreement. Everybody needs to utilize this opportunity. Now everybody should exert efforts for a permanent resolution around these principles, instead of playing for time,"

Davutoğlu cautioned.

The minister was referring to the fact that the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed in January on a preamble to an updated version of the 2007 Madrid document, which includes the latest changes to the settlement's basic principles concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute.

The Madrid principle envisages a stage-by-stage resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict that should start with the gradual liberation of parts of Azerbaijan bordering Nagorno-Karabakh that were partly or fully occupied by Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh during the 1991-94 war. In return, Nagorno-Karabakh should retain a corridor to Armenia and be able to determine its final status in a future referendum.

Turkey closed its frontier with Armenia in 1993 in solidarity with Azerbaijan during the war, and Azerbaijan says it should stay closed until ethnic Armenian forces pull back.

---

MEP: Isolation of Turkish Cypriots Flautre must end immediately

21 April 2010, Wednesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

The European Union must put an end to the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots, EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee Co-Chairperson H el ene Flautre has underlined.

The French Member of the European Parliament (MEP) discussed the issue of the victimization of Turkish Cypriots by the EU in a statement released on Monday, following Sunday's presidential election on the island, which saw the victory of National Unity Party (UBP) leader Derviş Erođlu. She asked EU leaders to take immediate action to remedy the damage done thus far.

"I hope the European leaders have now realized the need to immediately begin a policy of integration in Cyprus so that the Turkish community is socially, politically and culturally integrated [with the EU]," Flautre wrote in the statement.

Flautre maintained that election results in Cyprus would not lead to the collapse of long-held talks for reunification between the leaders of each side but said the Turkish Cypriots were very disappointed by the EU, which has not ended their isolation, contrary to what was promised before the 2004 Annan plan.

"I do not consider the outcome of this election to be an expression of the rejection of the Turkish community of Cyprus to reunification of the island. I rather understand it more as an expression of frustration at the continuation of its isolation even when it had backed the UN plan for a solution in 2004," she noted. The plan, which was a UN initiative, was named after its then-Secretary-General Kofi Annan and was approved by the Turkish side, while the Greek Cypriots voted against it with a majority of more than 75 percent at the time.

There are now fears in Turkey and the EU that the reunification talks will collapse during Erođlu's term in office, a possibility, however, dismissed by Erođlu himself. Flautre also urged Erođlu to stay committed to the talks aiming to reunite the island on the basis of a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation. Erođlu won Sunday's election in the first round of voting by obtaining 50.8 percent of all votes cast.

The European Commission also issued a statement on Monday following Erođlu's victory, urging him to continue with the talks. "There is no alternative to a solution to the Cyprus problem. The status quo is in no one's interest. Turkish Cypriots are EU citizens and should enjoy all benefits of EU Membership as soon as possible. It is in the hands of both leaders to make this happen," the statement read.

The same level of encouragement came from the US side. During a press briefing on Monday, State Department spokesman Philip J. Crowley congratulated Erođlu on his victory but also urged him to contribute to efforts to settle the issue. "We encourage him to continue to pursue a settlement that reunites Cyprus into a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation through a process based on UN parameters," he said.

---

Greek jets intercept Turkish jets in international air space over Aegean Sea

21 April 2010, Wednesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Greek fighter jets intercepted Turkish jets training in international air space over the Aegean Sea three times on Tuesday.

According to the web site of the Turkish General Staff, Greek F-16 and M-2000 jets from the Greek centers of Tanagra and Limnos twice intercepted Turkish F-16 jets in the north-west and south-west of the Lesbos island.

The Turkish General Staff also said that Greek M-2000 jets from the Greek center of Tanagra intercepted Turkish F-16 jets once in the north-west of Kios island.

---

Turkey's relations with Iran very special, FM Davutoğlu

20 April 2010, Tuesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said Tuesday Turkey's relations with Iran were very special.

Speaking at a joint press conference with his Iranian counterpart Manouchehr Mottaki in Tehran, Davutoğlu said that he held comprehensive talks with Mottaki on Tuesday and that identical meetings would continue in the future.

We have reached excellent economic, political and cultural relations with Iran. During our talks on Tuesday, we went over our relations, Davutoğlu said.

We discussed ways to increase our mutual trade volume of 10 billion USD to 20 billion USD soon. Our relations will keep growing, Davutoğlu said.

Important developments are taking place in the region. The most important development in the region has to do with the elections in Iraq, the post-election status and efforts to form a government in Iraq, Davutoğlu said.

Iraq is an important friend and neighbor of both Turkey and Iran. Iraq's establishment of internal stability and support of its neighbors without interfering in Iraq's domestic issues are crucial for a strong regional atmosphere, Davutoğlu noted.

#### IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

Minister Davutoğlu said that the most important item on his trip's agenda was Iran's nuclear program.

I shared my observations at the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C. with our Iranian friends, Davutoğlu said.

Turkey has a special responsibility in all issues on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council as a member of the Council. Turkey is especially interested in issues pertaining to Iran.

Turkey has always made it clear that nuclear technology should be the right of every country as long as it is used for peaceful purposes, Davutoğlu said.

Nonetheless, nuclear weapons should be opposed any where in the world as these weapons are a threat to humanity, Davutoğlu said.

The way to resolve uneasiness should be through diplomacy and not mutual tensions, military options or sanctions, Davutoğlu underlined.

We pay high attention to resolving debates on Iran's nuclear program in the shortest time possible, Davutoğlu said.

Resolving debates on Iran's nuclear program would contribute to both regional and global peace, Davutoğlu said.

#### POSSIBLE NEW SANCTIONS

In response to a question on new sanctions against Iran, Minister Davutoğlu said that Turkey was a country in the UN Security Council, a neighbor of Iran and a country with deep historical relations.

Turkey is the country that would be affected the most by decisions taken on Iran at the UN Security Council. We are trying to resolve the issue of Iran's nuclear program before any sanctions are brought to the agenda of the Council. Our regional vision is based on high volume of economic relations, high level dialogue in the Middle East, mutual economic dependency, and turning the region into one of prosperity and stability, Davutoğlu said.

As one of the biggest economies in the region, Turkey has to protect her interests with neighboring countries, including with Iran. We believe that there is still a great chance for diplomacy, Davutoğlu underlined.

Through diplomacy, we believe that we can prevent all other possible negative developments and find new alternatives. God willing, we will create solutions with Iran and the international community, Davutoğlu said.

Mottaki, in his part, said that Davutoğlu and he discussed bilateral relations, Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine.

We had a chance to exchange views with Davutoğlu, Mottaki said.

Ahmet Davutoğlu later met with the Secretary General of Iran's Supreme National Council and chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili.

---

#### Turkey vows unconditional support to Iraq

20 April 2010, Tuesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

On the occasion of a visit to Ankara by Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, Turkey reaffirmed on Monday that it will continue lending support to neighboring Iraq under any circumstances.

As a country which has extremely good relations with all groups in Iraq, Turkey's vision regarding Iraq is clear," Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said at a joint press conference following his talks with al-Hashemi, Iraq's most senior Sunni Arab official.

"Turkey wants to proclaim that it is standing by Iraq under any circumstances and that it will continue doing so as a matter of principle," Davutoğlu said, while expressing confidence that all Iraqi groups will rebuild Iraq through their commitment to Iraq's national identity.

On Sunday al-Hashemi also held talks with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, but no statement was released. Al-Hashemi's talks with Turkish officials came at a time when protracted negotiations on forming a government in Iraq have increased the risk of heightened sectarian violence. Lengthy coalition talks after Iraq's last election in December 2005 saw the country plunge into a bloody war. In recent weeks, Ankara has hosted several senior Iraqi leaders following the March 7 national parliamentary elections.

Iraqi Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi, a member of the Shiite-led Iraqi National Alliance (INA), held talks in Ankara earlier this month and met with senior leaders, including Davutoğlu. Around a week before Abdul Mahdi's talks here, Ankara hosted senior Iraqi Kurdish leader Nechirvan Barzani, the former prime minister of the Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq.

---

Turkey, Azerbaijan willing for a new era with all borders open, Turkish FM  
20 April 2010, Tuesday  
TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said Monday that Turkey and Azerbaijan had common goals and that they were willing to begin a new era in which both countries would normalize relations in the region, secure mutual trust and open all borders. Following his meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku, Davutoğlu met with his Azerbaijani counterpart Elmar Memmedyarov and then the two ministers appeared at a joint news conference.

Davutoğlu said US and Russian co-chairs of the Minsk Group was due in Azerbaijan on Tuesday, which he said was a very important development, adding, "we hope efforts speed up with Minsk Group's initiatives and end up with its final goal."

The Minsk Group was created in 1992 by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to encourage a peaceful, negotiated resolution to the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Upper Karabakh. The Minsk Group is headed by a co-chairmanship consisting of France, Russia and the United States.

Turkey monitors Minsk Group's activities very closely, Davutoğlu said. He said Turkish officials had meetings with French President Nicolas Sarkozy, US President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and gave their messages clearly.

"There is a great opportunity over Madrid Principles and everybody should make use of it. Everybody must exert efforts for a solution around these principles instead of killing the clock," he said.

Following the news conference Davutoğlu departed from Azerbaijan for Iran.

---

New President of TRNC Eroğlu to take oath on Friday  
20 April 2010, Tuesday  
TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Newly elected President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) Dervis Eroglu will take oath on Friday as the country's third president.

Derviş Eroğlu won the presidential election on Sunday by receiving more than 50 percent of all the votes in the first round.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu will attend the oath taking ceremony of Eroğlu at the TRNC Parliament in Lefkoşa.

Derviş Eroğlu's biography

Dervis Eroğlu was born in Ergazi village of Magusa in 1938. He completed elementary school in Ergazi village. Eroğlu graduated from Magusa's Namik Kemal High School. In 1963, he graduated from the Medical Faculty of Istanbul University. Following graduation, Eroğlu worked as a doctor in Gazimagusa.

Later, Eroğlu specialized in urology at Ankara's Numune Hospital. Between 1972-1976, he worked at the Gazimagusa State Hospital as an urology expert. In 1976, he was elected as a deputy of Gazimagusa from the National Unity Party (UBP).

Eroğlu served as the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports in 1976-1977. Between 1977 and 1983, he served as the UBP leader in Gazimagusa. Between 1972 and 1982, he was the



president of the Gazimagusa Turkish Cooperative Bank. For 16 years, he served as the President of the Executive Board of the Magusa Turkish Power.

He served as a founding member of the Constituent Assembly in 1983. In December 1983, he was elected leader of the UBP. He was elected as an UBP deputy from Gazimagusa in national elections of 1981, 1985, 1990, 1993, and 1998. Between 1985 and 1993, he served as the Prime Minister. Between January 1, 1994 and August 16, 1996, he continued to work as the leader of the main opposition. As of August 16, 1996, he served as a Prime Minister in the UBP-Democrat Party (DP) coalition government. Following the general elections on December 6, 1998, Eroğlu became the Prime Minister under the coalition government of UBP-Communal Liberation Party (TKP). He served again as the Prime Minister under a new UBP-DP coalition government. Eroğlu was elected as the Chairman of the UBP on November 29, 2008 after serving as UBP leader for 11 terms. He formed up the government for the eighth time after winning the early elections of April 19, 2009 in which the UBP won 26 seats. Eroğlu is married with four children and five grand-children. He speaks fluent English and Greek.

Rauf Denktas was the first president of the TRNC which was established in 1983. He remained at office from 1983 to 2005. He was replaced by Mehmet Ali Talat during the election in 2005.

---

Eroğlu says could resume peace talks without any conditions

**20 April 2010, Tuesday**

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Turkish Cypriot president-elect Derviş Eroğlu said that he would begin Cyprus peace talks with Greek Cypriot leader in May without any preconditions.

Eroğlu, who won Sunday's election garnering 50.3 percent of votes, told a Greek Cypriot newspaper that he believed negotiations with the Greek Cypriot side could begin again in late May, and that he would not be setting conditions prior to his first meeting with Demetris Christofias.

Eroğlu said he would need time to assemble his negotiating team, Cyprus Mail said.

The outgoing Turkish Cypriot President Mehmet Ali Talat and Demetris Christofias had 71 meetings after reunification talks resumed in September 2008. The last meeting took place on March 30.

The Greek Cypriot newspaper wrote that Eroğlu would look at everything at the convergences and divergences as there were some points which need to be clarified to see whether Turkish and Greek Cypriots have agreed in exactly the same way.

The newspaper wrote that Eroğlu said he did not become a candidate in order to obstruct talks. "I became a candidate in order to defend the rights of the Turkish Cypriots at the negotiating table. Whatever people say, we are for a solution," Cyprus Mail quoted Eroğlu as saying.

---

Turkey to send humanitarian aid to Kyrgyzstan

**19 April 2010, Monday**

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Turkey will send ambulance, medicine and medical equipment to Kyrgyzstan by a plane on Monday.

The Prime Ministry Office said, "Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs told Kyrgyz interim government authorities that Turkey was determined to extend a helping hand to Kyrgyz people

who were affected from the recent incidents in the country. After Kyrgyz authorities informed us that they needed ambulance, medicine and medical equipment through the Turkish Embassy in Bishkek, we prepared a humanitarian aid package."

A cargo plane of the Turkish Armed Forces carrying the aid will leave for Kyrgyzstan on Monday.

---

Armenians protest Turkish meeting in Beirut

**19 April 2010, Monday**

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Lebanese of Armenian descent have pelted Turkish businessmen with eggs outside a Beirut hotel to protest their participation in a business conference in Lebanon

Some 200 Armenians gathered outside the venue for the Turkish-Lebanese Economic Conference on Monday.

They held flags and banners reading "trade is expensive, justice is priceless" and hurled eggs at cars and a bus bringing in Turkish businessmen.

The police intervened and quickly dispersed them.

Lebanon has 150,000 Armenians, or nearly 4 percent of its population. The community harbors deep animosity toward Turks over alleged killings of up to 1.5 million Armenians in 1915 under the Ottoman Empire.

Armenians claim it was a "genocide." Turkey rejects the label and says the killings occurred in civil war during the catastrophic atmosphere of the World War One and the death toll is inflated.

---

Greek Cypriots see problems from Eroğlu poll win

**19 April 2010, Monday**

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Derviş Eroğlu's victory in the Turkish Cypriot elections will cause "serious problems" for reunification talks on ethnically divided Cyprus, the Cypriot government said on Monday.

Taking into account the declared positions of Mr Eroğlu against a federation, and for the establishment of two independent states in Cyprus, this could cause very serious problems to the (peace) negotiations," government spokesman Stefanos Stefanou told reporters.

Eroğlu, a staunch backer of Turkish Cypriot independence, swept to victory in an election in the breakaway north of Cyprus on Sunday, according to unofficial final results. The island has been split since a Turkish intervention in 1974 triggered by a brief Greek-inspired coup.

Eroğlu wants broad autonomy for Turkish Cypriots in reunification talks with Greek Cypriots, a position to which the Greek Cypriots object.

"We expect the international community to exert its influence and pressure on the new leader of the Turkish Cypriot community to continue talks on the proper basis," Stefanou said.

Progress in peace negotiations between the two sides is closely tied to Turkey's chances of joining the European Union. Greek Cypriots represent Cyprus in the bloc and have said they will block Turkey's entry until the island is reunited.

The Greek Cypriots launched peace talks with outgoing Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat in late 2008 on reuniting the island as a sovereign state with autonomy for the two zones but with an effective central administration.

Ankara has said it hopes for a solution to the Cyprus problem by the end of this year.

"Turkey will continue to support negotiations for a permanent and extensive peace on the island, regardless of who chairs the Turkish Cypriot side of the table," Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu told a news conference on Monday.

Unofficial final results showed Eroğlu winning 50.38 percent of the vote with Talat garnering 42.85 percent.

---

Eroğlu becomes third president of KKTC, vows to continue peace talks

19 April 2010

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

A hard-liner challenger and the Prime Minister Derviş Eroğlu has claimed a landslide victory in a key Turkish Cypriot presidential election and vows to continue peace talks with Greek Cypriots. He is now the third president of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (KKTC). Eroğlu addressed supporters who congregated outside his party headquarters on Sunday, saying that he will represent the Turkish Cypriot at negotiations aimed at reunifying the divided island. Many feared that an Eroğlu win over leftist incumbent Mehmet Ali Talat could lead peace talks to collapse, jeopardizing Turkey's European Union membership bid. Eroğlu advocates separate sovereignty for the KKTC.

"Talks will continue because I want peace more than those who say that I don't," Eroğlu told supporters at a rally after preliminary results indicated he had won. "I seek a solution based on the realities of the island and a solution that all of us can live with."

Assessing the elections on Sunday while speaking at NTV TV channel, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said his country will continue backing peace talks between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots in the divided island regardless of who wins Sunday's vote in KKTC. Erdoğan also told he will seek a solution to Cyprus problem by the end of 2010.

Immediately following the elections, Greek Cypriot said Eroğlu's victory in KKTC elections is a negative development. "His election is a negative development, bearing in mind the positions that Mr. Eroğlu has and expresses," said Stefanos Stefanou, spokesman for Greek Cypriot's government. "What is important now is to get to the fundamentals of this development, how we will handle matters, what our tactics will be, so that we are able to implement the aims of a solution," Stefanou told the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation on Sunday night.

The Sunday's vote is a crucial presidential poll, which would swing the fate of slow reunification talks on the divided island and Turkey's bid to join the EU.

The election was an effective showdown between incumbent leftist Talat and Eroğlu. Opinion polls put Eroğlu, a hard-line supporter of Turkish Cypriot independence, in the lead.

The winner would need more than 50 percent of votes cast, or it would go to a runoff next week.

Diplomats worry an Eroğlu victory could slow the pace of reunification talks with Greek Cypriots, who officially represent Cyprus in the European Union, and will block Turkey's admission to the bloc as long as the island remains divided.

"A lot of people see it's [a deal] within reach, and if you can't do it now it's very hard to see when the next opportunity will come along," a diplomat close to the peace process told Reuters. The United Nations, which has been overseeing peace talks launched in 2008, was to undertake a broad review of progress to date at the end of April, another source said.

Independence call

Eroğlu supports more independence for each community in any peace settlement, at odds with the agreed basis of talks that the island should be a loose federation of two zones, but with an

effective central administration. “I hope the process that follows this election brings an honorable solution that allows Turkish Cypriots to live in peace and security under Turkish guarantees,” Eroğlu said.

Greek Cypriots eschew his independence call and any suggestion that Turkey have any security role in the island after a settlement. Turkey had cited its rights as a guarantor power of Cypriot independence in 1974 to militarily intervene after a brief Greek-inspired coup engineered by the military then ruling Greece. Britain and Greece also are guarantor powers of the island, a British colony until 1960.

Talat has said peace talks with Greek Cypriot leader Dimitris Christofias to re-link the island as a loose federation are promising.

“I wish the best for the island, and I wish this to be a boost for the solution of the Cyprus problem,” he said after casting his vote. The outcome of the vote in the KKTC has major implications for Turkey, whose negotiations to join the EU are virtually hostage to the resolution of the decades-old dispute.

The conflict not only burdens Turkey's bid to join the EU but also makes decision making on defense issues between NATO, of which Turkey is a member, and the EU problematic.

---

#### Israel imposes partial arms embargo on Turkey

**19 April 2010, Monday**

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Israel will temporarily freeze sales of advanced military platforms to Turkey over concerns about the perceived mounting anti-Israel rhetoric from Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, reported UK-based Jane's Defence Weekly.

According to a story Jane's published on April 16, Israel's defense assistance and export organization, SIBAT, has decided to evaluate Turkish requests on a case-by-case basis; one case under review is a Turkish request for Israeli-made electronic warfare systems. Turkey has also expressed interest in Rafael's Spike non-line-of-sight (NLOS) anti-tank guided weapon as well as Israel Aerospace Industries' (IAI's) Barak 8 theatre-defense missile system for its navy and the Namer heavy infantry fighting vehicle.

“Ties with Turkey will never be the way they once were,” a defense source told Jane's on April 14. “We are being very careful which systems we sell them due to the growing Islamic trends in the country.”

Diplomatic relations between the two countries declined in the aftermath of Israel's 2008-09 conflict with Hamas in the Gaza Strip because Turkey was among the harshest critics of the Israeli offensive. They deteriorated further with the delay in deliveries by IAI of six Heron unmanned aerial vehicles and still further with the decision to cancel the October 2009 Anatolian Eagle exercises.

More disharmony followed Turkey's decision to forbid Israel Air Force strike aircraft to be deployed in Turkey, where they have held numerous joint exercises in recent years. Israel has instead turned to Europe for training, aiming to bolster a 2006 agreement to allow strike aircraft to be deployed in Romania, reported Jane's quoting its Tel Aviv correspondent.

According to Jane's, Israel and Turkey have, however, maintained a cautious business relationship, jointly discussing with Colombia the sale of upgraded M60 main battle tanks (MBTs). Israel Military Industries (IMI) and Turkey's Aselsan on April 7 handed over the last of

170 upgraded General Dynamics M60A1 MBTs to the Turkish military at a ceremony attended by a top Colombian general, said Jane's.

Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül was not available to answer Today's Zaman's questions on the issue.

---

US: Ratification of Armenia-Turkey protocols a difficult process

**19 April 2010, Monday**

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

The US administration has expressed awareness of the fact that parliamentary ratification of deals envisioning normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey, which is required for the implementation of the deals, is a "difficult process" that involves "emotion" and "risk" on both sides.

The issue concerning the efforts made by Armenia and Turkey for normalizing their bilateral ties, which have been stalled for a number of reasons, was on the agenda of three separate bilateral talks between Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton last week in Washington.

During a daily press briefing on Friday, the day after Clinton and Davutoğlu's third meeting, State Department spokesperson Philip J. Crowley was reminded of Azerbaijan's objections regarding the rapprochement process and was asked, "Does the American side work with their Azerbaijani counterparts to somehow resolve these issues?"

"There are things that both countries have committed to do. There are difficult processes working with their respective parliaments. We have the same experience in this country where the executive branch can make a commitment that has to work with Congress in terms of implementing that or getting ratification of that. We know this is a difficult process. We know it involves emotion on both sides, risk on both sides, and we will continue to work constructively with Armenia and Turkey to try to see this process through," Crowley responded, without elaborating on whether the US administration has been exerting effort to deal with Baku's recalcitrance on the issue.

A previous question at the briefing invited Crowley to disclose details of Clinton and Davutoğlu's Thursday meeting in regards to Armenia-Turkey relations.

"We obviously had very meaningful discussions this week, both with the Turkish side, with the Armenian side, and we continue to try to find the right formula working with both countries. And clearly, we're also supporting the Minsk process regarding Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh. We are -- the process has stalled from last fall when the countries signed the protocols on normalization. We want to see Turkey and Armenia ratify those protocols, normalize relations, open borders. That has significant benefits for both countries. And we continue to work with both to see if we can find the right formula, the right timing to see ratification and the benefits that come with ratification," Crowley said.

---

Turkey will not approve sanction package against Iran in advance, Davutoğlu

**18 April 2010, Sunday**

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said on Saturday that it would be out of question for Turkey to give confirmation to sanction package envisaged for Iran in advance unless details of the package are revealed.

Davutoğlu, speaking to Turkish reporters in Brazil, said he would pay a visit to Iran next week and assess recent developments. He said new ideas regarding solution of the problem through diplomatic ways would be taken up.

"It is out of the question for Turkey to discuss a sanctions package that we don't know the details of," Davutoğlu said.

Davutoğlu said Turkey was a neighbor of Iran and may be one of the countries which would pay the cost the most, "we can not confirm the package in advance. All the ways should be exhausted. After all the efforts are exhausted, all members of the UN Security Council should again discuss the measure. We know how we suffered from the embargoes on Iraq," he said. Davutoğlu said stances of Turkey and Brazil on Iran's nuclear program were close, "Brazil also favors solution of the problem through diplomatic ways. We think that this problem may be solved without need for new sanctions and without new military tensions erupt."

---

#### Papandreou-Erdoğan meeting key in arms race reduction

18 April 2010, Sunday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Turkey and Greece have once again reiterated their desire to improve relations by reducing defense spending in both countries, a measure that will also help the troubled Greek economy recover. Analysts expect a confidence-building deal to be struck between Turkey and Greece to reduce military spending during Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou's meeting with the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan next month. The deal is of vital importance to Greece as it grapples with severe economic turmoil.

Turkey can now play an important role in mitigating the factors that led to the economic recession in Greece. Most analysts believe the primary reason behind Greece's severe economic crisis was its heavy military spending to contain the threat posed by Turkey. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, speaking after a meeting with Greek Alternate Foreign Minister Dimitris Droustas last week, said there would be no need for arms spending if the two neighbors work to build a "common future."

Greece, the country with the highest military expenditure to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio in Europe, has in a sense become a victim of its arms race with Turkey. In 2000 Turkey devoted \$16.4 billion to its military spending, while that figure was \$8.7 billion for Greece in the same year. In 2003 Turkey's military spending stood at \$13.4 billion, compared to \$8.5 million in Greece. Per capita defense spending in Turkey was around \$164 on average in the 2000s, while this number never went below \$709 in Greece.

Turkey's military spending gradually declined and fell to \$11.6 billion in 2008, while Greece's military expenditures consistently increased, reaching \$9.7 billion in the same year. Speaking about Greece's military spending and its connection to the financial crisis, International Crisis Group (ICG) Turkey analyst Hugh Pope said reports of large German sales of armaments to both Turkey and Greece illustrate a phenomenon -- which he says is most likely just coincidental -- that the German policy of excluding Turkey from the EU has contributed to tensions between Turkey and Greece, from which the German arms industry has then profited.

“Although the January trip to Turkey by German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle has done much to improve the climate, past statements by German politicians have left the impression that Germany opposes Turkey's EU membership, which frustrates Turkey and feeds tensions between Turkey and Greece,” Pope stressed.

An additional paradox is that Germany is also doing its best to help Greece emerge from the financial crisis as its partner in the EU, while one of the contributing reasons for that crisis is the fact that Greece's per capita military spending is higher than the average of NATO member countries. According to Pope, fear of Turkey is one of the main reasons why Greece spends large amounts on its military.

According to the Deutschlandfunk radio station, Greece buys 31 percent of its arms from Germany. This is a high figure considering that Greece ranks fifth among arms buyers in the world.

Speaking in an interview with The New York Times in Brussels in late March, Turkey's chief negotiator for EU talks, Egemen Bağış, said that to help Greece escape its “economic disaster” and reduce regional tensions, Ankara would reciprocate if the Greeks froze or cut defense procurement. “One of the reasons for the economic crisis in Greece is because of their attempt to compete with Turkey in terms of defense expenditures,” Bağış said.

“Even those countries that are trying to help Greece at this time of difficulty are offering to sell them new military equipment,” he added. “Greece doesn't need new tanks or missiles or submarines or fighter planes, neither does Turkey. It's time to cut military expenditure throughout the world, but especially between Turkey and Greece. Neither Greece nor Turkey needs German or French submarines,” Bağış said in the interview.

Last December, when the EU told Athens that it should reduce its arms expenditures to get its budget deficit under control, Greek officials responded by saying they could only start such a significant reduction only after a period of three years had elapsed due to tension with Turkey in the Aegean Sea. Athens also says it cannot abandon the previous government's order for six French FREMM multipurpose frigates worth 2.5 billion euros, despite its budget woes.

“The Greek prime minister was clear in stating that he regards the continental shelf as the issue to be discussed with Erdoğan. No other issue can be taken up at a high political level at this moment in time. The Greek government would, of course, welcome an agreement by the two sides on issues such as the dogfights in the Aegean, which are costly in human and economic terms. However, substantial progress on such an issue cannot be expected in the current conjuncture characterized by political instability in Turkey and the economic crisis in Greece,” Dimitris Tsarouhas, assistant professor of European politics at Bilkent University, said while speaking with Sunday's Zaman.

Noting that the Greek government has announced a defense budget of 6 billion euros for 2010 (it was 6.6 billion euros in the previous year), part of the cuts in response to the crisis, Sam Perlo-Freeman, a senior researcher of the Military Expenditure and Arms Production Programme at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), said Greek military expenditure, according to SIPRI estimates, is by far the highest as a share of GDP of all European Union countries.

“This is unquestionably due to the continuing tensions with Turkey over Cyprus and the Aegean,” Perlo-Freeman said. The expert noted that generally, statistical studies have failed to find a direct connection between changes in Greek and Turkish military spending -- a typical “arms race” pattern – and that, for example, between 1999-2008, Turkish military spending was generally going down, while Greece's was generally going up. But the high relative level of

Greek spending certainly relates to Turkey. "Improved relations with Turkey could therefore be expected to lead to a reduction in Greek military spending," Perlo-Freeman stated. Commenting on the benefits of military spending, Perlo-Freeman said it may create economic benefits if it is necessary to provide the level of security needed for investment -- but if the source of insecurity is removed, through cooperation with Turkey, for example, then there is no longer any potential economic benefit from military spending.

---

#### Turkey faces tough task of balancing act in nuke policy

18 April 2010, SUNDAY

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

It is hard to find anyone questioning the sincerity of Turkey's principle-based opposition to the proliferation of nuclear weapons within the entire region.

Yet, in particular, the prime minister's discourse -- again on principle -- defending Iran's right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes has led to questions over the persuasiveness of this opposition regarding Iran, since this discourse is constantly paired with his rebuke against Iran's arch-foe Israel and the international community for ignoring Israel's assumed atomic arsenal.

In the recent past, at any platform where the issue has been Iran's controversial nuclear program, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has drawn attention to Israel's undeclared nuclear arsenal and stated that it should be examined as well if Iran's nuclear program is being scrutinized. Israel is believed to be the only nuclear-armed power in the Middle East but has never confirmed or denied it. It has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Yet, such rhetoric has led to criticism among opinion leaders who said that Erdoğan's stance was encouraging Iran, which is already dragging its feet from engaging in cooperative dialogue with the international community over its disputed nuclear program, and which Washington and its allies suspect is a cover for building a nuclear weapon. Iran denies the charge, saying it aims to generate electricity and use it for other peaceful purposes.

Moreover, some commentators suggest that Iran is wasting Turkey's time and misusing Turkey's sincere and intense efforts at pushing for a diplomatic resolution to the controversy by pretending to be willing to respond in the affirmative to these diplomatic overtures.

"No," a senior Turkish diplomat said when asked whether there was a feeling among Turkish diplomats that the Iranians have been "wasting Turkey's time."

"Especially at the moment, definitely no," the same diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Sunday's Zaman, in apparent reference to Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's contacts on the issue with the US administration. These took place in Washington on the sidelines of a nuclear security summit hosted by US President Barack Obama early last week. "Turkey does not believe that its efforts are destined to be futile, since it frankly believes that there is still room for a diplomatic solution. Mr. Davutoğlu's efforts are aimed at yielding a result," the diplomat said. When reminded of the extremely conflicting messages coming from Tehran, for example, on whether they are into a deal, widely regarded as dead, under which Iran would send much of its low-enriched uranium (LEU) for processing abroad, the diplomat referred to internal divisions among the decision-making mechanisms of the Islamic republic.

A pretext for Israel too?

Only days before the summit in Washington, a senior Israeli government official said that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had cancelled a planned trip to Washington for Obama's



47-country nuclear security conference after learning that Egypt and Turkey had intended to raise the issue of Israel's assumed atomic arsenal at the meeting.

Opposing sanctions as a way of resolving the dispute between neighboring Iran and Western powers over Iran's controversial nuclear program, Erdoğan has firmly supported exhaustive diplomatic efforts to resolve the dispute. However, Erdoğan says Israel, which is widely believed to possess nuclear weapons although it has never openly acknowledged it, should also be facing pressure to get rid of them.

The censure against Israel turned out to be muted. Nonetheless, some Israeli commentators accused Netanyahu of shying away from a face-off with Obama over stalled Palestinian talks and using the possible censure as a pretext for avoiding it.

Turkey joined the 15-nation Security Council as a non-permanent member in January and will have the seat until the end of 2010.

According to another Turkish diplomat, "If and when there is a vote at the UN Security Council on imposing sanctions on Iran, Turkey has to be in a position which lets it justify its vote with confidence, whether it is eventually 'yes' or 'no'." The diplomat talked about Turkey's intense efforts to persuade Iran to act more cooperatively with the West while also urging the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany -- the P5+1-- for a modified approach towards Iran if it really wants to hold a healthy dialogue.

Turkey's seriousness about pursuing legitimate and justifiable policies obviously deserves appreciation, yet because of the prime minister's harsh words, that seriousness has remained in the background, with a considerable number of analysts suggesting the presence of political motives behind Erdoğan's public pronouncements on Iran's nuclear program. The same analysts argue that by appearing to attack Israel and back Iran, Erdoğan stands to benefit politically. What is at stake?

Pursuing legitimate and justifiable policies is a prerequisite for a country's credibility. Time will show whether Turkey's efforts for a diplomatic resolution to the Iran nuclear dispute will yield a result. Yet, for the time being, signals coming from Washington after talks between US and Turkish officials indicate that Ankara needs to be more careful with its methodology and wording on Iran. Such a signal was best reflected within delicate remarks delivered by US State Department spokesperson Philip J. Crowley.

"And let's remember that whatever happens involving Iran, Turkey borders Iran, and Turkey will be among the first countries to feel the impact of whatever happens. So we respect that. That's why Turkey has been deeply engaged in this process. We have an understanding with Turkey as to what needs to happen from here. We have a shared objective, which is that no one wants to see Iran emerge as a nuclear state in the Middle East. That's Turkey position. That's the United States' position," Crowley told reporters at a daily press briefing on Thursday, emphasizing that Washington comprehends Turkey's concerns over the impact of new sanctions on its neighbor. Nonetheless, during the rest of the briefing, Crowley's emphasis on "international credibility" is worthy of attention.

"Turkey recognizes that there is work being done on a sanctions resolution, and Turkey is part of that process and ultimately will have the opportunity to cast a vote on that. At the same time, Turkey has indicated it wants to continue to see if there's a way to resolve this through diplomacy. And obviously, at the end, what matters is what -- not only what Iran does, but also what matters is the international credibility, because we all have a very significant stake in this," he said.

When asked whether US and Turkish officials had discussed any sort of help for Turkey if sanctions on Iran go ahead, Crowley again referred to the same concept.

“There’s an international responsibility, that there are rights and responsibilities when it comes to the development of civilian nuclear energy. And there are countries that are playing by the rules, and there are other countries such as Iran and North Korea that are not playing by the rules. You can look at a country like Libya, for example, that it contemplated a nuclear program and it chose a different path. And we have obviously welcomed that and that’s opened the door for a different kind of relationship between Libya and the United States. Likewise, for a country like Iran or a country like North Korea, there are opportunities here should they choose to abide by their international obligations. But at the same time, that the credibility of the international system is at stake,” he said.

When Crowley explained that during his meeting with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Thursday, Davutoğlu brought up that as a neighbor of Iran, Turkey will be affected by whatever course of action the international community takes, he was asked about Clinton’s response to that.

“Now, once we get into -- and as a member of the international community and as a key leader in the region, Turkey has responsibilities. And just as the international community came together in the context of North Korea and not only passed tough sanctions, but also have been enforcing them, we would expect all countries, including Turkey, to step up to its responsibilities. But at the same time, we will be very cognizant of the fact that in doing so there is impact. But we think that the credibility of the international system is at stake,” he said, repeating the expressions “international credibility” and “at stake” for the third time.

---

#### Erdoğan, Medvedev discuss economic relations by phone

17 April 2010, Saturday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

As a follow-up to his meeting with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in Washington early this week on the sidelines of the nuclear summit, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Friday spoke with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, on the phone to discuss bilateral economic relations in particular.

Speaking to reporters on Friday, Putin’s Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov said the two prime ministers primarily discussed trade and economic relations during the phone conversation, which was also deemed to be in preparation for Medvedev’s visit to Turkey at the start of May.

Diplomats and ministers of the two countries will meet in early May to discuss bilateral relations and conclude a strategic partnership deal. The most important article of the deal is believed to be the reciprocal elimination of visa requirements between the two countries. Nearly 3 million Russian tourists are expected to visit Turkey this year.

During Erdoğan’s visit to Moscow in January, officials pledged to reach \$100 billion in trade between the two countries. The Turkish side believes the goal is not unattainable if Medvedev’s visit to Turkey is successful and if opportunities are created in the automotive, food, textile and construction sectors. Energy is undoubtedly one of the most important segments of relations between the two countries. The agreement to construct a nuclear reactor in Akkuyu, Mersin province, is also expected to be signed during the Russian president’s visit.

---

Report: Israel searching for airspace for drills after Turkey's refusal

17 April 2010, Saturday

TODAYS ZAMAN

-----

The Israeli Air Force (IAF) has its eyes on Europe and Asia as it searches for new training grounds for its fighter jets with an emphasis on long-range missions after Turkey's refusal to give permission to use its airspace, Israeli media reported on Friday.

Israel has extensive defense ties with Turkey, a NATO member and one of the few Muslim nations to have built an alliance with the Jewish state. Yet tension prevails in the relationship between Israel and Turkey, particularly since Ankara's harsh criticism of Israel's three-week offensive in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip from December 2008 to January 2009.

"We are looking for new places where we can fly," a senior IAF officer was quoted as saying by English language daily The Jerusalem Post.

As a result, the Defense Ministry is looking to continue an agreement it signed in 2006 that allows Israeli fighter jets to deploy in Romania. The IAF sent jets to Romania for training in 2007 and plans to deploy aircraft there again later this year, the daily said.

"Our ties with Turkey will never return to be the way they once were. It is unlikely that under the current government in Ankara we will be allowed to fly there again," a senior Israeli defense official was quoted as saying on Thursday by The Jerusalem Post.

Last October, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu made clear that the absence of any substantial move by Israel to end the months-long humanitarian tragedy in Gaza as well as Israel's unwillingness to revive peace efforts in the Middle East were a barrier to engaging in the usual military cooperation with Israel.

-----

EU should accept Turkey as member, says Estonian president

17 April 2010, Saturday

TODAYS ZAMAN

-----

Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said on Friday that Europe must think about Turkey's membership in the EU from a global and strategic perspective and accept the country as a member of the bloc.

Speaking at a joint news conference after his talks with President Abdullah Gül in Ankara, Ilves said Turkey has the right to be a member of the EU and that his country was not against Turkey's membership in the union.

Indicating that the EU should not think [about Turkey's membership] according to the possible results of the next local or general elections, he said if the EU is thinking about its future, it should think globally, assess the issue from a strategic perspective and accept Turkey into the bloc. He added that this was the way he personally thinks.

Gül said frequent visits between friendly countries were helping to boost bilateral relations and noted that issues such as Turkey-EU relations and Cyprus were discussed during his meeting with Estonian President Ilves.

Gül said Turkey had extended support to Estonia's membership of NATO, adding that both Turkey and Estonia had assumed tasks within NATO.

On Turkey's bilateral relations with Estonia, Ilves said he had visited Turkey during Gül's tenure as prime minister and has always had warm feelings towards Turkey. Ilves said he has on many occasions made statements or written articles in support of Turkey.

Noting that Turkish-Estonian relations have a long history, he recalled that Turkey was among the first countries that recognized Estonia as a new country by rejecting the Soviet occupation of Estonia. Turkey has always been a strong supporter of Estonia, he added.

Ilves also said there are Turkology departments at universities in Estonia and many Estonians who can speak Turkish.

Focusing on the importance of citizens from both countries getting to know each other, Ilves said he came to Turkey as a tourist and was expecting many Turks to visit his country.

When reminded of the fact that İstanbul is a European Capital of Culture for 2010 and whether there is any work going on in Estonia to introduce and promote Turkey, Ilves said Turkey was already a popular tourist destination for Estonians and that there were advertisements in many of the magazines published in the country promoting Turkish resorts.

---

Davutoğlu sees change in Iranian stance on uranium deal

16 APRIL 2010, FRIDAY

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has stated that he believes it is still possible to revive a deal, widely regarded as dead, under which Iran would send much of its low-enriched uranium, or LEU, for processing abroad. Davutoğlu, speaking to reporters in Washington, said on Wednesday that he had discerned a change in the Iranian stance over the past several months, during which he said he visited Tehran about a half-dozen times, most recently in early March. "There is a positive development and change of approach," Davutoğlu said. "We have some chance, and if we continue this diplomacy, I think we can achieve a solution." According to Western diplomats, Iran agreed "in principle" to a deal that would move most of its enriched uranium out of the country during an Oct. 1 meeting in Geneva with the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany.

The uranium would have been further enriched abroad and sent back to Iran -- under tight international safeguards -- to run a nuclear research reactor in Tehran that was built before the 1979 Islamic Revolution and produces medical isotopes.

Iran ignored a US call for a formal decision on the deal -- seen as a way to build trust and to start to address Western concerns it may be developing a nuclear bomb -- by the end of the year.

As a result, Western officials have all but declared the agreement dead and major powers have begun to discuss a fourth round of UN Security Council sanctions against Iran, which says its nuclear program is to generate power.

Davutoğlu, who said he may return to Iran in the coming weeks, said Tehran previously insisted on a simultaneous exchange inside Iran of its LEU for the fuel for its research reactor but it was now "more flexible in that position."

He said one problem was that the international community did not have sufficient stocks of medium-enriched uranium, or MEU, to hand over to Iran in exchange for its low-enriched uranium.

If we have today enough MEU in our hand to give to Iran, we will get the Iranian uranium the same day," he said. The proposed deal was based on an idea hatched by Mohamed ElBaradei, the former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The new IAEA director-general, Yukiya Amano, said on Tuesday that he has thrown his support behind the idea.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of US President Barack Obama's two-day summit on nuclear security, Amano was asked if he thought there was a way to bridge the differences and make the deal work.

"I don't see that indication for now," he replied. Although he was not hopeful, Amano said the offer was "still on the table."

Turkey wants details on proposed Iran sanctions

Davutoğlu also emphasized that the big powers on the UN Security Council are not keeping other members informed about discussions on sanctions against Iran. Davutoğlu said the five permanent members of the UN Security Council have not provided any details to nonpermanent members, including Turkey, about the content of the sanctions being discussed. He added, "How can we decide if we don't have any idea about the sanctions?"

Davutoğlu reiterated that Turkey does not believe that sanctions will help defuse the controversy over Iran's nuclear ambitions. Some analysts suspect Iranian hints of flexibility may aim to weaken support for sanctions on the UN Security Council.

US State Department spokesman Philip J. Crowley voiced skepticism that Tehran was actually willing to resuscitate the deal.

"The details do matter," Crowley said on Wednesday at a daily press briefing. "Iran communicates publicly ... some greater flexibility, but when you, you know, look behind the curtain, there's really nothing there."

Crowley was also reminded of Davutoğlu's remarks complaining of not being informed about the content of planned sanctions and was urged to provide information on what kind of sanctions Washington has been planning to propose at the UN.

"That work is ongoing in New York and I would expect -- I mean, we are having consultations with a range of countries," Crowley responded. When a journalist asked, "But not Turkey, or Brazil?" he said: "We have been consulting very closely with Turkey on Iran. We are only at the point now where we are beginning to identify the specifics of a resolution. And obviously, that is work that will involve the entire UN Security Council at the appropriate time."

Brazil and Turkey -- which both hold nonpermanent seats on the UN Security Council -- are studying an alternative proposal to deal with Iran's controversial nuclear program.

---

#### Baku, Yerevan divided over Turkish role in Karabakh

16 APRIL 2010,FRIDAY

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Talks between Turkish and Armenian leaders in Washington this week have sparked a debate in Armenia and Azerbaijan about Turkey's role in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute.

While Armenia categorically dismisses any Turkish role in the dispute -- saying its efforts to normalize relations with Ankara are not linked to this territorial rift -- Azerbaijani experts and politicians insist that peace is not attainable in the Caucasus without a solution in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Turkey has increased its efforts to normalize relations with its estranged neighbor Armenia in the run-up to a speech traditionally made by the US president on April 24, the day the world commemorates the victims of atrocities against Armenians in 1915. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Armenian President Serzh Sarkysyan met in Washington, D.C., on Monday on the sidelines of the nuclear security summit to discuss the status of the reconciliation

process between the two countries. While the contents of the talks remained undisclosed, Azerbaijan and Armenia made their positions clear in a series of public statements. Speaking to reporters in Washington, Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian said there was no sense in discussing the Nagorno-Karabakh issue with Turkey, adding that Turkey cannot act as a mediator in the Karabakh dispute. “Armenia will never agree to concessions on the Karabakh issue to normalize ties with Turkey,” Nalbandian noted. He also said linking the settlement of the Karabakh conflict to the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement would harm both processes. He made similar statements in Armenia on Wednesday, as well.

Armenia has resisted Turkey’s attempt to link the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations to the settlement Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. Azerbaijan, in contrast, claims the opening of the borders would be a big boon to Armenia, which occupies 20 percent of Azerbaijan’s territory. Speaking to members of Azerbaijan’s cabinet on Wednesday, Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev questioned the wisdom of solving other issues in the region while maintaining the status quo on the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, the local ANS TV station reported.

Erdoğan sent a special envoy, Feridun Sinirlioğlu, to both Yerevan and Baku last week. In Baku, he conveyed the view of the Turkish administration that Azerbaijan should not be concerned about the Turkish-Armenian talks. The primary aim of the Baku visit was apparently to reassure the Azerbaijani administration that Turkey does not intend to leave it hanging in regional politics.

In his statements to the cabinet, Aliyev said the opening of the border between Turkey and Armenia is clearly against Azerbaijan’s national interests. “How can the Azerbaijani public accept this fact if our national interests are being put aside, the occupation of our country is ignored and everything possible is being done to rescue a country [Armenia] from economic hardship?” Aliyev asked.

In addition, Azerbaijani presidential public policy administration head Ali Hasanov accused the US of often taking a unilateral position supporting Armenia, in remarks to reporters on Thursday. “We urge the US to take a neutral position,” Hasanov said. Hasanov also lauded Turkey’s position and effort in bringing the Karabakh issue to the forefront. “We are fully satisfied with Turkey’s stance on the Karabakh issue,” Hasanov noted.

The Azerbaijani president also stressed that the issue of opening the borders between Turkey and Armenia is a bilateral affair and that third parties should not be involved in the situation. “Neither we nor anyone else should interfere in this. These are relations between two countries. Of course, while these countries attempt to solve their problems, they will also consider the ongoing processes, history and historical relations in the region. What kind of things do those sides, which know nothing about the processes in the region, want to achieve by sabotage and pressure? We cannot accept this. This is clearly against our national policy,” Aliyev said.

---

#### Turkey demands details of Iran sanctions

Wednesday, 21 April 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

---

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said his country would not discuss a new package of UN sanctions against Iran unless details are revealed, Anatolia news agency reported Friday. “It is out of the question for us to discuss a sanctions package that we do not know the details of,” Davutoglu was quoted as telling reporters in Washington, where he attended the summit on nuclear security.

Turkey, a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, is opposed to a U.S. push for fresh sanctions to punish Iran for failing to halt its uranium enrichment program.

Davutoglu said he would visit Iran next week in a bid to find a diplomatic solution to the stand-off over Tehran's nuclear drive. He did not give a date.

“I do not think diplomatic channels have been used sufficiently on this issue. If we can do that, I believe we can find a solution,” the minister said, according to Hurriyet.

He added that he would brief Iranian officials about meetings he held with the U.S. administration.

“I believe we have made serious progress in our latest talks,” the minister said, without elaborating.

Davutoglu spoke before he left for Brazil where he was to hold talks with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Foreign Minister Celso Amorim.

Brazil is also a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and reluctant to vote for new sanctions against Iran.

Wednesday, 21 April 2010

---

### Turkey Pushes to Speed Karabakh Talks Between Armenia, Azerbaijan

Wednesday, 21 April 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

---

With a few days left for U.S. President Barack Obama to make his annual speech on the 1915 killings of the Armenians during the last days of Ottoman Empire, Turkey has increased its diplomatic efforts to speed up the peace process between Baku and Yerevan over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Foreign Minister Elmar Mamedyarov on Monday to inform them about recent meetings on the reconciliation process between Turkish and Armenian officials in Washington.

“We first met with France’s President Nicholas Sarkozy, then with Mr. Obama and we also contacted the Russians. These three countries make up the Minsk Group. And we also had meetings with Armenia and Azerbaijan. Now we have a better picture in front of us,” Davutoğlu told reporters traveling with him late Monday.

“Thanks to these sorts of meetings we can always keep the issue on the agenda of the international community. We do have the objective of keeping the relations between the parties in the right rhythm.” Davutoğlu added that Russian President Dimitry Medvedev would visit Turkey on May 11 and 12.

Turkey and Armenia signed two protocols last year in Zurich to normalize their relations and open their shared border. But due to Azerbaijan’s strong reaction to the protocols before the Armenians withdraw from the occupied Azeri lands, Turkey introduced the pre-condition of improvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh talks for parliamentary ratification of the protocols.

Proposed timeline

The U.S. has been a strong advocate of the protocol between Turkey and Armenia and has pressured both countries to ratify as soon as possible. The approval of the Armenian “genocide” resolution by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House Representative on March 4 was seen as an early warning to Turkey if it were to consider halting the normalization process.

When asked if Turkey would accept a proposed timeline for the ratification of the protocols, Davutoğlu underlined the importance of keeping the process moving in the right direction. “Both

parties should of course do their best to conclude the process as soon as possible. But instead of highlighting the timelines, it is better to work on building mutual confidence.”

Though neither Turkey nor Armenia views the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as an important hurdle before the normalization of the two countries, it has certainly slowed the process. For diplomatic sources, progress in the direction of the resolution of the two-decade old conflict could mobilize Turkey and Armenia to conclude what they started in 2009.

In this regard, Armenia’s potential decision to withdraw from even two regions surrounding the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave could have an enormous effect on the regional stability. Turkish officials believe such a move, which would break up the status quo, could trigger a more positive mood between the parties and lead to more courageous steps in the future.

Wednesday, 21 April 2010

---

### Turkey, China Sign Mou On Cultural Cooperation

Friday, 16 April 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

---

Turkey and China signed a memorandum of understanding on cultural cooperation on Friday. The MoU enables the establishment of culture centers in both countries mutually.

The agreement was signed on Friday by Turkish Culture Minister Ertugrul Gunay and Chinese Culture Minister Cai Wu after the meeting of Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan and Li Changchun, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, in Ankara.

---

### Turkey's top religious official meets Syria's Assad

Bardakoglu said his meeting was the first contact between Turkey and Syria over religious matters.

Thursday, 22 April 2010 15:52

WORLD BULLETIN

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad received on Thursday Ali Bardakoglu, president of Turkey's Religious Affairs Directorate, in Damascus.

Speaking to the Anadolu News Agency, Bardakoglu said his meeting was the first contact between Turkey and Syria over religious matters.

Bardakoglu said theology schools in Turkey needed instructors to teach Arabic, adding that his visit to Syria aimed at seeking cooperation opportunities on this issue.

AA

---

## **ECONOMIC NEWS**

Unemployment still plaguing economy, increases to 14.5 percent

16 APRIL 2010,FRIDAY

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Despite the influx of positive economic indicators showing that Turkey is well on its way to recovering from the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression, unemployment, a global nightmare, is still rearing its ugly head after increasing by a full percentage point to 14.5 percent



in January over December, although there are clear signs that the turbulent 2009 has been left behind.

The Turkish Statistics Institute (TurkStat) announced figures for unemployment in January yesterday, showing that this chronic problem had increased to 14.5 percent, a full percentage point higher than December, even with the significant increase in exports and industrial production that occurred during that period. The figures indicate that an extra 230,000 individuals were added to the army of the unemployed, while the number of individuals employed also fell by 291,000.

The data show that the unemployment situation in Turkey has become worse in more ways than just the pure unemployment rate. The labor force participation rate also fell, albeit slightly, from 47.6 percent to 47.5 percent from December to January. Non-agricultural employment, an indicator that does not include the volatile agricultural sector, also increased by a percentage point from 16.6 percent in December to 17.6 percent in January, a sign that urban and industrial unemployment is still growing.

The employment rate, or the percentage of the population employed, decreased from 41.2 percent to 40.6 percent in an indication that some people are becoming discouraged from even applying for work.

Industry and Trade Minister Nihat Ergün, speaking at a conference in İstanbul yesterday, stated that although the unemployment figures were showing some volatility, they would stay within the goals put forward in the Medium-term Economic Program.

When looking at gender, the participation rate of the female labor force stayed stable from December to January, at 25.9 percent. The unemployment rate showed a similar trend to the national average, increasing from 13.4 percent to 14.5 percent from December to January. The male unemployment figure was similar, with 14.5 percent unemployment increasing from 13.6 percent.

Slightly better news

The numbers, however, show great improvements compared to January of 2009, indicating that 2010 will not be a repeat performance. According to the figures, the unemployment rate was a full percentage point lower in January 2010 than a year before, when it was 15.5 percent. The labor force participation rate was also almost 2 percentage points higher, increasing from 45.8 percent in January of last year to 47.5 percent. Moreover, the share of the population working, or the employment rate, rose from a dismally low 38.7 percent to 40.6 percent.

Research by Bahçeşehir University Center for Economic and Social Research stated that non-agricultural unemployment has decreased for the first time since the onset of the crisis. In comparison to the figures of a year ago, for the first time since the start of the crisis, unemployment decreased by 83,000 individuals, down from 18.5 percent in January 2009 to 17.6 percent in January of this year. According to their analysis, when the non-agricultural unemployment rate is seasonally adjusted, the figure drops to 16.3 percent.

With regard to educational levels of the unemployed, the countless cries from the business world for trained workers from vocational schools may have paid off. According to the figures, the unemployment rate for workers from vocational high schools actually fell from 16.1 percent to 15.6 percent from January 2009 to January 2010. During this same period, university graduates had a slightly tougher time, as their unemployment rate grew from 11.4 percent to 11.5 percent.

---

Aksa Enerji launches \$400 million IPO

16 April 2010, Friday

Todays zaman

-----  
Aksa Enerji, the largest independent power generation firm in Turkey, plans to raise around \$400 million in a May listing, a source familiar with the matter said on Thursday.

The company plans to sell 15 percent to 25 percent of its existing share capital in new shares to fund expansion, the source said. The IPO, likely to be the largest on the Istanbul Stock Exchange since 2008, will kick start a bookbuilding process on April 27, with pricing expected around May 7. Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.

-----  
Turkish Petroleum Corporation Invests 4 Bln USD for Oil Exploration in Black Sea

Thursday, 22 April 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

-----  
Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) has invested four billion USD for oil exploration in Black Sea so far.

TPAO Director General Mehmet Uysal told A.A on Thursday that the investment amount would be more than 50-60 billion USD, if oil production started in Black Sea.

Noting that they thought there was an important oil and natural gas potential in Black Sea, Uysal said that if TPAO found oil or natural gas in Black Sea, Turkey's 40-year energy need would be met.

"We believe there is 10 billion barrels of producible oil and three trillion cubic meters of producible natural gas in Black Sea," added Uysal.

Uysal said that they also believed there was a serious oil and natural gas potential in the Mediterranean too.

TPAO was founded in 1954 with the responsibility of being involved in hydrocarbon exploration, drilling, production, refinery and marketing activities as Turkey's national company. Until 1983, as an integrated oil company, it was engaged in all the activity fields of oil industry from exploration to production, refinery, marketing and transportation.

Today, TPAO is a national oil company involved in merely upstream (exploration, drilling, well completion and production) sector.

Thursday, 22 April 2010

-----  
Turkey, China to increase flight traffic, destinations

17 April 2010 Saturday

TODAYS ZAMAN

-----  
Turkey and China have reached an agreement to increase both passenger and cargo flights between the two countries as well as add a new city to the list of destinations served.

In a written statement released on Friday, the Transportation Ministry's Civil Aviation General Directorate (SHGM) announced that a memorandum of understanding had been signed between Turkey and China on Thursday after the completion of civil aviation talks between SHGM General Manager Ali Aridur and Rong Hua Wang, director general of the Department of Air Transportation of the General Administration of Civil Aviation of China.

According to the deal, Turkey will start flights from İstanbul to Guangzhou in addition to the present destinations of Beijing and Shanghai. The number of flights was also raised from current

10 in a week to 21. Furthermore, there will be 14 cargo flights between the two countries every week, up from the previous four.

---

MÜSİAD declares support for PM's employment campaign call

17 April 2010 Saturday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's call for members of the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB) to employ one additional worker each was reflected in a message the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (MÜSİAD) delivered to its members to support the campaign.

Around 600 TOBB members convened in Ankara on Thursday to discuss the prime minister's request and to vote on a course of action. The voting ended with 94 percent of the businessmen unwilling to make such a move.

However, MÜSİAD announced it would shoulder the burden for helping to solve the unemployment problem. Similarly, the Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON) has also announced it would support the prime minister's idea.

Speaking to Today's Zaman on the country's agenda, MÜSİAD President Ömer Cihad Vardan said he sent a note to the members of the association asking them to employ at least one more worker if they are financially able to do so. He noted that one of the members of his association is planning this year to invest \$1 billion and employ 2,000 new workers.

Vardan stated that many industrialists are searching for skilled workers who already have expertise in certain jobs. For this reason, he noted, the measures to encourage vocational training at the high-school level must be increased.

The MÜSİAD head also didn't hesitate to lend his support to the government's recently announced stimulus plan for craftsmen and artisans on the grounds that this package would significantly help the country's small companies.

Vardan also mentioned the unregistered economy as one of the biggest burdens on the economy and criticized it, saying: "This means seizing others' rights unfairly. This is an ethical problem, and we must work to end it."

Banks must be more active in post-crisis era

Recalling Turkey's ambitious target to become one of the top 10 largest economies of the world, Vardan said a common and concerted effort with the participation of all segments of society is required.

Blaming the financial sector for failing to back producers sufficiently during the hard times of the global economic crisis, Vardan called on the banks to be more involved in the economy in the next period.

---

Turkey, China sign four deals to boost commercial relations

17 April 2010, Saturday

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Four agreements were signed between Turkey and China yesterday in the fields of tourism, construction and energy, during an official visit by a high-level Chinese delegation to Turkey. Presided over by Li Changchun, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China, the delegation was received by Deputy Prime Minister and Economy

Minister Ali Babacan. Following the meeting, four agreements were signed between the two countries, the first being a cultural memorandum of understanding, which envisions the establishment of cultural centers in each country. A letter of intent for financial cooperation between China and Turkey was signed by Turkey's Treasury undersecretary and officials from the China Development Bank. An agreement was also reached between Eren Holding of Turkey and the Chinese International Sinoma Engineering Co. Ltd. on the Akdeniz cement project. In addition, Turkish Bereket Energy Production and Chinese Zhejiang Orient Engineering signed a deal for cooperation on the Çankırı power plant project. The delegation comprised six ministers along with businessmen and journalists from China.

---

#### Turkish contractors get large piece of pie in Turkmenistan'

17 APRIL 2010 SATURDAY

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Turkish firms in Turkmenistan are reshaping the way business is being done and are making themselves known in various sectors, aiming to export to the world through the land of their ancestors

State Minister Zafer Çağlayan, visiting Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, gave the president the Government Official of the Year Award yesterday, presented by the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Foundation (TÜSİAV) for his efforts to transform Turkmenistan into a developed nation and for his support of Turkish businessmen in the country. Berdimuhamedov accepted the award and stated that the Turkish businessmen his country were vital to the growth of the economy and that their numbers were so large that he was unsure of how many of them were in his country.

Çağlayan noted that Turkmenistan's construction sector was backed by Turkish contractors and that they were currently involved in over \$17 billion in projects in the country. He added that the biggest source of projects for the Turkish contracting sector during the economic crisis was Turkmenistan and requested that the president give preference to Turkish firms for power plant construction.

---

#### Türk Telekom on list of world's top 21 companies

19 APRIL 2010 MONDAY

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Turkish telecommunications giant Türk Telekom was selected as one of the world's top 21 companies performing best in global markets by leading global financial management and advisory company Merrill Lynch, the company announced in a written statement on Sunday. Türk Telekom is the only company on the list from Turkey. Merrill Lynch prepared the list after examining the market performance of 2,973 companies in 68 countries over the past eight quarters, or between March 2008 and March 2010. The factors that affected the results were the rise in revenues of firms during this period along with their financial statements and profitability, the statement read. Apart from Türk Telekom, the list, which is made up of 21 companies operating in nine sectors, also includes leading firms Daimler, Nike and Volkswagen. While the companies on the list were operating in 13 countries, eight of them are from developing countries, the statement said.

Merrill Lynch stressed in the report that the shares of firms on the list were performing better than the overall market.

---

IMF raises forecast for Turkey's growth

Wednesday, April 21, 2010

ANKARA – Bloomberg

HURRIYAT

---

Turkey's economy may expand 5.2 percent this year, the International Monetary Fund, or IMF, said in a report on Wednesday, raising its forecast as domestic demand helps the country recover from recession.

The IMF prediction exceeds the government's estimate of 3.5 percent growth and is higher than the 3.7 percent the fund forecast in its October issue of the World Economic Outlook. The IMF expects Turkish growth to slow to 3.4 percent in 2011.

The economy expanded an annual 6 percent in the last three months of 2009.

Turkey is rebounding from the global financial crisis faster than many peers in eastern Europe because domestic confidence "has already recovered from the initial external shock" and capital flows and trade are returning to normal, the IMF report said.

Inflation will average 9.7 percent over 2010, compared with 6.3 percent last year, the IMF said.

The average rate in 2011 will be 5.7 percent, it said.

The current-account deficit will widen to 4 percent of gross domestic product this year from 2.3 percent in 2009, the IMF said. The previous forecast for the 2010 deficit was 3.7 percent of GDP.

---

GIMF report says Turkish economy to grow 5.2 percent in 2010

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that Turkish economy is expected to grow by 5.2 percent in 2010 and 3.4 percent in 2011.

World Economic Outlook" report of the IMF said that global economic growth would probably become 4.25 in 2010 and 2011.

The report said that consumer prices in Turkey would probably rise by 9.7 percent in 2010 and 5.7 percent 2011.

"In emerging Europe, growth prospects also vary widely. Economies that weathered the global crisis relatively well (Poland) and others where domestic confidence has already recovered from the initial external shock (Turkey) are projected to rebound more strongly, helped by the return of capital flows and the normalization of global trade," it said.

22 April 2010, Thursday

THE ANATOLIA NEWS AGENCY WASHINGTON

---

Auto industry picks up in first quarter, percent growing by 7.2

The Turkish auto industry enjoyed growth of 7.2 percent in the first quarter of the year and saw 107,195 vehicles sold compared to the same quarter of the previous year, a recent report has shown.

In a written statement released on Wednesday, the Automobile Manufacturers' Association (OSD) announced that the automobile market had begun to contract again in October of last year following the expiration of private consumption tax (ÖTV) cuts at the end of September. But automobile manufacturers managed to significantly boost demand in December after introducing

attractive promotions, the report read, adding, however, that this situation also led people to purchase vehicles earlier and caused January automobile sales figures to drop. But the sector started to revive again in February, a trend that also continued in March. The market grew by an impressive 65 percent in March from one month earlier, the OSD underlined.

The market for automobiles contracted by 16.4 percent in the third month of the year compared to a year ago, which stemmed from the fact that tax incentives were introduced in March 2009, enabling the sector to see high levels of sales.

The OSD also said the heavy commercial vehicle market began to revive in March and grew by 17.2 percent in the first quarter of the year over the same period of last year. During this period, the light commercial vehicle market enjoyed growth of 27.1 percent, while the bus market continued to contract, dropping by a steep figure of 69 percent.

During the same period, automotive industry exports rose by 67.3 percent, while automobile exports registered an increase of 52.9 percent. The first quarter of the year also saw total automotive production up by 80.7 percent and automobile production increase by 63.4 percent compared to the same quarter of 2009. A total of 203,472 motor vehicles were exported in the January-March period, of which 122,310 were automobiles. Tractor exports, on the other hand, dropped by 4 percent to 2,830, while the production of tractors rose by 88 percent to 6,124 during the same period.

22 April 2010, Thursday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

---

İstanbul to begin hosting world's largest white goods expo

İstanbul will begin hosting World's largest white-goods expo, Domotechnica Components, which had been held in Cologne, Germany for the past 30 years.

160 companies from 14 countries, 85 of which are foreign, will participate in the fair.

18,000 foreign and 12,000 local visitors are expected to visit the expo, which will draw purchasing delegations from 50 countries.

Ateş Atalay, a senior official of the Forum Fairs which is organising the expo in Turkey said Turkey offered a wide market potential with its vicinity to markets in Middle East, Asia and North Africa.

Domotechnica Components will be held in İstanbul every two years.

An information note posted in the official website of the forum said the white goods sector in Turkey became one of the important industry sectors with its high standards in product quality and diversity, its significance in terms of the market potential is also evident.

It said Turkey was a very attractive market for household appliances with the construction industry growing continuously and 500.000 people getting married each year.

It said the approximate annual growth of 2,5% in the number of households was considerably above that of developed countries (1,5% as average).

It said Turkey could be reckoned as an excellent turntable between Europe, Asia and Middle East and as a stable market, expecting visitors from the neighbouring countries like Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Iran, Iraq or Syria, as they enjoyed easy access to Turkey.

The Expo will be open to visitors between April 22-25.

Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.

22 April 2010, Thursday

THE ANATOLIA NEWS AGENCY İSTANBUL

---

## Greek crisis at apex amid public discontent

Thursday, April 22, 2010

ATHENS - From wire dispatches

---

Neighboring Greece is battling one of the worst economic crises in decades, as public discontent spills into the streets. European Union's statistics agency revises the country's 2009 budget deficit figures for the worse, triggering a downward spiral in bond markets. The yield for 10-year government bonds spikes to 8.761 percent

Market confidence in Greece tumbled the same day civil servants in the country staged a 24-hour strike against the government's austerity measures and expected job cuts. To add insult to injury, the European Union's statistics agency announced the country's budget deficit was even worse than previously thought.

Increasingly convinced that the economy might default on its mounting debt, the markets turned their back on Greece. The interest rate demanded to lend money to the economy jumped above 8.5 percent and the yield on 10-year government bonds was at a massive 8.761 percent at 4:23 p.m. on Thursday.

Speaking to Agence-France Presse, Natixis bond strategist Jean-Francois Robin said Greek debt is now considered "as risky as some emerging economies" and that the crisis reminds some investors of Argentina, which defaulted on its debt in 2001.

"Some in the market are convinced that Greece will find itself in Argentina's situation or be forced to reschedule its debt," Robin said. "Today, Greece, which is part of the European Union and has adopted the euro, is considered by investors as risky as Dubai, Iceland and riskier than Bulgaria or Romania."

A month ago, the yield on the Greek 10-year bond was about 6.3 percent, which the Greek government said at the time was unbearably high. The difference between the rate at which Greece has to borrow on international markets and what the eurozone benchmark Germany borrows has now widened to 5.48 percentage points.

The one-day strike disrupted public services, shut down schools and left state hospitals working with emergency staff. Protesters from a Communist Party-backed labor union blockaded Athens' main port of Piraeus, disrupting ferry services, the Associated Press reported.

Revision for the worse

Eurostat raised Greece's budget deficit in 2009 to 13.6 percent of gross domestic product from an earlier prediction of 12.9 percent, while the ratio of government debt to GDP stood at 115.1 percent, the second highest in the European Union after Italy.

In comments that rattled the markets, the statistics agency also expressed "a reservation on the quality of the data reported by Greece." It also said the 2009 figures could be revised further, to the tune of 0.3 to 0.5 percentage points of GDP for the deficit and 5 to 7 percentage points of GDP for the debt.

Athens said its target of reducing its deficit by at least 4 percentage points in 2010 remained unchanged despite the revision.

"The government has already adopted all the necessary measures in excess of 6 percent of GDP to ensure the achievement of this objective," the finance ministry said.

It said the new figures showed the scale of Greece's financial troubles, which it blamed on mishandling by the previous, conservative government.

Markets were shocked last fall when the government announced that the previous conservative Greek government had issued misleading financial data for years.

A few thousand protesters marched through central Athens, carrying banners reading "Tax the rich" and "Don't take the bread from our table." Scuffles broke out when a group of demonstrators challenged police lines near the city's central Syntagma Square, and police responded with tear gas.

Greek airports remained open, however, after air traffic controllers suspended their participation in the strike because of the travel chaos caused by Iceland's volcanic ash cloud.

Labor unions fear deeper cuts after the Socialist government began talks this week with the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission for a three-year rescue package aimed at easing the country's acute debt crisis.

"The IMF has the same cookie-cutter solution for different economies ... Now they are making a European cookie cutter," AP quoted Spyros Papaspyros, head of the civil servants umbrella union ADEDY, as saying.

Unbearable debt

Greece is struggling to cope with a debt of 300 billion euros (\$406 billion) and needs to borrow about 54 billion euros this year alone. It has a projected public debt of more than 120 percent of gross domestic product through 2011.

According to analysts at the Royal Bank of Scotland, the EU would fight any suggestion of debt restructuring by Greece, because it would imply a failure of the bloc's bailout plan. "Even a voluntary restructuring should be seen as a disaster," Bloomberg quoted a report by Harvinder Sian, a senior bond strategist at RBS in London. "It would mean the failure of the EU to buy Greece time, a prelude to eventual Greek default and then EMU breakup. The big picture would be horrendous."

Deficits have surged across Europe after governments were forced to bail out banks and spend on stimulus to fight the worst recession in 60 years. Greece's shortfall last year was more than four times the EU limit, though it was not the region's biggest. Ireland's budget gap was revised up to 14.3 percent, the largest for any country since the start of the euro in 1999, Eurostat said.

---

#### Syria eyes increased cooperation with Turkey in construction

The Syrian government is interested in stepping up cooperation with Turkey in the construction sector as this area has entered a stable growth trend in Syria, the Arab nation's construction and housing minister said on Monday.

Syrian Construction and Housing Minister Omar Ghalawenji was visiting Turkish Public Works and Housing Minister Mustafa Demir in Ankara on Monday. Speaking to reporters following a meeting to discuss future cooperation, Demir said the government was ready to engage in joint projects with the Syrian side.

The Syrian minister said they were keen to upgrade the level of construction investments in his country and that Turkey could contribute to this. The minister said the two countries could cooperate particularly in mass housing projects along with wastewater treatment and water supply projects. Regarding work carried out by the Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKİ), Ghalawenji said they would like to see TOKİ engaged in new projects in Syria. He added that four Turkish contractors have recently conveyed their interest in launching mass housing projects in Syria.

Also speaking to reporters after the meeting, Iyass Aldairi, manager of the Syrian General Housing Establishment, said the country's demand for housing grows by around 100,000



annually. He said Turkish construction firms should take their chances and enter the Syrian market. Aldairi said they planned to commence a new sale program with repayment terms of up to 15-20 years, similar to that of TOKİ.

Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.

20 April 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

---

Turkey sells TL 1.51 billion at bond auction

20 APRIL 2010, TUESDAY

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Turkish Treasury sold on Tuesday a total of 1.51 billion TL at a 7-year bond auction.

TRY denominated Government Bond (FRN), with quarterly floating coupons was auctioned with settlement date of April 21st, 2010 and maturity date of January 4th, 2017.

The auction was held as part of Treasury's "April-June 2010 Domestic Borrowing Strategy."

Nominal bids amounted to 761.7 million TL and nominal sales were worth 458.6 million TL. A net total of 457 million TL was raised at the auction.

The treasury sold a total of 1.058 billion TL to public institutions and market maker banks in non-competitive sales.

---

Turkey banking sector employment hits record high in March 2010

20 APRIL 2010 TUESDAY

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Number of people employed in commercial and investment banks in Turkey has grown to 174,493, hitting a record high since 1999, according to March 2010 figures of a nationwide association of banks.

The number of branches of commercial, development and investment banks increased 203 up to 9029 as private commercial banks and foreign private commercial banks closed down 15 and 21 of their branches respectively.

Twenty-six percent of the banking sector employees worked in state-owned banks as 48 percent of them was employed in private banks. The figure was 23 percent in foreign capital banks.

Fifty percent of the overall banking sector employees were women as the figure was 40 percent and 55 percent in state-owned and private banks respectively.

---

Marmaray connects Asia, underwater link

A tunnel on the Asian side of Marmaray, a project that will link the city's Asian and European sides via an undersea commuter train line, has been linked to a portion of the tunnel currently under water.

The Yavuz Tüneli, which starts from Üsküdar on the city's Anatolian side, has reached the underwater channel, Transportation Minister Binali Yıldırım said on Sunday.

In a ceremony to mark the connection of the two tunnels, Yıldırım said 50 percent of the underwater tunnels, a total of 13.6 kilometers, have been completed in the Marmaray project.

The foundation for the Marmaray line was laid by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on May 9, 2004, and construction is being carried out by DHL, Japanese contractor Taisei Corporation and Turkish firm Gama-Nurol. The project includes 13.6 kilometers of tubes, 1.4

kilometers of which are underwater. The 36-station line will provide travel between the European and Asian sides of İstanbul in just two minutes and with extreme connectivity allow seamless transfers to other forms of transportation throughout the city, including lines that connect to the city's two airports. When the project is completed, currently scheduled for Oct. 29, 2013, passengers will be able to go from Halkalı to Sabiha Gökçen in 100 minutes.  
Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.

20 April 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

---

Turkey sells TL 1.51 billion at bond auction

20 APRIL 2010 TUESDAY

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Turkish Treasury sold on Tuesday a total of 1.51 billion TL at a 7-year bond auction.

Turkey sells TL 1.51 billion at bond auction

Turkish Treasury sold on Tuesday a total of 1.51 billion TL at a 7-year bond auction.

TRY denominated Government Bond (FRN), with quarterly floating coupons was auctioned with settlement date of April 21st, 2010 and maturity date of January 4th, 2017.

The auction was held as part of Truesary's "April-June 2010 Domestic Borrowing Strategy."

Nominal bids amounted to 761.7 million TL and nominal sales were worth 458.6 million TL. A net total of 457 million TL was raised at the auction.

The treasury sold a total of 1.058 billion TL to public institutions and market maker banks in non-competitive sales.

---

**COMMENTARY**

The Turkey-EU-Cyprus triangle

18 April 2010, Sunday

AMANDA PAUL

TODAYS ZAMAN

---

Today Turkish Cypriots go to the polls to choose a new president. It is without doubt one of the most (if not the most) important elections that northern Cyprus has ever held.

There are two clear choices: Vote for incumbent President Mehmet Ali Talat and allow him to continue constructive peace talks with Greek Cypriot President Dimitris Christofias, which will hopefully end in a comprehensive settlement deal, or vote for Prime Minister Derviş Eroğlu and accept an increased risk of the continuation of the status quo, or worse. And of course, today's vote not only impacts the lives of Cypriots both in the north and south of the island, but will also have considerable ramifications far beyond the island's boundaries, including on Turkey's bid to join the European Union.

Barring a last-minute upset, hard-liner Eroğlu is expected to win, which is highly unfortunate and puts at risk the peace talks that have been ongoing between Talat and Christofias for the last 18 months. For me, no matter how slim the chance, Talat still offers the best possibility of a future beyond the past. For his entire career, he has never wavered in his desire for Cyprus to be reunified. Even in the run-up to this election, he has shown courage and sincerity in his vision.

He could have played a different game with Christofias, but he chose not to. He has shown integrity, which is a rare quality among Cypriot politicians. Early this year the talks intensified and both leaders have been increasingly ready to make compromises, with the two “motherlands,” Turkey and Greece, also pressing strongly for a deal. Furthermore, some taboos have been broken along the way -- Turkish officials have met with Greek Cypriot civil society representatives and the Greek Cypriot church has been welcomed in the north. This was unimaginable only a short time ago.

But clearly concessions are never easy to accept, and this will be reflected in the vote. Moreover, Talat has been let down by the international community and in particular the EU. The promises vis-a-vis direct trade that were made in the aftermath of the failed 2004 referendum on the UN Annan plan (which saw Turkish Cypriots supporting it by 65 percent and Greek Cypriots rejecting it by 76 percent) were not delivered, and this cost him a great deal because he trusted EU leaders to deliver to his people. In this respect, it is even more unfortunate that this election coincides precisely with developments in the EU that could result in these promises finally being delivered. Additionally, the fact that the indigenous Turkish Cypriot population is decreasing (there are more Turkish Cypriots in London than on the island) while the presence of mainland Turks and “mixed” Turkish Cypriots has increased will also be reflected in the election result. Not surprisingly, most of the Turks that came to the island following the 1974 operation support Eroğlu because they believe that Talat has sold them out during the peace negotiations. Under an eventual peace deal, it is very likely that a considerable number will be asked to return to Turkey. Eroğlu does not support the bi-zonal, bi-communal federation-type solution that Talat and Christofias have been negotiating. The worst case scenario is that the talks on the island may totally collapse, and Turkey’s EU process will run aground, given that Turkey only has four negotiating chapters left to open if you consider all those that are blocked by the Greek Cypriots because of Turkey’s refusal to open its ports and airspace to the Greek Cypriots until the EU delivers on its promises to the Turkish Cypriots.

However, while it would be depressing to see Talat go, there is a small light at the end of the tunnel. The recent request made by the European Commission for the European Parliament to reconsider the legal basis of the proposed direct trade directive opens the way for the possibility to have it implemented if the European Parliament passes the change, although it would still require a qualified majority in the European Council. The Greek Cypriots will no doubt fight tooth and nail to prevent this happening, but it is not totally impossible. If successful, this should open the way for Turkey to open its ports and airspace to the Republic of Cyprus. This would in turn remove the veto that the Republic of Cyprus currently places on a number of Turkey’s chapters. If all this were to happen, it should in the first place improve the image of the EU amongst Turkish Cypriots, showing that the EU is a credible and trustworthy partner, as well as clearing Turkey’s path to the EU, which should give Turkey an even greater incentive to get a deal in place on the island. In this scenario, Mr. Eroğlu may find his tough approach difficult to maintain.

However, if all of this does not happen, the future looks very bleak indeed. Therefore, the EU should do all it can to get the directive implemented. With stability in the region at risk, even those countries that oppose Turkey’s EU membership should not stand in the way.

---

DOĞU ERGİL

## Nuclear summit 2010

### USAK PUBLICATIONS

The stated reason why US President Barack Obama convened a 47-nation summit is to keep nuclear arms out of the hands of terrorists.

But there is a second equally important reason: to convince powerful states like China to impose a new round of sanctions on Iran, which is believed to be working towards producing nuclear arms.

President Obama's invitation brought together an impressive group of world leaders for a cause that concerns the common future of mankind. The initiative bore some concrete fruit. For example, Mr. Viktor Yanukovich, the Ukrainian president, declared that his nation would get rid of its inventory of highly enriched uranium. President Obama expressed pleasure with this decision because it would greatly help international efforts to keep these materials out of the hands of terrorists.

The expectation of having China among other UN Security Council members to put pressure on Iran to abandon its ambition for nuclear weapons was realized to a great extent. Although a definite set of sanctions against Iran to deter its nuclear weapons program has not yet been decided on, Chinese President Hu Jintao had instructed the Chinese delegation to the United Nations to begin working with the US. China is the last of the five (the US, UK, France, and Russia) permanent members of the UN Security Council to agree on sanctions against Iran. As of today nine countries have nuclear weapons, or simply said, atomic bombs. Thirty-eight other countries store or produce enriched uranium and plutonium. The magnitude of their nuclear storage is enough to make more than 100,000 nuclear bombs. It is reported that there have been 18 cases of weapons-grade (highly enriched) uranium theft since 1993. Authorities in this issue point the finger at Russia, the former Soviet republics and Pakistan as the weakest links.

While President Obama seems to have Chinese President Jintao on the bandwagon to impose a fourth round of UN sanctions against Iran, China, Russia and Turkey have so far acted as if they are convinced of Tehran's statement that Iran's nuclear program is for peaceful purposes. All three have significant economic ties with Iran.

Iran expressed its displeasure with the summit and said it would not be swayed by any decisions made there. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad added that the gathering intended to humiliate Iran and its people.

But many heads of state from the Middle East are worried about the potential of Iran developing a nuclear arsenal and triggering a Middle East arms race. It is with this concern that President Obama signed a new treaty with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev a week before the summit to cut US and Russian nuclear stocks and limit the use of nuclear weapons.

These are efforts that aim to rally global action on reducing nuclear hazards by way of reducing stocks of weapons-grade plutonium and thus locking down loose nuclear materials worldwide. Otherwise irresponsible fanatical groups such as al-Qaeda that are trying to secure a nuclear weapon and other weapons of mass destruction may get what they are after.

The danger has led to the formulation of a final communiqué in which participating leaders have pledged to work toward preventing "vulnerable nuclear material" from getting into the hands of rogue actors and developing more effective ways for dealing with nuclear smuggling.

Needless to say Iran and North Korea were not welcome at the summit where the envisaged preventative action is pretty much against them. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was also missing, knowing that Muslim leaders, including Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, would seize the opportunity to demand that Israel get rid of its nuclear arsenal.

18 April 2010, Sunday

---

### Is There a Future for Turkey With(out) the IMF?

Thursday, 18 March 2010

USAK PUBLICATIONS

The Turkish government finally put an end to the 'creeping negotiations' with the IMF and declared that the two sides had agreed to end the talks. The Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, explained that the "two sides differ on some of the IMF's key requirements, and that Turkey is now ready to stand on its feet."

The possible agreement had long been a confusing issue for Turkish economic pundits and observers. Turkey negotiated with the IMF for roughly two years, and the government previously declared at least twice that they were very close to a final agreement on the 20th stand-by (refer to table). The discussion over a possible stand-by agreement divided the experts mainly into two camps. The proponents argued that Turkey's undeniable success in the 2002-2007 period partly came out of the 'anchor' role of the IMF. They also pointed out that Turkey needs external credit sources in order to finance its current account deficit and to stimulate economic growth. In this regard, they claimed that the IMF is an important actor in keeping foreign channels open. Having taken the severe crisis conditions into consideration, the IMF was seen as a 'safe credit and credibility' source by the first group.

On the other hand, the opponents underlined the incompatibility of the visions of the Turkish government and the IMF. They also underscored the unsuccessful formulas offered by the IMF during the previous crises. They argued that Turkey faced the drastic challenges of the financial crisis without the IMF's support, which in turn proved Turkey's ability to stand on its own feet. In terms of the political economy consequences, the anti-IMF lobby also underlined the detrimental symbolic effects of the IMF agreement on Turkey's new initiatives to become a power centre in its neighboring region.

After the Prime Minister's declaration it became apparent that the Turkish government followed the latter's way and ended the negotiations. Contrary to some concerns, the international and domestic market actors did not overreact to the decision and no major shakedown occurred in the markets. Turkey, for the first time, overcame an important 'physiological barrier' by denying the 'IMF anchor' and relying on 'domestic sources' in the middle of a severe financial crisis. This point is worth appreciating and is a clear indicator of the self-confidence of the 'New Turkish Republic.' Nevertheless, one question still needs an answer: Is Turkey capable of facing the possible forthcoming challenges with its own sources?

The Challenges for the Turkish Economy

Turkey's most important economic challenge, inter alia, is the low economic growth risk and the alarming unemployment as the epiphenomenon of low growth. Accordingly, the success of the new term without the IMF will be mainly tested by the success in those areas. In the following part, these challenges are briefly analyzed.

The 'New Normal' for the Turkish Economy

As a result of the global financial crisis, a new concept entered into the economic lexicon: 'new normal.' Accordingly, the historic growth figures realized during the 2002-2007 period are no longer possible. This sea change in growth figures is also the case for Turkey. After buoyant

economic activity in the 2002-2007 period (annual economic growth was 6.8%), the Turkish economy started to shrink considerably as of the last quarter of 2008 (refer to following figure). On the other hand, the opponents underlined the incompatibility of the visions of the Turkish government and the IMF. They also underscored the unsuccessful formulas offered by the IMF during the previous crises. They argued that Turkey faced the drastic challenges of the financial crisis without the IMF's support, which in turn proved Turkey's ability to stand on its own feet. In terms of the political economy consequences, the anti-IMF lobby also underlined the detrimental symbolic effects of the IMF agreement on Turkey's new initiatives to become a power centre in its neighboring region.

After the Prime Minister's declaration it became apparent that the Turkish government followed the latter's way and ended the negotiations. Contrary to some concerns, the international and domestic market actors did not overreact to the decision and no major shakedown occurred in the markets. Turkey, for the first time, overcame an important 'physiological barrier' by denying the 'IMF anchor' and relying on 'domestic sources' in the middle of a severe financial crisis. This point is worth appreciating and is a clear indicator of the self-confidence of the 'New Turkish Republic.' Nevertheless, one question still needs an answer: Is Turkey capable of facing the possible forthcoming challenges with its own sources?

#### The Challenges for the Turkish Economy

Turkey's most important economic challenge, inter alia, is the low economic growth risk and the alarming unemployment as the epiphenomenon of low growth. Accordingly, the success of the new term without the IMF will be mainly tested by the success in those areas. In the following part, these challenges are briefly analyzed.

#### The 'New Normal' for the Turkish Economy

As a result of the global financial crisis, a new concept entered into the economic lexicon: 'new normal.' Accordingly, the historic growth figures realized during the 2002-2007 period are no longer possible. This sea change in growth figures is also the case for Turkey. After buoyant economic activity in the 2002-2007 period (annual economic growth was 6.8%), the Turkish economy started to shrink considerably as of the last quarter of 2008 (refer to following figure). Negative growth continued into 2009 at an accelerating pace and reached 14.7% in the first quarter of 2009. However, the effects of this decline have yet to fully materialize. The socio-political transformation in the last decade rested in large part upon Turkey's rapid economic growth. Since such rapid growth is now beyond the 'possibility frontier' of the Turkish economy, one has to find extra sources to stimulate economic growth in the post-IMF period. Modest economic growth for the world is expected vis- -vis the latest 'economic boom' years under the 'new normal' scenario. Inescapably, Turkey will be affected by the incoming hard years. How would it be possible for Turkey to stimulate economic growth from its own sources? The real durability test for the Turkish economy seems to start at this point.

As the epiphenomenon of the low growth risk, it is the alarming unemployment figures that raised doubts about the strength of the Turkish economy. The unemployment figures have always been high in Turkey, yet the ratio has skyrocketed since 2007 and now almost 14% of the labor force does not have a job. In addition, the unemployment rate within the most dynamic part of the Turkish labor force (ages 15-24) is almost 25%.

Turkey could not reduce the unemployment figures during the high economic growth years; moreover, the unemployment rate increased dramatically due to the economic crisis. So the question is obvious: how would it be possible for Turkey to fight against unemployment under

the 'new normal'?

The Economic Underpinnings of Turkey's New International Stature

This question becomes vitally important not only due to the economic reasons. It should be underlined that Turkey's recent economic performance has repercussions well beyond the economic sphere. When the recent foreign policy activism is taken into consideration it becomes apparent that the improvement in the Turkish economy underpinned Turkey's new international stature. Thanks to the increased power of Turkish businessmen and the extra suitable international economic conditions, Turkey was able to play an active role in its neighboring region. The economic agreements and economy-driven visa arrangements improved Turkey's gravity vis-a-vis its neighbors and other states. Yet, under the 'new normal' scenario based on low growth figures, it no longer seems possible for Turkey to benefit from the practical hand of economic entrepreneurs as in the 2002-2007 period. Moreover, the unemployment risk deteriorates the social cooperation and cohesion in the domestic political economy. In the final analysis, it is these questions that ought to be discussed rather than merely the IMF agreement.

Mustafa KUTLAY

mustafakutlay@gmail.com

Thursday, 18 March 2010

---

RWE: A non-state player in the Caspian region, if it will be successful?

Sunday, 21 March 2010

USAK PUBLICATIONS

Germany gas company RWE (Rheinisch-Westfälisches Elektrizitätswerk AG), is a partner in a consortium to build the Nabucco gas pipeline. Initially, Nabucco was planned to be a pipeline to transport gas from Central Asia, but a number of reasons delayed this possibility.

It should be noted that RWE, as well as other members of the Nabucco consortium, does not have enough experience in participating in international projects of this kind. Despite the fact that RWE is a major distributor of gas and electricity in European countries and even has some 20 million users of its services, this company hopes to become a major transnational company following the successful implementation of the Nabucco project.

It is worth noting that established in 1898 RWE, is the second largest energy company in Germany. However, till now, no companies from Germany have participated in the development of any field in the Caspian region. The German companies did not participate in consortiums, which were created in early 90-ies in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan to develop the hydrocarbon fields. It can be related to the fact that, historically, the German companies have not been very actively involved in the development of energy resources in some parts of the world. And perhaps the post-Soviet countries' regions are also not the exception. However, since 2000, we have witnessed how many national oil companies are actively involved in international projects. It is also due to the fact that countries that do not possess adequate resources of hydrocarbons directly want to ensure their stable supply through the development of deposits in different parts of the world.

After RWE joined the consortium for the construction of Nabucco, this company, in addition to the Austrian company OMW, opened an office in Baku in order to get in touch with officials in Azerbaijan. After the opening of the Shah Deniz gas field, it became clear that Azerbaijan would become one of the main suppliers of gas for Nabucco. In addition, RWE via Baku planned to

create cooperation with Turkmenistan, which subsequently happened. As can be seen, RWE is not limited to the role of a member of the Nabucco consortium, but also actively participates in the region to establish contacts with representatives of the countries of the Caspian basin. For example, RWE was one of the first Western companies to sign a contract with the Government of Turkmenistan for the development of offshore fields in the Caspian Sea. It is worth noting that this fact, in the case of a successful project implementation, will enable RWE to become a producer of gas in the region. The RWE Company is also actively in contact with officials of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. As a result, on 10 March 2010 SOCAR and RWE signed a memorandum of understanding for the prospective gas structure "Nakhchivan", located in the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea. This memorandum provides conditions for RWE to begin preparations during the year for the signing of the PSA-type contract. It is assumed that the "Nakhchivan" deposit is about 300 billion cubic meters of gas and about 40 million tons of condensate. By signing this agreement, RWE assures its participation in the exploitation of hydrocarbon deposits in Azerbaijan, which in itself is a significant event.

The signing of this memorandum is of practical importance. The contracts signed in Ashgabat and Baku state that RWE will participate directly in the possible deliveries of natural gas to Nabucco. As a member of the consortium, RWE may increase the possibility of this project being realized.

It is worth noting that the German government is also interested in how to support its company's involvement in the exploitation of deposits in the region. It is no accident that Turkmen President Berdymuhamedov visited Germany in November 2008, although Germany has refused to accept the Turkmen president for the past year due to the human rights situation in that country. The participation of German companies in mining was a widely discussed topic during the visit of the Azerbaijani President to Germany.

However, Germany and German companies are still not actively involved in projects in the region. For comparison, neighboring France is very active in the region and has long been implementing projects in Azerbaijan. In addition, President Sarkozy visited Kazakhstan and signed contracts worth over \$6 billion USD, and Berdymuhamedov visited Paris, where the parties stipulated the possibility of cooperation in the energy sector. No doubt, greater participation by RWE in the region would require more active support of the German government. Experience shows that the implementation of energy projects in the region and government support of its companies plays a key role in the successful development of cooperation.

Sunday, 21 March 2010

---

#### Turkish Opposition to Rasmussen as the Head of NATO

Tuesday, 7 April 2009

USAK PUBLICATION

Nermin Aydemir

*"I respect Islam as one of the world's major religions as well as its religious symbols,"* Dane Anders Fogh Rasmussen said at a panel discussion at the Alliance of Civilizations forum in Istanbul two days after being chosen as the chief of NATO. *"I was deeply distressed that the cartoons were seen by many Muslims as an attempt by Denmark to mark and insult or behave*



*irrespectively towards Islam or the Prophet Mohammad. Nothing could be further from my mind,"* the would-be Secretary General added.

NATO now appears to feel at ease after the thorny discussions at the NATO Summit on 3-4 April 2009, which was marked with the Turkish opposition against Rasmussen as the chief of the Alliance. The Turkish resistance seriously complicated the appointment of Rasmussen. Yet, the former Danish PM succeed to become the General Secretary thanks to do strong support from the heavyweights such as US, UK, Germany, France and Italy.

The Cartoon Crisis and Roj TV

Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan countered the leadership of Rasmussen for two reasons, namely the cartoon crisis and Roj TV, broadcasting from Denmark. Erdogan put his opposition into words in a speech that he gave at the Chatham House, the home of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, in London. The Danish Prime Minister's approach in dealing with the 'cartoon crisis' in 2006 significantly hinders his potential to lead the Alliance, according to Erdogan. Rasmussen supported the release of the controversial cartoons, one of which showed Prophet Mohammed with a bomb in his turban, in the name of freedom of expression. Freedom of expression may be a very fundamental reason for bearing up with such a situation. Yet, the situation went from bad to worse due to Rasmussen's way of dealing with the crisis afterwards. The Danish PM had declined a meeting offer from the ambassadors of Muslim countries – a proposal initiated by Turkey. The representatives' endeavor was to evaluate the situation and call for a peaceful atmosphere.

Allowing the PKK-associated Roj TV to broadcast from Denmark appeared to be another reason for the Turkish PM to oppose the candidacy of Mr. Rasmussen. 'The media arm of the terror organization in my country is broadcasting from Denmark. I've asked Mr. Rasmussen do stop this but he either couldn't or wouldn't do it,' Erdogan told in London. Though giving space to even terrorists who are on the red list of Interpol and openly making propaganda of the terrorist organization, PM Rasmussen had not done more than saying that the Danish police were investigating the case.

The stalemate is now over thanks to the diplomatic efforts of leaders at the Summit, particularly to those of the Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi and American President Barack Obama. Obama's 'guarantees' seem to have convinced Erdogan.

The Evolving Role of the Alliance

The tone of the discussions on the issue in fact addresses an ever-developing role of NATO. Who will lead the Alliance increasingly becomes an important issue not solely because of political passions or crafty tactics. The profile of the boss is critical, since NATO plays a key role in dealing with today's security issues. The Alliance is no more an outdated burden serving no useful purpose, as it was after the demise of communist Russia. NATO is a significant opportunity for the world to tackle the global root causes of terrorism as well as reacting to terrorist events and threats.

NATO appears to be a promising actor for meeting today's security challenges in the contemporary world. As the organization states on its website, NATO has chosen to operate within a wide spectrum of civil and military instruments, which requires regular coordination, consultation, and interaction among all actors involved. After a short period of uncertainty, the organization soon managed to choose a new path and became a key player in the security arena.<sup>[1]</sup> NATO has indeed done much to ensure that it has the capabilities, policies, and structures required in the changing international security environment and to pre-empt future challenges. With Allied forces engaged in operations and missions across several continents, the

Alliance also works to ensure that Allied armed forces remain modern, deployable, and sustainable. [2]

NATO has extended the number of its member states with the accession of Albania and Croatia a couple of days ago. The Alliance further expands its power through developing strong ties with non- NATO countries within the frame of partnership. NATO has dialogue with many partner countries from Europe, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Mediterranean area on security issues. An emphasis put on the improved relationships with countries like Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia appears to be a bold step when the reawakening of the Russia is taken into consideration.

#### Concluding Remarks

It would not be wrong to say that the NATO mission in Afghanistan is a proficiency test in Afghanistan. NATO will prove its competence and will give good reasons for the earlier failures in the country, if it can give a hand in dealing with corruption, opium cultivation, building infrastructure, establishing the rule of law, and substantiating the authority of the state. Much of this work is only slightly related to conventional military understanding. NATO needs to allocate much of its energy to soft power issues and to give attention to winning the hearts and minds of people, if it undertakes finding solutions to today's problems. Leaders, and particularly the leader of NATO, need to show potential in this regard. Until his speech in Istanbul, Rasmussen had not appeared to be very compatible with these needs. Yet, his speech in Istanbul indeed raises hopes, especially when the transforming approach within the U.S. foreign policy is also taken into consideration. Winning hearts and minds, the political participation of the disadvantaged, and eliminating cynicism seem to be the most common words of the NATO speeches in the coming period. The ever evolving nature of the Alliance does not give the new Secretary General much room in terms of leaving his Istanbul speech in the air. Much improvement and progress await Rasmussen in this regard.

---