

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD
TURKEY

Weekly Report on Turkey's Political, Geo-Strategic, Economic and Social Issues,
Period: 6th - 12th August - 2010.

Submitted By: Aasia Khatoon khattak

Presentation: 18th August, 2010

Report no.132

News Outline

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	3
POLITICAL NEWS	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-referendum poster battle in S Turkey over 'yes' and 'no'• Free coal to Turkish poor: charity or bribery?• Stamps for ballots will confuse Turkish referendum voters, critics say• Turkish military should expel wrongdoers, PM Erdoğan says• American journalist detained in Turkey• PKK likely to declare unilateral truce as a result of civil-society calls• Youth put most trust in Parliament, survey reveals• Resignations from CHP over referendum might influence voting'• CHP district heads resign to vote 'yes' in referendum• Turkey to Go to Polls for 6th Time to Vote on Constitutional Amendment Package	
GEO-STRATEGIC NEWS	13
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turkey delivers aid to flood-hit Pakistan• Turkey donates \$5 million to Pakistan• Firebomb at Turkish consulate in northern Greece• Turkey to Keep Trade Ties With Iran Despite Sanctions• Turkey gives full support to UN panel despite Israeli threats• Report: UN rights council under pressure to scrap flotilla probe• Turkey-Iran gasoline sales dive as sanctions bite• Cards reshuffled in Middle East with strong backing of Turkey• Turkey's policy in Iraq aims for broad-based government• Cameron's Turkey speech: not-so-fine-tuning of axis shift claims• Seized aid ships to arrive in Turkey today	
ECONOMIC NEWS	25
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turkey to earn over \$1 billion from defense industry exports• Food prices increase significantly ahead of Ramadan• Turkish PM calls for more hydroelectric power plants• Delaying fiscal rule is a shift in policy, says TUSİAD chief• Turkish government to postpone 'fiscal rule' until 2012• Turkey on the phone for long talks	
SOCIAL NEWS	30
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turkey to swelter under heat wave for 15 more days	
COMMENTARY	31

- A Kurdish flag in Turkish skies?
- Bribe trucks back on roads
- So what?
- The CHP, state and democracy
- Turkey should lead in global agriculture reform
- Expert reports confusing
- CHP and the referendum
- Is it money that keeps Turkey denying what happened to Armenians?
- The morning of Sept. 13] What if the referendum results in a 'yes'?
- Democratic control of the Turkish Armed Forces

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

SUMMARY-POLITICAL NEWS

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said The military should not allow personnel who make mistakes to remain in the institution, referring to the government's recent intervention into the promotion of generals linked to alleged coup plots.

Jake Hess, an American journalist, has been detained by police in the southeastern province of Diyarbakır, facing accusations that he has links with the Kurdish Communities Union, or KCK, and of leaking information to United States security services.

The outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party or PKK's has announced a bilateral cease-fire. Experts have said their decision may have been influenced by calls from civil-society organizations for a halt to the violence as well as the beginning of Ramadan.

A survey of university students carried out by a club at Fatih University has revealed that young people have more trust in the Turkish Parliament than other state institutions.

The survey was carried out by the Fatih University Ideal Youth Club (FÜİG) among 850 university students. The survey also asked the students about their views on a government-sponsored initiative to resolve Turkey's long-standing Kurdish problem. While 59 percent said they support the Kurdish initiative, 18 percent said they were against it. In response to a question asking about Turkey's EU membership prospects, 48 percent said, "The EU will not grant Turkey entry to the bloc."

More people from the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) ranks expressing support for the constitutional amendment package slated for referendum on Sept. 12 might lead to concerns in the party because of the effect it will have on the referendum results, observers say.

The heads of two Republican People's Party (CHP) district branches have resigned to vote yes in a referendum to take place on Sept. 12 on the government's constitutional reform package.

Turkey is set to head for the polls on September 12 for the sixth time to vote constitutional amendment package. 49,446,269 electors will cast their votes.

SUMMARY-GEO-STRATEGIC NEWS

Turkey has sent another round of humanitarian aid to flood-hit Pakistan, dispatching a Turkish cargo plane carrying nearly 35 tons of aid materials that arrived in Islamabad late Wednesday. The aid materials, which include food packages, blankets, tents and cleaning and healthcare products, have been delivered to Pakistani Red Crescent officials.

Turkey donated \$5 million to flood struck Pakistan on Wednesday as Turkey's Ambassador to the country, Babür Hızlan, presented the check to the Prime Minister of Pakistan Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani.

Greek authorities say a firebomb has been thrown at the Turkish consulate in the northern city of Thessaloniki. Police say three men with crash helmets threw a molotov cocktail towards the consulate, aiming for the police guards outside the building. The firebomb caused no damage or injuries. Greek government spokesman Giorgos Petalotis condemned the attack. He described the attack as unforgivable, adding that the culprits would be caught and brought to justice.

Energy Minister Taner Yildiz said on Friday that trade relations with Iran will continue despite recent UN sanctions.

Turkey is giving full support to the U.N. probe into the Israeli raid on a Gaza-bound flotilla despite Israel's threats that it could consider withdrawing if its soldiers are called to testify.

The UN Human Rights Council (HRC) has been encountering pressure from various international key players to scrap its investigation of Israel's deadly raid on a Gaza-bound flotilla.

A visit by Saudi King Abdullah and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to Beirut last week, a move that was strongly supported by Turkey, served to reshuffle the deck of cards that make up the Middle East, but it remains unclear if this visit will open the way for new peace and stability in the region.

SUMMARY-ECONOMIC NEWS

Foreign Trade Minister Zafer Çağlayan on Tuesday said current projections show that the country's defense industry exports would exceed well over \$1 billion next year.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Wednesday in the Black Sea province of Rize, Turkey should build more dams and hydroelectric plants to reduce the country's dependence on foreign energy, Natural-gas power plants, widely used in Turkey at the present, are costly, meaning they lower Turkey's competitive power in industry because the gas needs to be imported adding that Turkey should seek to become a self-sufficient country in energy through the construction of new dams and hydroelectric plants.

Turkish people spend an average of 209.3 minutes per month on their mobile phones, putting the country in third place among European nations in mobile call duration.

SUMMARY-SOCIAL NEWS

The heat wave that has been hitting Turkey for nearly 20 days is expected to last 15 more days, according to meteorologists.

POLITICAL NEWS

Pre-referendum poster battle in S Turkey over ‘yes’ and ‘no’

Thursday, August 12, 2010

ISTANBUL - Daily News with wires

HURRIYAT

With “yes” and “no” becoming loaded words as the constitutional referendum approaches, an anti-drug poster in the Mediterranean province of Antalya has raised the ire of the main opposition party, the Anatolia news agency reported Thursday.

The Republican People’s Party, or CHP’s, provincial organization filed a complaint about a poster reading, “No to Drug Addiction, Yes to Life,” that was hung by the Antalya Police Department.

Özer Ülken, the head of the CHP’s local organization, said they had filed a complaint with the Antalya governor’s office and called for the removal of the posters, saying they leave a negative impression about the word “no” and a positive impression about “yes.” The CHP is urging a “no” vote on the referendum.

The ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, had previously applied to the Supreme Board of Elections for the removal of posters that called on people to say “no” to certain social problems. The Antalya Municipality collected all the posters.

Free coal to Turkish poor: charity or bribery?

Thursday, August 12, 2010

ZEKİ GÜNAY - MEHMET BULUT

GAZİANTEP - Doğan News Agency

HURRIYAT

Despite temperatures hitting 45 degrees Celsius, many people in Gaziantep waited in line Wednesday to receive 650 kilograms of coal per household, a distribution opposition parties called “a bribe” ahead of the upcoming referendum.

The coal was given out by the Social Cooperation and Solidarity Foundation in front of the offices of different neighborhood headmen in the southeastern province, but critics said the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, was using the charity as a way to secure “yes” votes in the referendum.

The AKP led the creation of the constitutional-amendment package for which the country will go to the polls Sept. 12.

“The AKP is using its tactics of receiving votes by threats or by bribes as it always does. Distributing coal in that hot weather is clearly a bribe to people to influence their votes in the referendum,” said Hasan Öztürkmen, head of the provincial organization of the main opposition Republican People’s Party, or CHP.

“But I believe that Turkish people will not be deceived by these tactics and will be voting of their own free will,” Öztürkmen said.

The governor of Tunceli had previously received fines for allowing similar charitable distributions in a pre-election period, said Mehmet Özdemir, head of the provincial organization of the Nationalist Movement Party, or MHP.

“This is disrespect to people and also a crime. This has bad intentions behind it and also offends people,” Özdemir said, adding that the AKP had done similar things before. “It is

a duty of the state to help those in need, but making these [donations] before the referendum shows bad intentions.”

Ali Çınar, district governor of Gaziantep’s Şahinbey district, said such charitable donations were made every year and were intentionally scheduled for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which started Wednesday.

“We carry out this charity in August, September and October each year, especially during the month of Ramadan. There is no other intention behind this,” Çınar said.

Authorities had announced that 66,000 people would receive free coal if they applied to local officials.

Stamps for ballots will confuse Turkish referendum voters, critics say

Thursday, August 12, 2010

ÖZGÜR ÖĞRET

ISTANBUL - Hürriyet Daily News

Early reports from polling stations have set a debate brewing in the media over whether the ballots for the upcoming constitutional referendum will confuse voters and sway them toward the “yes” vote favored by the government.

Daily Hürriyet’s Ayşe Arman, who lives in Dubai, set off the controversy when she wrote in her Wednesday column about her experience voting early at an airport while entering Turkey.

According to Arman’s report, the ballots for the Sept. 12 referendum are white for “yes” votes and brown for “no,” but some of the stamps to be used while voting have “yes” written on them – meaning that someone who wanted to oppose the constitutional changes might end up having to stamp “yes” on a “no” ballot.

Arman said that might be confusing for voters.

The stamps are just the latest controversial detail about the referendum that seems to have overtaken debate about the content of the reforms themselves.

The Supreme Election Board, or YSK, announced Wednesday evening that two different types of stamps will be employed in the referendum: Some will mark “yes,” while others mark “choice” on the ballots. According to the YSK, this is the result of a lack of sufficient stamps of either type.

“The YSK has always been occupied with creating confusion,” said Gürsel Tekin, a central executive board member of the main opposition Republican People’s Party, or CHP, which has been leading the “no” camp on the referendum.

Tekin told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review that there was no need for stamps at all. “[The ballots] should already be stamped and the voters should put either a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ ballot into an envelope; whichever they want,” he said, adding that he cannot understand why the YSK arranged the procedure in the way it did.

“How come the government does not have stamps? I can provide them. Let the government allow me, and I would provide them [with a sufficient amount of] stamps,” he said.

Burhan Kuzu, the head of the Constitution Commission of the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, which is pushing a “yes” vote, denied claims that the ballots were intentionally confusing. “The voters have not been fooled for years, why would they be fooled in this one?” he asked. Kuzu said the “yes” stamps have been used in every previous election and he believes the voters will know what to do with them.

“The legal procedure in the [election] law is being practiced. That is all,” Kuzu said. Tarhan Erdem, a columnist for daily Radikal and founder of KONDA Research and Consultancy, a firm known for its accurate election predictions, said he did not believe the ballots would cause much confusion, but urged the YSK to address the matter since “sensitivity on this issue has emerged.”

“The voters are aware of how they will vote. However, there is still time; all stamps may be changed to mark ‘choice,’” he said.

Turkish military should expel wrongdoers, PM Erdoğan says

Font Size: [Larger](#)|[Smaller](#)

Thursday, August 12, 2010

ANKARA – Hürriyet Daily News

The military should not allow personnel who make mistakes to remain in the institution, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Wednesday, referring to the government’s recent intervention into the promotion of generals linked to alleged coup plots.

“This institution [the Turkish Armed Forces, or TSK] will not carry stains. The TSK needs to head toward the future untarnished. No one has the right to tarnish this institution. We have to always cooperate with the chief of General Staff and our generals,” Erdoğan told the televised press conference.

During the Supreme Military Council, or YAŞ, conference the government strongly resisted the military’s plans to appoint 1st Army Commander Gen. Hasan İğsız to the position of Land Forces commander. İğsız was among generals who allegedly launched an anti-government campaign via the Internet.

“We do not direct the TSK. The TSK has its laws and regulations. YAŞ is an advisory commission. Therefore, it doesn’t work with customs and such things. There will be times when it uses customs. But it extends beyond customs,” Erdoğan said.

“Who will pay the price in front of the people? The civil government. This is how it is in the world, in the West. We are a NATO member. All NATO countries are like this. We did what was necessary.”

Adding that the government was not willing to speculate regarding the generals, as these subjects would be taken care of by military or civil justice, depending on the situation, Erdoğan said: “We cannot leave room for such speculation. We cannot allow people who make these mistakes to remain inside the institution.”

YARSAV in PM’s targets

When asked about his harsh reaction to the Judges and Prosecutors’ Association, or YARSAV, Prime Minister Erdoğan repeated his opposition to the existence of such associations within the judiciary.

“How can I trust members of the judiciary who are members of YARSAV? How can I trust a judiciary member who openly criticizes and insults the party in power? I’m against such a formation there,” he said. He also repeated his intention to seek ways to shut it down.

“The European Union suggests a judiciary association that encompasses everyone. Not an association according to what individuals want,” he noted.

‘2011 my last election’

Erdoğan also recalled his earlier decision to quit politics after three terms in Parliament. “The 2011 general elections will be my last elections. I will not run for Parliament afterwards,” he said.

“People are telling me not to drop politics. Politics does not have to happen under the roof of a party. You can make politics at various foundations and associations and even in the media. As long as you have the passion, you can do it. I am determined to do this.” However, Erdoğan said he would resign as the party leader if his party does not win a majority in next year’s general elections. “Though I do not think that we will be second, I say so. Why? I will hold myself responsible for my party reaching that position,” he noted.

American journalist detained in Turkey

Thursday, August 12, 2010

ISTANBUL - Daily News with wires

HURRIYAT

Jake Hess, an American journalist, has been detained by police in the southeastern province of Diyarbakır, facing accusations that he has links with the Kurdish Communities Union, or KCK, and of leaking information to United States security services.

“Jake was detained by police in Diyarbakır at 5.45 p.m. on Wednesday,” said his lawyer Serkan Akbaş, Doğan news agency reported Thursday.

Hess was accused of collaborating with around 150 Kurdish activists currently in prison and whose names feature in a case file about the KCK.

Hess is also accused of leaking information about nearby provinces via mail to the U.S. Authorities said his name was found in some suspicious letters written to the United Nations and to various European countries.

Akbaş rejected all accusations against Hess including that his client was working for Muharem Erbey, deputy chairman of the Human Rights Association, or İHD. Akbaş said Hess had worked as translator for the association in the past but was not currently involved with the group. He said Hess’ relation to the İHD extended no further than that. Akbaş said Hess might be deported for “helping those who want to disturb the safety and public order of the country.”

Hess is expected to be brought to court Friday where he will either be detained pending trial or deported.

Hess was writing articles mainly for Inter Press Service, or IPS, regarding suspected terrorists’ claims of having been tortured in Turkey.

PKK likely to declare unilateral truce as a result of civil-society calls

Thursday, August 12, 2010

Sevil KÜÇÜKKOŞUM

ANKARA - Hürriyet Daily News

The outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK’s, decision to announce a cease-fire may have been influenced by calls from civil-society organizations for a halt to the violence as well as the beginning of Ramadan, experts have said.

Calls from civil society, the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP, and the Democratic Society Congress, or DTK, for a bilateral cease-fire “played a role in this

decision,” Galip Ensarioğlu, the chairman of the Diyarbakır Trade and Industry Chamber, told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review on Thursday.

“The [PKK] cannot ignore those calls,” Ensarioğlu said.

Others, however, believe different factors led to the decision. “The PKK could not make an attack as noteworthy as it wanted to this summer,” Professor Ümit Özdağ, an expert on terrorism, told the Daily News on Thursday.

“This might have depressed the organization. Then the calls of civil society came out. In a PKK attack, Kurdish people who were close to the organization died. The PKK may also be using Ramadan as an excuse for a cease-fire,” Özdağ said.

The PKK has been listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

Daily Taraf argued in its Thursday edition that Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned head of the PKK, was expected to instruct members of the outlawed organization to lay down their arms during the holy month of Ramadan, which also coincides with political campaigning for the upcoming charter referendum Sept. 12.

Öcalan was scheduled to hold a weekly meeting Wednesday with his lawyers, but the latter were unable to convene with the PKK leader, reportedly because there was no available sea transportation to İmralı Island, where he is imprisoned.

The first signals of a possible cease-fire came in July in an interview with Murat Karayılan, a senior PKK member, who said he was willing to order the group to lay down its arms under United Nations supervision if the Turkish government agreed to a cease-fire.

“If the Turkish state does not accept this solution, then we will independently declare democratic confederalism,” Karayılan said.

The interview was given during a period of increased attacks by the PKK beginning in June. The Turkish government has so far ignored the call.

Karayılan’s statement was followed by increased militant activity throughout the entire country that ultimately fueled urban clashes between Kurds and Turks in various centers. Concerned with the increasing division in the country, representatives of civil society and political parties, including DTK co-chairs Ahmet Türk and Aysel Tuğluk, as well as BDP leader Selahattin Demirtaş, called on both the government and the PKK to lay down their arms.

Some experts said the month of Ramadan could not be the sole reason for the cease-fire since the PKK is not a conservative religious organization.

“The violence was increased as soon as the referendum was announced. However, the PKK has now declared a cease-fire,” Ensarioğlu said. “If these are evaluated as mutual gestures, they may assist in finding a solution.”

Asked why the PKK had changed its strategy, Ensarioğlu said: “Maybe there are some indirect talks for the solution.”

The government, moreover, could take some confidence-building steps to enable a longer cease-fire, he added.

“Steps could be taken without legal changes, such as changing the names of villages to their original [names] and strengthening the authority of the local administrations,” he said. “Maybe the government will not be able to declare stopping the operations verbally, but they can decrease in practice.”

Özdağ, however, said there are hints the PKK could still attack despite the cease-fire: “Thus, the security forces are suspicious about this cease-fire.”

This sentiment was backed by Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç. “We may guess attacks may decrease, but we will take all security measures since we have some intelligence that [there may be attacks] to create fear, panic and anxiety in order to prevent [people] from going to vote,” Arınç said Thursday in an interview with private channel NTV.

Similarly, Interior Minister Beşir Atalay also said the security forces would do everything within their power to ensure a safe and secure Ramadan and referendum process, the Anatolia news agency reported Thursday.

Youth put most trust in Parliament, survey reveals

TODYS ZAMAN

A survey of university students carried out by a club at Fatih University has revealed that young people have more trust in the Turkish Parliament than other state institutions.

The survey was carried out by the Fatih University Ideal Youth Club (FÜİG) among 850 university students.

When asked which state institution they have the most trust in, 39 percent of the students said the Turkish Parliament.

Parliament was followed by the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), with 17 percent saying they have the most trust in the TSK. In previous years, the TSK was considered the most trustworthy institution.

The discovery of dark military coup plots within the TSK in the recent years, in which some members of the military devised plans to incite chaos in the country with the ultimate goal of staging a military takeover, has seriously tarnished the TSK’s image. The institutions young people trust the least are the judiciary, at 6 percent, and the media, at 2 percent. Municipalities were also among the least trusted institutions, at 3 percent, according to the survey.

On a question asking what Turkey’s most serious problem is, 34 percent said it was terrorism while 31 percent said it was a lack of adequate education.

Unemployment and economic problems were thought to be Turkey’s most serious problems by 12 percent of those surveyed.

The survey also asked the students about their views on a government-sponsored initiative to resolve Turkey’s long-standing Kurdish problem. While 59 percent said they support the Kurdish initiative, 18 percent said they were against it.

In response to a question asking about Turkey’s EU membership prospects, 48 percent said, “The EU will not grant Turkey entry to the bloc.”

11 August 2010, Wednesday

BURAK KILIÇ İSTANBUL

Resignations from CHP over referendum might influence voting’

More people from the opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) ranks expressing support for the constitutional amendment package slated for referendum on Sept. 12 might lead to concerns in the party because of the effect it will have on the referendum results, observers say.

Tarhan Erdem, owner of the KONDA Research Group, said if more people from the CHP say they support the reform package, this could influence the referendum results.

“One person is not enough to affect the package, but if it turns out to be a political movement in the end, that would be a serious development,” Erdem told Today’s Zaman. CHP deputy Eşref Erdem was recently referred to the party’s disciplinary board after he announced that he would vote in favor of the referendum.

“I don’t know if Erdem’s resignation could have the potential to spark a political movement that would engulf intellectuals,” Erdem said.

A district mayor from the CHP has announced that he will vote “yes” on the constitutional reform package despite the CHP’s threats to party members who deviate from the party line.

Mehmet Çöğür, the mayor of Konakkale in Konya’s Doğanhisar district, made an announcement yesterday just prior to CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu’s appeal in Konya for a “no” vote on Sept. 12.

Çöğür, who wore a cap with “yes” written on it, said that in the province’s Beyşehir district, where Kılıçdaroğlu was expected to address a crowd, the country’s interests come before both his party’s and his personal interests and that this is why he will vote for the reform package.

“I will say ‘yes’ in the referendum not to have my country in chaos,” he said, adding that he had lived through the days of the 1982 Constitution, which was forced on the people.

“I say ‘yes’ for more freedoms. And I believe we should all say ‘yes’ to it,” he said.

Nurettin Tursun, a CHP mayor of the district of Döşemealtı in Antalya, also resigned from his party and joined the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party).

Previously, CHP referred Şerif Memioğlu, the mayor of Yedisu in Bingöl province, to the party’s disciplinary board because Memioğlu voiced support for the reforms.

Özer Sencar, the owner of the Ankara-based MetroPOLL Strategic and Social Research Center, said Erdem’s resignation might have an effect on people who have not yet decided which way they’ll vote on Sept. 12. “Individual actions would not have much effect on people who will vote on the referendum, but if this attitude becomes a political movement, then it certainly would,” Sencar said.

Meanwhile, speaking in Konya, Kılıçdaroğlu said he is not happy about Erdem’s resignation.

Kılıçdaroğlu who affixed CHP pins to 30 people who joined the party, answered questions from reporters at the event about Erdem’s resignation, and he said he wished he hadn’t resigned. “Erdem has worked in the CHP for a long time and served in high-ranking positions. I am saddened by his decision to resign. I wish he did not do so. But this is his decision, and we have to respect it,” Kılıçdaroğlu said. He added that his tours of Konya’s districts would continue and that he is pleased with the interest from young people. He also promised “clean politics” and an end to corruption by ensuring accountability.

Kılıçdaroğlu has been touring the country to rally support for a “no” campaign against the proposed changes, which seek to allow Parliament and the president to appoint judges to the Constitutional Court, increase the number of members of the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) -- the key authority in the appointment of judges and prosecutors -- and further curb the powers of the military by paving the way for the trial of military commanders in civilian courts.

Erdem appeared to criticize his party's line, saying that the CHP has for two decades insisted that the current Constitution is a product of military rule, that it consists of bans and that it has to be changed.

In an interview with the Sabah daily, Erdem said he did not deserve to be referred to the CHP's disciplinary board after his 37 years in the party. He also claimed that the Party Assembly, which was formed by the influence of CHP Secretary-General Önder Sav, is against change.

Erdem announced his resignation on Monday in a press conference in the capital of Ankara.

He also claimed that former CHP leader Deniz Baykal, who had to resign because of a sex scandal, was not forced out of the leadership due to external pressure. Erdem claimed that there was pressure on Baykal from within the CHP itself.

Erdem, who will stay in Parliament as an independent deputy, said the reform package should not be opposed just because it is offered by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party).

In an August interview with Sabah, Erdem said the reform package is not enough but that he approves of it. Kılıçdaroğlu had said that Erdem is free to express his opinion, but following the interview Erdem faced disciplinary action by the party.

11 August 2010, Wednesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

CHP district heads resign to vote 'yes' in referendum

The heads of two Republican People's Party (CHP) district branches have resigned to vote yes in a referendum to take place on Sept. 12 on the government's constitutional reform package.

The CHP district chairmen of Ağrı's Doğubeyazıt and Eleşkirt districts preferred to resign from the party after what happened to former Mayor Şerif Memioğlu of Bingöl and Ankara deputy Eşref Erdem when they announced that they would be voting in favor of the constitutional changes. Memioğlu and Erdem were referred to the party's disciplinary board after they announced their decision.

Quitting the CHP's Eleşkirt chairmanship, Tahsin Tekin said there is no reason to say "no" in the referendum. "Knowing that it would harm my country, I couldn't tell people to vote no. From now on, I will work for 'yes'," Tekin stated.

He also criticized the CHP for opposing each and every step the government took. "The "The Justice and Development Party [AK Party] government wanted to offer a solution to the Kurdish problem; the CHP said 'no.' They wanted to offer a solution to the headscarf problem; we said 'no' again. Now, they want to democratize the country, and we say 'no' again. With this policy, as the CHP, we are damaging our own country. I listened to my conscience and resigned from the party. I decided to work for something that I know is right," he explained.

09 August 2010, Monday

İSTANBUL TODAY'S ZAMAN

Turkey to Go to Polls for 6th Time to Vote on Constitutional Amendment Package

Thursday, 12 August 2010

Turkish electors will go to polls on September 12, 2010 to vote a constitutional

amendment package.

Five referenda have so far been held in Turkey regarding constitutional amendments. The first referendum took place for 1961 Constitution which was prepared after military intervention on May 27, 1960. The constitution was adopted with 61.7 percent affirmative votes in the referendum, held on July 9, 1961.

Under the constitution submitted to referendum, Parliament, formed following elections on October 10, 1961, elected Cemal Gursel as the fourth president of Turkey.

After 21 years, Turkish voters went to polls for the second time to vote on 1982

Constitution which was prepared after military intervention September 12, 1980.

The second referendum took place on November 7, 1982. A total of 18,885,488 electors joined the referendum. 17.5 million of the electors (91.37 percent) voted in favor of the Constitution, whereas 8.3 percent gave "no" votes.

1982 Constitution took effect on November 9, 1982 and Kenan Evren became the president. Evren's term in office expired on November 9, 1989.

Third referendum took place on September 6, 1987 to decide whether the banned leaders should be allowed to return to politics or not.

According to results announced by Higher Electoral Board on September 12, 1987, 50.3 percent of the electors voted "yes" and 49.8 percent voted "no" out of the 24,436,821 electors. The political bans were thus cancelled.

Turkey's fourth referendum was thus on a constitutional change to allow the local elections to move to the earlier date. The referendum took place on September 25, 1988. 65 percent of the electors voted "no" for the change and 35 percent "yes". Thus early local elections did not take place.

The fifth referendum regarding Constitutional texts took place on October 21, 2007. The Constitutional amendments also included arrangement election of the president by people with 5+5 formula. 67.5 percent of the registered electors said "yes" and 31.05 percent said "no" in the referendum and thus the constitutional amendment adopted.

On October 3, 2001, Parliament adopted a law making amendment to the "starting" text of the Constitution and Article 33.

Then president Ahmet Necdet Sezer approved 32 articles of the law, however decided to put article 27 (arranging subsidies and travel allowances to parliamentarians) to referendum. The law, apart from Article 27, was enacted on October 2001 after being published in the Official Gazette.

However, the Parliament made an amendment to the article in question and thus decision of then President Sezer to put the article to referendum was annulled.

Turkey is set to head for the polls on September 12 for the sixth time to vote constitutional amendment package. 49,446,269 electors will cast their votes.

Thursday, 12 August 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

GEO-STRATEGIC NEWS

Turkey delivers aid to flood-hit Pakistan

Thursday, August 12, 2010

ISLAMABAD - Anatolia News Agency

Turkey has sent another round of humanitarian aid to flood-hit Pakistan, dispatching a Turkish cargo plane carrying nearly 35 tons of aid materials that arrived in Islamabad late Wednesday.

The aid materials, which include food packages, blankets, tents and cleaning and healthcare products, have been delivered to Pakistani Red Crescent officials.

Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan Babur Hizlan said Turkey's assistance to the Pakistani people would continue. Turkey is expected to send two more planes carrying aid to Pakistan in the coming days.

Humanitarian aid will be distributed to flood victims in northwest part of Pakistan, which has been the hardest hit by monsoon rains. Floods in the country have killed more than 1,600 people and forced nearly 14 million people from their homes over the past two weeks, while damaging or destroying some 5 million houses.

Meanwhile, two U.S. Marine helicopters arrived in Pakistan Thursday to join relief and rescue operations in areas hit by massive floods in the country's worst catastrophe, the U.S. embassy said. The two aircraft are the first of 19 extra helicopters that U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates urgently ordered to Pakistan on Wednesday, it said.

U.S. military helicopters will operate in partnership with the Pakistan military throughout the country's flood-affected areas. The 19 aircraft will relieve six U.S. Army helicopters already in Pakistan that will soon return to duty in Afghanistan, the embassy said.

Turkey donates \$5 million to Pakistan

Turkey donated \$5 million to flood struck Pakistan on Wednesday as Turkey's Ambassador to the country, Babür Hızlan, presented the check to the Prime Minister of Pakistan Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani.

Hızlan said Turkey would continue to display solidarity with the people of Pakistan which is struggling with the worst flood in its history. Hızlan added that three cargo planes of humanitarian relief material would be on the way to Pakistan in a week as reported by the Anatolia Agency.

Earlier Wednesday, Turkey's Red Crescent distributed 35 tones of humanitarian aid consisting of food packages, blankets, sleeping bags and beds to the victims of the disaster. A second cargo plane was expected to depart from Turkey to Pakistan on Wednesday evening.

Over 1,000 people have died so far and 1.5 million people have been displaced in the country after the worst monsoon floods of the past 80 years. Raging waters have spread from the northwest to the Punjab agricultural heartland and down to the southern province of Sindh, as Pakistanis watched villages collapse, thousands of people drown, and their president leave for state visits abroad at the height of the disaster. Officials in Sindh, home to Pakistan's biggest city and commercial hub Karachi, are scrambling to prevent heavy loss of life and more destruction to the mainstay agriculture industry. Rural areas are expected to be hit hardest.

12 August 2010, Thursday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Firebomb at Turkish consulate in northern Greece

Greek authorities say a firebomb has been thrown at the Turkish consulate in the northern city of Thessaloniki.

Police say three men with crash helmets threw a molotov cocktail towards the consulate, aiming for the police guards outside the building. The firebomb caused no damage or injuries.

Police say three men with crash helmets threw a molotov cocktail towards the consulate, aiming for the police guards outside the building. The firebomb caused no damage or injuries.

Greek government spokesman Giorgos Petalotis condemned the attack, which he said had endangered the safety of the police guards. He described the attack as inexcusable, adding that the culprits would be caught and brought to justice.

Greece and Turkey have often had tense relations, but attacks against Turkish diplomatic missions are rare. Police, however, have increasingly been targeted since the riots of Dec. 2008, sparked by the fatal police shooting of a teenager in Athens.

12 August 2010, Thursday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Turkey to Keep Trade Ties With Iran Despite Sanctions

Monday, 9 August 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

ANKARA, Turkey -- Energy Minister Taner Yildiz said on Friday (August 6th) that trade relations with Iran will continue despite recent UN sanctions. Speaking to journalists in Trabzon, Yildiz said Turkey has no plans to curb Iranian petroleum trade, since the UN sanctions do not cover trade. Turkish companies are importing crude oil from Iran and selling refined products back in return. The government continues to support diplomatic channels at the EU and UN level to solve the issue with Iran's nuclear programme.

Turkey gives full support to UN panel despite Israeli threats

Wednesday, August 11, 2010

FULYA ÖZERKAN

ANKARA – Hürriyet Daily News

Despite Turkish confidence, the mandate of the four-member UN panel that convened Tuesday for the first time is still vague, although it is certain that it is not a criminal investigation. Some observers say all issues were left vague to prevent further problems in Turkish-Israeli ties, adding that the panel was formed following concessions from both sides. 'Israel agreed to join a UN panel, while Turkey's concession was that it is not a real inquiry,' says one observer

Turkey is giving full support to the U.N. probe into the Israeli raid on a Gaza-bound flotilla despite Israel's threats that it could consider withdrawing if its soldiers are called to testify.

"Whatever the U.N. panel requests of us we'll provide. We demanded this commission. We have been supporting the work of the secretary-general from the very beginning," a senior Turkish Foreign Ministry official told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review on Wednesday.

Although Turkey has been confident, the mandate of the four-member United Nations panel remains vague. Regardless, the probe is not a criminal investigation, meaning it is unknown whether the findings will satisfy the Turkish government, which is pressing for an apology and compensation from Tel Aviv.

The probe's first hearing was Tuesday, during which the parameters of the panel were discussed, according to officials.

The U.N. panel is tasked with reviewing reports of national investigations; requesting clarification and additional information; examining and identifying the facts, circumstances and context of the incident; and recommending ways of avoiding similar incidents in the future, the U.N. said. The panel will submit an initial progress report by the middle of September and a final report by February.

Israeli government officials, however, are threatening a pullout, saying their agreement to take part in the U.N. panel was tied to the panel relying on reports from Israel's own inquiry, not direct testimony from soldiers.

"Israel is insistent on the principle that its soldiers will not be interrogated," Amit Zarouk, a spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Ankara, told the Daily News.

Although U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon denied Monday a "behind-the-scenes" agreement with Israel that the panel would not summon the country's soldiers to testify, U.N. spokesman Martin Nesirky did not rule out the possibility that the panel could seek to talk to or obtain information directly from Israeli soldiers, as well as officials from either side.

The committee, however, appears set to approach the relevant governments in the event it wishes to obtain clarification or data from any of the actors in the event, according to Israeli reports, which cited official sources.

While there is no written agreement between Israel and the U.N., there appears to be an important verbal understanding that the panel will not impose themselves on the governments and will instead give authority to them.

In the present situation, all the issues were left vague in order to overcome obstacles in the Turkish-Israeli relationship, which descended into crisis in the wake of the flotilla incident, according to diplomatic observers.

"If it were a criminal investigation, it would be hard for the U.N. to handle it because problems in Turkish-Israeli ties would get even more complicated if one of the states were held responsible," said one observer. "Both Turkey and Israel made concessions here. Israel agreed to join a U.N. panel, while Turkey's concession is that it is not a real inquiry."

Yet it is unclear how the U.N. and Ban will handle the inquiry.

"We'll see what emerges out of this mess. But even if Israel is hurt because of the attack on the Mavi Marmara, this would not necessarily suggest that a result desired by Turkey will emerge," columnist Semih İdiz wrote in daily Milliyet on Wednesday. "If there had been a U.N. secretary-general who could stand up and be a more distinctive personality this might have been possible, but there is not."

Turkish commission continues working

Both Turkey and Israel have established national commissions to investigate the May 31 incident that left nine activists dead, including eight Turks and one U.S. citizen of Turkish descent.

Israel has established two commissions to investigate the flotilla incident, including a military committee that already released its report and a civilian committee, which also includes two international supervisors. The latter continued listening to testimony from Israeli government and military officials on Wednesday.

Turkey established a commission which convened twice in June and included officials from the Justice and Foreign ministries, as well as the Maritime Undersecretariat. Turkish officials told the Daily News the commission was working both at a high level and technical levels.

Report: UN rights council under pressure to scrap flotilla probe

The UN Human Rights Council (HRC) has been encountering pressure from various international key players to scrap its investigation of Israel's deadly raid on a Gaza-bound flotilla, as a higher-profile UN investigation was set to begin yesterday, a leading Israeli daily has suggested.

Diplomats in New York said several heavyweight countries are now pressing the Geneva-based HRC to cancel its probe and leave the issue to the committee set up by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, English-language daily Haaretz reported yesterday in a report filed from New York.

If the UN HRC fails to accede to this request, it will be setting itself up for humiliation because the conclusions of Ban's panel will be deemed more credible than those of the HRC panel, the same diplomats told the daily.

As of Monday Israel's ambassador to the UN, Gabriela Shalev, told Haaretz that "from the standpoint of the level and quality of the people participating in it, the secretary-general's committee will obviate any need for the investigation by the council in Geneva."

Last week the president of the UNHRC, Sihasak Phuangketkeow, denied that the body's investigation of the May 31 raid which led to killing of nine civilians had been made redundant by the announcement of the higher-profile UN probe.

"There's a clear distinction between the two missions and the mandates given,"

Phuangketkeow told reporters, dismissing suggestions that the 47-nation council's probe was now superfluous.

11 August 2010, Wednesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Turkey-Iran gasoline sales dive as sanctions bite

Turkey's gasoline sales to Iran fell by 73 percent in July as US-led sanctions came into force, data from the İstanbul Exporters Association of Chemical Materials showed on Tuesday.

Sales of \$25.55 million recorded by the association were down sharply on the \$93.45 million sold in June and represent the equivalent of just one cargo of the motor fuel, according to Reuters calculations.

The steep month-on-month decline coincided with the introduction of US and European Union sanctions that aim to squeeze Iran's fuel imports and increase its international isolation over its nuclear programme.

The West suspects Iran of attempting to build nuclear weapons, but Tehran says its development of nuclear technology is for peaceful purposes.

Iran has turned to Turkey and China for gasoline imports after many of its traditional suppliers in Europe and the Middle East were frightened off by US sanctions, though the exporters' July data suggests Turkish traders have not been immune.

Turkey's gasoline exports to Iran were estimated at nearly 30,000 tonnes, based on a premium of 25 percent above July's average spot price of gasoline in the Mediterranean of \$685 per tonne.

Turkish government data showed Iran bought 138,673 tonnes of gasoline at a 25 percent premium from Turkey in June.

Sanctions bite

At least one tanker of gasoline meant for Iran was prevented from sailing from Turkey in July, trade and shipping sources said.

Ship owners are concerned about shipping to Iran after Lloyd's of London said it would not insure or reinsure petroleum shipments going to the Islamic Republic.

According to figures from the Turkish government and Iranian Oil Ministry, Turkey's gasoline exports to Iran in June amounted to roughly 10 percent of the Islamic Republic's gasoline consumption.

Based on the numbers from the Turkish export group, Turkey supplied just 2.5 percent of Iran's total gasoline needs in July. A Turkish ship was among only three gasoline cargoes that reached Iran by sea, a source said last month.

Despite being the world's fifth-largest crude exporter, Iran has to import around 40 percent of its gasoline needs because it does not have enough domestic refining capacity to meet demand.

Ties between Turkey and Iran have strengthened recently, and Turkey, along with Brazil, pulled together a last minute uranium-swap deal in June that was aimed at quelling fears over Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

Western powers responded coolly to the deal and sanctions were imposed the next month.

10 August 2010, Tuesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Cards reshuffled in Middle East with strong backing of Turkey

A visit by Saudi King Abdullah and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to Beirut last week, a move that was strongly supported by Turkey, served to reshuffle the deck of cards that make up the Middle East, but it remains unclear if this visit will open the way for new peace and stability in the region.

Their meeting with Lebanese President Michel Suleiman served to strengthen the fragile stability in Lebanon that was established after tremendous efforts were exerted by Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The visit was helpful in reducing a strong expectation of war despite a bloody skirmish this week at the Israeli-Lebanese border which was perceived as an Israeli provocation. Some commentators argue that this visit may open a small window to regional peace, although the possibility is not high. Other analysts, however, underline that the success of the summit might not last long.

Turkey is there as a guarantor

Lebanon, devastated in a 2006 war with Israel, had much difficulty in establishing a government on very fragile internal power balances. The country came from the brink of a new civil war especially after Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed paramilitary force, took to the streets of Beirut.

As Hüsnu Mahalli, a Syrian journalist based in Turkey, recalls, Turkey's involvement in ensuring stability in Lebanon started right after the 2006 war and as Turkey participated in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Ankara played a very positive

role in ending the Lebanese presidential crisis in October 2007 and May 2008. It helped establish a government in this country together with Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

“Ankara has been very engaged in ensuring not only stability in Lebanon but also in finding a solution to other inter-Arab conflicts, such as hostility between Saudi Arabia and Syria. As a result of these efforts, King Abdullah and President Assad were able to pay a visit to Lebanon, which served to ensure stability in the region in a broader sense,” he told Sunday’s Zaman.

But many analysts these days, including the International Crisis Group (ICG), mention the possibility of a fissure in the fragile stability in Lebanon due to an indictment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which was established to investigate the 2005 assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, the father of current Prime Minister Saad Hariri.

The tribunal might point to Hezbollah as the main suspect. And if this is the case, the government in Lebanon might collapse and a new internal fight may start.

“Think about Prime Minister Hariri. He will have some difficulties cooperating with Hezbollah if it is established that they killed his father. But, if he tries to arrest Hezbollah members, the country may enter a bloodbath,” Mahalli said.

With the situation that tense, Turkey strongly backed King Abdullah and Assad’s visit. Mustafa Ellabbad, the director of the Al Sharq Center for Regional and Strategic Studies in Cairo, told Sunday’s Zaman that the leaders’ visit was helpful for stability. They gave messages of restraint to both parties. According to him, this visit is an indication of realignment in the region.

“Saudis in some way recognize the dominance of Syria over Lebanon but in return get a promise from Damascus. President Assad will not cut ties with Hezbollah and Iran but will put distance between himself and them,” Ellabbad said.

According to him, the new stability between Saudi Arabia and Syria and of course the internal stability in Lebanon are useful for Turkey. This is why Ankara is backing this move, he said.

“Turkey is not exporting ideology but it is exporting stability. It can implement its influence in the region if there is stability in the region. Turkey is a busy country; it has to deal with many things: the EU, Central Asia, the Balkans, the Caucasus. It is also obliged to exert efforts in inter-Arab matters. But for other countries in the region, it is important to know that Turkey is there as a guarantor and ready to get involved,” he said.

The possibility of regional war

The Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Wednesday in this direction, and pointed out that Turkey has always encouraged regional players to come up with solutions to regional problems. The trilateral meeting in Beirut is a good example of this. The same statement also underlined the importance of stability in Lebanon to the whole region but also draws attention to the clashes at the Israeli-Lebanese border that resulted in the killing of two Lebanese soldiers and one journalist as well as an Israeli soldier.

“Turkey is seriously concerned by the clash on the Lebanese-Israeli border, which could lead to instability in the region as a whole at such a critical and sensitive time,” the same statement underlined.

According to Mahalli, this skirmish is a provocation by Israel, which thinks that new developments brought about by the trilateral meeting in Beirut and stability in Lebanon might not serve its interests.

Paul Salem, an analyst at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Beirut, pointed out in an article that he wrote for Qantara that “if sanctions on Iran don’t bear fruit by early 2011, Israel might feel the need to act. If it launched military strikes on Iran’s nuclear installations, Hezbollah would likely join the fray and Israel would have to engage Hezbollah at the same time. Alternatively, Israel might launch a pre-emptive war against Hezbollah in order to rob Iran of a nearby retaliatory capacity.”

But he does not rule out the possibility of peace, although the chance for it is very slim and depends on many other issues.

Salem told Sunday’s Zaman in a telephone interview that the Beirut summit was successful to a certain degree but that tension in Lebanon can resume again depending on developments at the Special Tribunal for Lebanon on the Hariri murder.

However, some analysts, including Alon Ben-Meir from New York University, think that the relatively calm situation might open a way for regional peace. According to him, the summit in Beirut restored Damascus’ dominance over Lebanon.

“While Syria is likely to maintain its bilateral relationship with Iran for its own strategic and tactical reasons, the new undeclared understanding between President Assad, King Abdullah and Prime Minister Hariri of Lebanon was that Lebanon would remain outside of the Iranian orbit of influence. The message to Tehran was quite clear: Syria -- with the backing of the Arab states -- will resume its hegemony over Lebanon and both Iran and its proxy Hezbollah must accept this new political reality,” he writes in a recent article and underlines that “this new political configuration in Lebanon also suggests that for the right price Syria would align itself with the Arab world to blunt Iran’s ambitions to become the regional hegemony.”

According to many analysts, this “right price” is the return of the Golan Heights and resuming negotiations over it which were carried out under Turkish mediation but came to an end when Israel attacked Gaza on the eve of 2009.

However, Salem told Sunday’s Zaman that resuming negotiations between Syria and Israel is unlikely. According to him, Damascus will prefer to wait and see if there are any developments on the Israeli-Palestinian track.

“This depends on many things; the Obama administration is preparing a new package, but no one knows what is in it. Israel for the time being is not interested in moving ahead on the Syrian track, either,” he said and added that another obstacle is the situation between Turkey and Israel.

“Turkey was the mediator between Syria and Israel. But the relations are facing problems now after the flotilla, although the situation might be different in the coming months,” he said.

Turkey and Israel have been at odds ever since Israeli forces killed nine Turks on May 31 in a bloody interception of a flotilla sailing in international waters. The ships were carrying humanitarian assistance to Gaza. Israel until this week refused to accept Turkey’s demand for an international investigation into the issue.

However, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in a recent interview with the Görüş magazine, published monthly by the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen’s Association (TÜSİAD), said Turkey would support revived proximity talks between Israel and Syria, dismissing allegations that Turkey’s former allies had “lost” Turkey.

Reshuffling the deck in the Middle East this week might bring new opportunities and a “win-win” situation for the whole region to the table, but it can bring new skirmishes, conflicts and even wars as well.

08 August 2010, Sunday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Turkey’s policy in Iraq aims for broad-based government

“[US President Barack Obama] is leaving Iraq to the wolves,” Tariq Aziz, the man who once served as Saddam Hussein’s leading lieutenant, said, slamming the planned withdrawal of US forces from his country.

It is still unclear who he was implying to be “wolves,” but it is certain that many neighboring countries have already started to show off their political power in Iraq’s political scene, trying to get as much as they can in the five-month-long political standstill after the four largest blocs failed to form a coalition government.

Aziz has appealed to the United States to extend its presence in Iraq, saying that President Obama is abandoning the country, according to a Guardian interview published on Friday.

Obama on Monday hailed this month’s planned withdrawal of all US combat troops -- “as promised and on schedule” -- as a major success.

“Because Iraq is a weak and divided country (essentially a power vacuum in the region) all of its neighbors, including Turkey, maneuver to influence developments there,” Ted Galen Carpenter, vice president of Defense and Foreign Policy Studies from the Cato Institute, said.

Roughly 20 days ago, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hosham Zebari, an ethnic Kurd representing the most anti-Saddam political and social force in the country, said as he spoke to a group of Washington Post reporters during his Washington visit, that one big reason that Iraq has not managed to form a new government in over four months [now five] after its parliamentary election is heavy and conflicting interventions by its neighbors. “Every country is a player on a different side,” he is reported to have said.

The Iraqi foreign minister said Iran and Turkey have emerged as the biggest players and as rivals inside Iraq.

As both Saddam’s former aide and Zebari say, the US drawdown from Iraq is “immoral” and a “mistake,” and this particular case displays how complicated Iraq’s political platform is.

Turkey is supporting Iyad Allawi, the leader of the Iraqi election-winning al-Iraqiyya bloc, by only a small margin, as Sunni groups are mostly represented in his cross-sectarian alliance. Iran is backing current Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who trailed Allawi in the March 7 parliamentary elections, and many observers believe the Islamic republic also stands by anti-Western Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

But it seems al-Sadr is slowly weaning himself from Iran’s sphere of influence thanks to Turkish mediation among Iraqi political parties. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Sadr and Allawi held talks in the Syrian capital of Damascus on July 20, and initial signs from the talks carry promise of untangling Iraq’s coalition government knot. “There are positive developments,” Davutoğlu said after his three-way talks with the two major Iraqi political leaders.

Zebari's claim that Turkey and Iran are to blame for the failure to form a government can be dismissed, said Marina Ottaway, one of the most recognized experts on Iraq from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, claiming that the main problems are domestic.

Turkey says it maintains dialogue with all Iraqi groups but says the new Iraqi government should be broad based, meaning the Sunnis, who have no representation in Maliki's coalition, should also be represented in the government. Turkey also coaxed Sunnis to participate in political processes in the 2005 elections, and coalition forces were adamant then to Turkey's efforts, claiming that Turkey is reviving former pro-Saddam forces. "Turkey is trying not to take sides either between Sunnis, Shias, Kurds or Arabs. Time will tell if it will succeed," she argued.

Speaking about possible Turkish-Iranian competition in Iraq, Ottaway claimed that Turkey has no interest in antagonizing Iran by playing the Sunni card [in Iraq], and Turkey has shown by voting against the sanctions at the United Nations that it wants good relations with Iran.

Carpenter thinks the struggle for dominance along the Sunni-Shiite divide is more between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and Turkey's goals are more focused.

Ankara's primary objective, the expert notes, is to help preserve Iraq's unity -- at least what is left of it.

Another contentious issue for Turkey is Iraq's Kurds, who are not truly represented in any coalition forces and who want the US to remain as a guarantor for their regional government, which Turkey prefers to ignore.

"Turkey's main worry is that Iraq will fragment further and lead to the emergence of a fully independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq," Carpenter said. Turkey has repeatedly rejected any idea that northern Iraq will be split into an independent state, worrying that a spillover of irredentist moves among Kurds might accelerate in Turkey's southeastern region, predominantly populated by ethnic Kurds who primarily vote for parties sympathizing with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terrorist organization. Carpenter argues that that development would pose obvious problems for Turkey and indeed, even the current situation (with a highly autonomous Kurdish regional government) has led to security headaches for Ankara, with PKK fighters using Iraqi territory as a sanctuary from which to launch attacks on Turkey.

08 August 2010, Sunday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Cameron's Turkey speech: not-so-fine-tuning of axis shift claims

Due to various implications a speech delivered by British Prime Minister David Cameron during his visit to Turkey had on British domestic policy and the global stage, a core message within the same speech may have escaped notice: his bold answer to, or maybe even challenge of, arguments and debates suggesting the presence of a so-called shift in Turkey's foreign policy axis.

Diplomatic opaqueness is obviously not a favorite style for this young politician, who became the youngest British prime minister in nearly two centuries at 43 and has been in office since May.

“Because he truly believes in what he said,” a senior UK diplomat replied when asked by Sunday’s Zaman why Cameron dared to push the limits with his speech, in which he, for example, angered Israel by saying in Turkey that Gaza was a “prison camp.”

Cameron drew the ire of both his opponents and his fellow Tories as he vowed to fight for Turkey to have its place in the European Union and warned opponents of Turkish membership against shutting Ankara out of the European bloc.

Still, some UK-based commentators say his wording lacking in subtlety should not detract from the underlying realism of his speech in Turkey.

While in Ankara, he dismissed opponents of Turkish membership to the EU as “protectionist, polarized or prejudiced,” an opinion that is not shared in Paris or Berlin. France and Germany oppose Turkey’s accession to the EU. According to Cameron, the polarized who “see the history of the world through the prism of a clash of civilizations think that Turkey has to choose between East and West and that choosing both is just not an option.”

And for the prejudiced “who willfully misunderstand Islam,” Cameron believes that “they see no difference between real Islam and the distorted version peddled by the extremists” and “they think the problem is Islam itself and they think the values of Islam can just never be compatible with the values of other religions, societies or cultures.”

“All these arguments are just plain wrong, and as a new government in Britain, I want us to be at the forefront of the international effort to defeat these arguments and I want to take each one in turn,” he said in his July 27 speech, delivered at the headquarters of an influential Ankara-based business group, the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB) -- an appropriate venue as he also called Turkey “Europe’s BRIC,” referring to the acronym for the emerging markets of Brazil, Russia, India and China, and said he wants to see bilateral trade between the UK and Turkey, which currently totals \$14 billion a year, to double over the next five years.

Changing the language

As a matter of fact, overall, Cameron described modalities of a win-win situation both in regards to the relationship between Turkey and the EU and the bilateral relations between his country and Turkey.

The British prime minister’s remarks came as Turkey pursues an increasingly independent course in its foreign policy, working for a negotiated settlement to an international dispute over Iran’s nuclear program while Western powers seek to up the pressure on the Islamic republic by imposing new sanctions.

Many in the West have expressed concern that Turkey is moving away from the West for the sake of building alliances with countries in the East, some of which have very troubled relations with the West, and US Defense Secretary Robert Gates recently blamed the EU for the shift in Turkey’s axis.

According to British diplomatic sources, claims of an axis shift are basically an oversimplification of Turkey’s policies and are plain wrong.

“For example, we may talk about a disagreement between the UK and Turkey on how to approach the dispute surrounding Iran’s nuclear program. But the UK certainly understands that Turkey has motives for doing so. That is a tactical difference, as Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has many times said that Turkey is against any country in this region possessing nuclear weapons,” the same UK diplomatic sources, who requested anonymity, told Sunday’s Zaman in the days following Cameron’s visit.

“What Mr. Prime Minister [Cameron] aimed to do with his speech is to change the language recently used about Turkey’s policies because that language -- based on the view that Turkey is moving away from the West or from its traditional alliances -- is definitely an oversimplification. He came here to make this case and I believe he did it quite strongly,” the sources said. “Turkey is nobody’s client state.”

According to the same sources, the axis shift arguments “stem from the actual political agenda” and are “useful political tools for certain interest groups” and for those who don’t want to see Turkey within certain institutions, such as the EU.

Whether Cameron’s straightforward challenge will eventually lead to a “useful debate” on Turkey is not clear -- at least for the time being. But, according to Turkish diplomatic sources, since that challenge is coming from a powerful member of the 27-nation bloc, it will ultimately not go unnoticed.

“For us, what Cameron said is stating the obvious. However, it is important that the speech is eventually taken note of as an appropriate interpretation of Turkey’s policies by certain circles. Even the British media is divided into two camps over the content of the speech right now,” the Turkish diplomatic sources, speaking on the condition of anonymity, told Sunday’s Zaman.

“We hope Mr. Cameron’s speech and approach will pave the way for a new perspective of Turkey’s policies both inside the country and abroad because it presents a new look at a time when there are many heated debates and arguments,” the same sources added.

08 August 2010, Sunday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Seized aid ships to arrive in Turkey today

Three seized Turkish aid vessels will dock at Turkey’s İskenderun port today, the company responsible for transporting the ships to Turkey has reported.

It was earlier reported that the ships would arrive in Turkey on Sunday, but Solar Ship Rescue Services Director General Murat Bayhan said on Friday that the ships would be brought to İskenderun in southern Turkey this morning as procedures were speeded up. Bayhan had earlier said towing the ships could take two days depending on the weather. The Mavi Marmara left the Israeli port city of Haifa, where it had been docked since June 1, on Thursday night. On the same night the other two Turkish ships, the Defne-Y and the Gazze, left the Ashdod port.

The three Turkish ships were seized during a deadly Israeli raid of a six-ship aid flotilla, carrying humanitarian aid to impoverished Gazans to break the Israeli-Egyptian blockade, on May 31. The bloody raid by Israeli naval commandos left eight Turkish citizens and one American dead and more than 30 people injured.

Bayhan said the Mavi Marmara and Defne-Y will be in the İskenderun port by Saturday morning and while the Gazze will arrive by noon. He said three tugboats will tow the ships from Israeli ports.

Releasing the ships was one of Turkey’s demands for normalizing its downgraded diplomatic relations with Israel. Turkey wants Israel to apologize for the raid, return the seized ships, agree to an international investigation and offer compensation for the victims, Turkish officials said. Earlier this week, Israel agreed to work with a high-level United Nations panel that will investigate the raid.

07 August 2010, Saturday

ECONOMIC NEWS

Turkey to earn over \$1 billion from defense industry exports

Foreign Trade Minister Zafer Çağlayan on Tuesday said current projections show that the country's defense industry exports would exceed well over \$1 billion next year.

The minister also mentioned expectations related to the sector's turnover, saying the defense industry's annual earnings would reach \$3 billion in 2011 from the current \$2.3 billion. This figure was \$832 million in 2009 and only \$248 million in 2002, he said.

Çağlayan was speaking at a press conference in Ankara to promote the upcoming 2nd Equipment Expo of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) and the Ankara Industry Fair, both of which are scheduled for October 2010. He was accompanied by Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül and Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Çiçek.

Çağlayan said the TSK procured 46 percent of its defense requirements from national producers in 2009, adding that the rate had seen levels as low as 20 percent in the past. He summarized the "rapid developments" attained recently in the Turkish defense industry, mentioning in particular an accord that paves the way for the production of the engines of F-35 Lightning II jets in Turkey. He also cited a deal between Pratt & Whitney -- a division of United Technologies Corporation responsible for the production of F-135 jet engines for the Joint Strike Fighter Program -- and Turkey's Kale Group to jointly open a factory in Turkey.

Pratt & Whitney, the maker of jet engines for the F-15 Eagle, the F-16 Fighting Falcon, the F-22 Raptor and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter as well as the C-17 Globemaster III military transport aircraft, decided to invest in Turkey during Çağlayan's recent visit to the US. The minister said Pratt & Whitney and the Kale Group will start producing the F-135 engines for the F-35 jets in a joint investment, the majority of which would be undertaken by the Kale Group.

He also said that the engines would initially be partially produced in Turkey, but that the Turkish company would later undertake the entire production process. Çağlayan further said United Technologies was planning to open a Sikorsky factory in Turkey and was currently conducting feasibility studies jointly with Turkish corporations. He said Turkey would export all production to be made in such a factory.

A dream come true

Çağlayan further discussed the construction of a fairgrounds in Ankara on 1 million square meters of land, which he said had been a dream ever since he became a member of the Ankara Chamber of Industry (ASO) many years ago. Today, considerable progress has been made in this project, he said.

Cemil Çiçek also addressed the audience to say that there is no doubt Turkey will have one of the top 10 economies in the world by 2023, the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Turkish Republic. "Turkey has already surpassed the critical threshold and our industrialists have a great share in this success," he said, noting that every province must bring itself in line with the country's major projections for 2023.

11 August 2010, Wednesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN ANKARA

Food prices increase significantly ahead of Ramadan

With only a few days left until the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, the prices of 15 products were up compared to this time last year.

The prices of lemon, veal, lamb, hazelnuts and dried apricot rose the most while 13 other products saw a decline in this period, with potatoes seeing the greatest reduction in price, while only one product, the peach, saw neither drop nor increase in its price. The Turkish Union of Agricultural Chambers (TZOB) carries out a survey of these items prior to every Ramadan to track price changes.

TZOB President Şemsi Bayraktar announced the price changes ahead of the Muslim fasting month, which traditionally sees a noticeable increase in the demand for food in Turkey. Bayraktar stressed that fresh fruits and vegetables will be sold at the most affordable prices again during the month.

He said that the food market has started to stir with Ramadan approaching, but warned of speculators who could benefit from this soaring demand.

Giving information about developments in the prices ahead of Ramadan, Bayraktar said that consumer prices of 10 products declined in the past week, while another 10 remained unchanged and nine products saw a hike in their prices. In producer prices, however, the prices of 15 products remained unchanged during the period, but the prices of six products increased and another six products experienced a rise in producer prices. The difference between consumer and producer prices reached 322 percent, he said.

Recalling rumors about an expected rise in meat prices due to Ramadan, Bayraktar said a suitable environment has been created for prices hikes by speculators. Producers played no role in any meat price hikes, he asserted.

Also touching upon rises in wheat prices in recent days, Bayraktar said the price hikes are artificial and do not stem from a drop in world wheat production.

09 August 2010, Monday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Turkish PM calls for more hydroelectric power plants

Thursday, August 12, 2010

İKİZDERE, Rize - Anatolia News Agency

HURRIYAT

Turkey should build more dams and hydroelectric plants to reduce the country's dependence on foreign energy, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Wednesday in the Black Sea province of Rize.

Natural-gas power plants, widely used in Turkey at the present, are costly, meaning they lower Turkey's competitive power in industry because the gas needs to be imported, Erdoğan said, adding that Turkey should seek to become a self-sufficient country in energy through the construction of new dams and hydroelectric plants.

Erdoğan, who made the comments during the opening of the Cevizlik hydroelectric power plant in Rize's İkizdere district, said he believed the \$120 million investment would bring a new dynamism to the area's economy.

Erdoğan said Turkey's energy demand had peaked with the rise of both manufacturing and consumption in the country.

Alluding to dam projects, the prime minister said his government paid utmost attention to not harming nature and the environment while producing energy.

Turkey's annual hydroelectricity production was 51 billion KWH, Erdoğan said, adding that this represented only 36 percent of Turkey's potential production. Erdoğan said they aimed to boost the annual production up to 82 billion KWH, thus realizing 90 percent of Turkey's potential.

Delaying fiscal rule is a shift in policy, says TUSIAD chief

Font Size: [Larger](#)|[Smaller](#)

Thursday, August 12, 2010

Turkey is backpedaling on a commitment to implement spending limits that ratings agencies say would help the country win investment grade, raised concerns by the country's leading business organization. Opposition party calls on NGO's to protest the government's decision. State minister says the criticizers will be 'ashamed' of their attitude.

The Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association, or TUSIAD, said the Turkish economy would shift from a "rules-based" policy concept and lose its "inner consistency" if the government postponed approving the fiscal rule indefinitely.

The fiscal rule, which has been on the governments' legislative agenda since 2008, was of vital significance to the general economic outlook, from the struggle against the global recession and the general level of business and investment in the country, to the concreteness of financial policies and predictability, TUSIAD wrote in a statement after Industry and Trade Minister Nihat Ergün's announced the introduction of the fiscal rule would be further delayed until 2012.

The fiscal rule could secure financial policy against unexpected developments during Turkey's growth phase, contributing to the decision-making processes of financial bodies, the TUSIAD statement said.

"The business world attaches great importance to Parliament's discussing the fiscal rule in the next legislative period, an application that we think was postponed due to a heavy legislative agenda in the last period," TUSIAD wrote.

Currently, Turkey's "accommodative" fiscal policy may contribute to a wider current account deficit that would make the economy too reliant on capital inflow and could curb growth, Standard & Poor's said, according to a Bloomberg report Wednesday.

Turkey's current account deficit increased by 180 percent in the first six months of 2010, compared to the same period a year earlier, according to figures released Wednesday by the Turkish Central Bank.

'Not acceptable'

According to Umut Oran, deputy president of the main opposition Republican Peoples' Party, or CHP, the fiscal rule will not actually be applied. He said the introduction of the rule had been canceled by the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, because the government wanted to spend money as they wished.

"The cancellation of the fiscal rule shows the undisciplined behavior of the AKP government regarding the economy," Oran said in a written statement Thursday.

"The growth that we saw in 2010 only comes from domestic consumption. The added value of exports has dropped while imports increased. The growth model, which increased the foreign trade deficit by 2.5 percent, is not sustainable," Oran said, adding, that the unemployment rate is higher than 12 percent.

"This is not acceptable," he said.

Oran called on nongovernmental organizations to protest the AKP's decision to delay implementing the fiscal rule, while he also called on everyone to protect Turkey's resources.

Minister on the defensive

State Minister Zafer Çağlayan, on the other hand, said everyone who criticized the government's fiscal rule decision would be ashamed of themselves one day. People who think the introduction of the rule has been delayed because of the election economy are on the wrong track, Çağlayan said.

Çağlayan said at a press conference that the fiscal rule in Turkey is practically already being applied, adding that Turkey successfully negotiates internal and external debt and budget discipline.

While Çağlayan admitted that as long as there was production and investment in the country, there would be a budget deficit, he also said that in 2009 the budget deficit decreased, while in 2010 both the economy generally and exports particularly are tending toward growth.

Turkish government to postpone 'fiscal rule' until 2012

Wednesday, August 11, 2010

ISTANBUL - Daily News with wires

HURRIYAT

Turkey may delay implementing the new spending limits policy known as the "fiscal rule" until 2012.

"The budgetary practice of 2011 will not be constituted on the fiscal rule, but it will be effective by 2012," Turkish Industry and Trade Minister Nihat Ergün told a press conference Tuesday. "However, the government has not given up on the commitment to the fiscal rule."

Revealing Turkey's long-term economic ambitions, the rule consists of two main components, including a requirement that the government maintain an annual growth target of 5 percent, as well as a budget deficit of 1 percent or less of gross domestic product to reduce debt relative to the size of the economy.

The rule was first sent to Parliament on May 26 and was initially expected to be discussed before the end of the current legislative year.

Words attributed to Turkish Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek on Aug. 5 first cast doubt on the approval of a fiscal rule. A Reuters report quoted Şimşek as saying in Helsinki that the fiscal rule might not pass when Parliament reconvenes in October. Even though Şimşek's spokeswoman, Sibel Tokgöz, released a statement denying the Reuters report, recent statements from Ergün confirmed the current situation.

"We have analyzed the fiscal rule with the Economic Coordination Council [EKK]," said Ergün, Anatolia news agency reported Wednesday.

"We have conducted studies about how we can get results with the best and worst scenarios, formulas and different simulations," he said.

"Studies in parallel with opinions received from professional organizations, credit rating agencies, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, Turkey's chambers and exchanges and other associations have been made regarding what may be the proper formula for Turkey," he said.

Turkey now operates according to a non-written fiscal rule, Ergün said, adding that the budget law is a fiscal rule in a sense. “The government already has a law that determines its macroeconomic equilibrium, budget deficit, amount of debt and investment, government payrolls and expected tax revenue.”

Opinions vary

Ergün said the government could propose new legislation setting budget limits as a proportion of economic output becomes more flexible, the Istanbul-based Bloomberg HT channel reported Wednesday.

The measure was delayed because some ministers objected, saying limits on spending would hurt investment, Ergün said. “During the presentation in Cabinet, investment ministries brought different opinions regarding the flexibility of the formula. Due to this situation, a discussion of the issue by those ministers has now been put on the agenda.” Noting that investment ministries doubt whether or not the formula was flexible enough, Ergün said, “The investment ministries want to see more clearly how much flexibility this formula brings to them.”

‘Loss of prestige’

Speaking to the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review, Professor Esfender Korkmaz from Istanbul University said the government delayed implementing the rule in order to be able to use the budget during the referendum and general election periods to its advantage.

“The present budget enables the government to cover expenses. If the fiscal rule became law now, the government would not be able to finance extra expenditure,” Korkmaz said.

With the rule was postponed until 2012, commentators have raised a number of different opinions on the matter. Speaking to the private channel NTV on Wednesday, economist Mahfi Eğilmez, a former Treasury undersecretary, said the postponement of the fiscal rule to 2012 represented a loss of prestige for Turkey.

Meanwhile, NTV reported a top official as saying: “It is possible to increase the proportion of the budget deficit to 2 or 3 percent of GDP, which the European Union targeted. It might be a much more proper step in terms of contribution to economic growth. Demands are mainly for 3 percent.”

Turkey’s “accommodative” fiscal policy for this year and next may contribute to a wider current account deficit that would make the economy too reliant on capital inflow and may curb growth, Standard & Poor’s, or S&P, said, according to a report from Bloomberg on Wednesday.

“A possible delay in implementing the country’s so-called fiscal rule may signify greater reluctance by authorities to rein in government consumption,” S&P analyst Frank Gill said in an e-mailed response to Bloomberg.

Turkey would “somewhat tarnish its fiscal credibility” by delaying a decision to introduce new limits on budget spending and failing to implement the steps, Fitch Ratings said, according to the Bloomberg report.

“The delay and weakening of the fiscal rule by the government suggests it may run a larger budget deficit next year than planned,” Fitch analyst Edward Parker said.

“Fitch has not made a linkage between legislating the rule and potential ratings actions,” Parker said.

Moody's Investors Service said a looser fiscal stance would adversely affect Turkey's credit fundamentals, Bloomberg reported. The delay of the proposed fiscal rule would "deprive Turkey of an anchor for its fiscal policy, which would make it easier for the government to loosen its fiscal policy in the run-up to elections" next year, said Moody's analyst Sarah Carlson.

Turkey on the phone for long talks

Thursday, August 12, 2010

ANKARA - Anatolia News Agency

HURRIYAT

Turkish people spend an average of 209.3 minutes per month on their mobile phones, putting the country in third place among European nations in mobile call duration.

A report, prepared by Turkey's Information and Communication Technologies Authority, or BTK, indicated that both mobile and fixed phone call traffic rose in the second quarter of 2010.

Mobile call traffic reached 30.99 billion minutes, and fixed phone calls reached 6.3 billion minutes in the April-May-June period. Some 77.7 percent of total call traffic consisted of mobile-to-mobile calls.

The number of fixed phone subscribers was 16.3 million in June 2010 – 61.5 million in mobile subscribers and 7.7 million in broadband subscribers.

Minutes of use (MoU) showed that Turkish people spend an average of 209.3 minutes per month on their mobile phones.

According to the report, French people, who topped the list, talk for 249.4 minutes on their mobile phones every month. Irish people followed them at 231 minutes.

The report also revealed that the upward trend in mobile subscribers and in the penetration rate halted at the beginning of 2009. This stop was triggered by number portability and a rise in cancellation of alternate subscriptions following attractive offers made by operators for calls in all directions.

A total of 18.7 million people have switched their mobile operators since Aug. 9.

Statistics showed that Turkcell had 55.1 percent of all subscribers. Vodafone had 26.2 percent and Avea had 18.6 percent of Turkish mobile phone users.

Seventy-two percent of Turkish people prefer prepaid subscriptions while the rest favor postpaid.

SOCIAL NEWS

Turkey to swelter under heat wave for 15 more days

The heat wave that has been hitting Turkey for nearly 20 days is expected to last 15 more days, according to meteorologists.

The Marmara, Black Sea and Mediterranean regions have been among the most affected by the high temperatures. People have been warned of the danger of heat stroke and advised to consume plenty of water. Mithat Kadioğlu, a professor from İstanbul Technical University's meteorological engineering department, said Turkey will continue to see high temperatures for two more weeks. A decline of 2 or 3 degrees Celsius is expected throughout the country around Aug. 20.

The temperature in İstanbul was 32 degrees Celsius and the relative humidity was around 70 percent on Tuesday, with a perceived temperature of 39 degrees Celsius. In addition to

İstanbul, the provinces of Zonguldak, Bartın, Sinop and Samsun have seen very high humidity for nearly two weeks. The temperature in Ankara was 38 degrees Celsius on Tuesday. News reports said there will be no decline in temperatures in Ankara for three more weeks.

In the Mediterranean province of Antalya, the perceived temperature was 44 degrees Celsius on Tuesday.

11 August 2010, Wednesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

COMMENTARY

A Kurdish flag in Turkish skies?

Tuesday, August 10, 2010

MUSTAFA AKYOL

HURRIYAT

About 10 days ago, Osman Baydemir, the Kurdish mayor of predominantly Kurdish Diyarbakır, said something that shocked most Turks. “Why hasn’t the yellow-red-and-green-colored flag waved,” he asked in a public speech, “beside the star-and-crescent flag in front of the municipality?” This would be the flag of the Kurdistan region, he explained, which would exist along with other several autonomous regions around Turkey.

In other words, Mr. Baydemir voiced a demand to change the “unitary” structure of Turkey into a federation (or “semi-federation,” such as in Spain) with regional governments.

Not too surprisingly, he received reactions. Minister Cemil Çiçek, one of the more nationalist figures in the Justice and Development Party, or AKP, government, gave a rather crude one by calling him “a man whose organs have changed places.” Some media commentators bashed him for his “separatist agitation.” And a prosecutor opened an investigation about him, probably finding the notion of a “Kurdish flag” too unbearable to hear.

Jacobins and sans-culottes

As for me, I am a fan of neither Mr. Baydemir nor his party – let alone the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK, the violent organization that he obviously sympathizes with. But I also think that his suggestion should provoke not insults or prosecutions, but an honest discussion of the matter.

I would start the latter by first drawing a line between “rights” and “demands.” The former are what every single person is entitled to and cannot be legitimately taken away by any government. Speaking, broadcasting and teaching the Kurdish language are such rights. The Turkish state has violated them unabashedly for decades and Kurds are absolutely right to get them back. Period.

But the structure of a country is a different matter. It is not a right, in other words, to live under a unitary country or a federation, or a monarchy or a republic. Such political structures emerge out of historical conditions, and their future, in a democracy, should be determined by deliberating the “demands” of various individuals and groups.

When we get into that territory, and discuss whether Turkey should accept regional autonomies, I probably would not be supportive – at least in the short run. In fact, I am sympathetic to the idea of “decentralization,” as advocated long ago by the late Ottoman

liberal Sabahattin Bey (along with “individual entrepreneurship,” which he also promoted). But decentralization is not the same thing as regional autonomies, which will inevitably have an ethnic flavor in Turkey, as Baydemir already hinted.

My first doubt on this is that, unlike in Iraq, the ethnic composition of Turkey does not make an ethnic regionalism too feasible. More than half of Turkey’s Kurds now live outside historical Kurdistan, in big cities such as Istanbul or Adana. The country is simply too integrated for a “Kurdistan region” to be meaningful.

A counter-argument can be that an autonomous Kurdish region in the Southeast will make all Turkey’s Kurds proud and content, regardless of where they live. An Istanbul Kurd, in other words, will feel more respected and empowered when he sees a Kurdish flag in Diyarbakır skies.

That might be a plausible theory, but then I have my second doubt: The Turkish majority of society is overwhelmingly nationalist and any step toward federalism of any sort is likely to deepen that problem. This is really a nation brainwashed by the “Sevres syndrome” (that the whole world is trying to “divide” us) and the uniformity syndrome (that the whole nation must be fully Turkish.) The two main proponents of this paradigm, the secular-nationalist Republican People’s Party, or CHP, and the vulgar-nationalist Nationalist Movement Party, or MHP – say, in French terms, our Jacobins and sans-culottes – are likely to resist by all means necessary.

In other words, while a Kurdish flag in the Southeast might make many Kurds happy, it might drive some Turks crazy. The latter factor is not something to be approved of – but it has to be reckoned with.

Minding the gap

That’s why pushing for the creation of Kurdish regional autonomy, and the raising of a “yellow-red-and-green-colored” Kurdish flag, will be unhelpful to Turkey’s Kurdish question at this particular stage. Before such alternatives might be discussed more sanely and fruitfully, we first need two important steps.

First, violence should come to a permanent end. Particularly, the PKK should stop attacking Turkish targets, killing soldiers and sending shock waves through broader society. This not only ends innocent lives but also poisons the whole political landscape. Second, the astonishing perception gap between the Kurds and the Turkish majority should be filled. Most Turks really have no clue about the Kurdish trauma in the republican era. On the other hand, most Kurds, particularly PKK fans, seem totally unempathetic to the pain of the thousands of families, villages and neighborhoods who have given “martyrs” to Turkey’s disastrous “war on terror.”

We, in other words, first need to understand each other before finding out how to live together. All else is destined to hit the walls of ignorance, prejudice and hatred.

Bribe trucks back on roads

Font Size: [Larger](#)|[Smaller](#)

Wednesday, August 11, 2010

YUSUF KANLI

HURRIYAT

Last time the trucks were seen on the roads Turkey was in the summer of 2008, when the country was heading to the March 2009 local polls.

Holidaymakers trying to enjoy the Mediterranean sun, sea and sand were shocked to see workers unloading sacks of coal from trucks hired by the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation. They would not stay in their summer houses in the winter; they would not burn that coal for heat in the winter. Yet by selling those sacks of coal they managed to offset some of their summer holiday expenses.

Such scenes were not particular to the summer resort places along the Mediterranean or Aegean coasts of the country. The hut on top of the hill barely had a road, and no electricity or running water. Yet, on instructions from an officious Tunceli governor – later officially condemned for violating election bans by distributing such election bribes and relocated, or promoted, by the government – not only couches and various small household appliances but also refrigerators, dishwashers and washing machines were provided from the state coffers to that hut and similar huts in the remote eastern Tunceli province. At the time it was calculated that the assistance Tunceli received from the state during that local elections campaign totaled the assistance it had received over the previous five years.

“Accept the bribe. . . . You deserve even more, get whatever is offered to you. But at the election booths vote for the candidates you prefer, not to those who want to buy your votes,” Tunceli’s then-independent, now main opposition Republican People’s Party, or CHP, deputy Kamer Genç told his constituents.

Istanbul’s Tahtakale market was flooded with the refrigerators, washing machines and dishwashers distributed to citizens within those few months before the elections.

Such scenes were also seen before the 2007 parliamentary elections, but the 2009 local polls became the record holder in Turkey in terms of massive election bribery distributed from the state coffers by the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP.

Now the people will have the booths placed before them not only on Sept. 12 for the referendum, but early next year the nation will be voting in parliamentary elections. Therefore, it was natural to expect the bribe trucks back on Turkey’s highways. Yet, though only weeks are left before the Sept. 12 referendum, no such news had been reported by the news agencies until yesterday. Was it because no such things are happening this time in Turkey? Was it because the AKP was ashamed of the massive election bribery of the past elections and decided to play it honestly this time? Or was it because of the “auto censure” in the media that no such developments could find their way into the pages of the newspapers?

Anyhow, perhaps the outcry of the provincial chiefs of the CHP and the Nationalist Movement Party, or MHP, was so loud that at least some media outlets could not neglect to report on the free coal distribution in Gaziantep last week when the city was sweltering in over-45-degrees-centigrade summer heat.

“If, under this heat, trucks are touring the poor suburbs of the city and shoveling out sacks of coal, that cannot be social assistance. What’s happening is election bribery, which is prohibited by the law but is being done without any effort to hide it at all,” complained Hasan Öztürkmen, the provincial head of the CHP.

MHP provincial head Mehmet Özdemir, recalling that the Tunceli official was earlier punished because of such election bribery, said: “This is insolence toward our people. It is illegal. Such attitudes are hurting our people. Social assistance is a requirement of our religion and culture as well as a requirement of being a social state. Yet the distribution of such assistance during the referendum campaign is obviously not an honest action.

This is a crime.” The local governor, however, declared that it has become a routine to distribute coal and food assistance provided or funded by the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation to the needy before or during the holy fasting month of Ramadan. That was indeed a remark indicative of the scenes we might come across all through this month. Ramadan started on Wednesday, and after a full one month of fasting, on the last day of the Ramadan Holiday – Eid ul Fitr or Candy Holiday – the nation will go to the booths for the referendum vote. Therefore, throughout the month the coffers of the state are likely be emptied once again, obviously not to buy the votes of the people through such bribes but in demonstration of the strong social assistance aspirations of the ruling AKP.

So what?

Font Size: [Larger](#)|[Smaller](#)

Tuesday, August 10, 2010

JOOST LAGENDIJK

HURRIYAT

It is good to see that next to a populist campaign against the constitutional amendments package based on distortion and distraction, the main opposition party is trying to justify its call for a “no” vote by going into the details of the proposals.

Republican People’s Party, or CHP, leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu published a long article in daily Hürriyet two days ago, in which he argues against the proposed changes to the Constitutional Court, or CC, and the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors, or HSYK. In his column in Milliyet, former Turkish Judge to the European Court of Human Rights Rıza Türmen formulated some additional arguments, supporting the basic thesis of Kılıçdaroğlu. The problem with both efforts is that they come up with some valid points of criticism but that they are totally silent on the main reason behind the proposed changes.

Let’s start with two of their objections that I share. When the package will be adopted on Sept. 12, the Turkish Parliament will gain a role in appointing the members of the CC. That, in itself, as Türmen acknowledges, is a positive step. Out of 17 members, the Parliament will elect three. The problem is that these three CC members will be chosen by simple majority, giving the present governing party, but in fact any future party or coalition that has a majority in Parliament, the power to select their candidates without having to take into account the views of the opposition. It would indeed be better if the Parliament would vote on these appointments by qualified majority (for instance 2/3), because that would force the majority and the minority to reach a consensus, as happens in the German Bundestag.

The second reasonable point of criticism is the ongoing presence of the minister of justice in the HSYK. Although I do not agree with Kılıçdaroğlu’s claim that the role of the minister will be increased, I do share his point that it would have been better to remove the minister from the HSYK, to make the separation of powers as clear as possible. For Kılıçdaroğlu and Türmen these are sufficient reasons to vote against the amendments. My problem with that conclusion is their deliberate reductionism. They simply do not mention the main progress that will be achieved and the most important reason why most Europeans are in favor of the CC and HSYK amendments. The current composition of both CC and HYSK is not representative of the judiciary as a whole: only senior

members of a limited number of other courts are selected to become members of the CC and HSYK. At the moment, a younger generation of judges has no say, making the CC and the HSYK conservative institutions, defending the status quo. According to the main organization of European judges, bodies like the CC and the HSYK should have a mixed composition because that “would present the advantages both of avoiding the perception of self-interest, self-protection and cronyism and of reflecting the different viewpoints within society, thus providing the judiciary with an additional source of legitimacy.” That is exactly what is going to happen in Turkey when and if these changes are adopted. Will that lead to more CC and HSYK members who are closer to the AKP? It probably will, but so what?

The present CC and HSYK are composed of members who share a particular view on Turkish society and who prefer the same lifestyle, both represented in politics by the CHP. That will change because other views, and other lifestyles will be represented as well. Ideally, the higher judicial institutions in every country should more or less reflect the different political views that exist in that society. That is why most Europeans, despite sharing some of the criticism on the details, agree with the bigger picture presented in the constitutional amendments package and are not impressed by warnings that the AKP will use the new rules to appoint CC and HSYK members who are close to the party. Of course, the EU will also closely follow the implementation of the amendments, but it welcomes the changes themselves.

The choice on Sept. 12 is not between an independent or a politicized judiciary, as Kılıçdaroğlu wants us to believe. It is between keeping a system in place, which is not representative of present-day Turkey or modernizing the key judicial bodies, reflecting Turkish plurality and enabling them to critically monitor every party in power.

The CHP, state and democracy

Font Size: [Larger](#)|[Smaller](#)

Wednesday, August 11, 2010

MURAT YETKİN

HURRIYAT

Recently, the main opposition Republican People’s Party, or CHP, chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu published a communiqué in the Hürriyet daily.

As far as I can see, the daily made an important decision to publish the article, amid heated referendum debates.

One can say that priorities in political discussions have changed the order after Kılıçdaroğlu became the new leader of the CHP.

Kılıçdaroğlu, in his letter built on worthy academic support, explains why his party will say “No” to the constitutional amendment package, giving the details of judicial – political relations. He summarizes the reason with the following sentence: If the judicial supervision disappears with the enforcement of the package, Turkey will be dragged into a single-party authoritarian regime underestimating any kind of constitutional supervision.

But until this particular sentence all others Kılıçdaroğlu says, in fact, show that the CHP leader has an ability to renew the party line beyond referendum debates. Kılıçdaroğlu wants us to see sub-headings of a discussion to begin in the CHP, first about the future of democracy in Turkey.

Like a manifest

Kılıçdaroğlu gives a summary of statements on politics, the judiciary and the military delivered since the beginning of his leadership in a rather conceptual fashion. Here are a few headings:

- The bottom line of main issues Turkey struggles with today is the threat against liberal democracy;
- Military interventions in civilian elected-administrations representing the free will of the people harm democracy;
- Civilian supervision over the military in a country is the rule of thumb for a democratic order;
- Non-democratic obstacles set in front of the free will of the people are unacceptable for the CHP. However, a dicta regime attempted by the governing party in order to suppress the entire community with the help of parliamentary support is equally unacceptable.
- In modern democracies, the ballot box is a sine qua non for democracy, but not a sufficient condition. The rule of democracy lies in limiting the power of the state by the rule of law.
- Liberal democracy does not mean the free will of the parliamentary majority. One of the basics of liberal democracies is judicial control over the political power of the day.
- Legal supervision of the judiciary over a government is not against the free will of the people. On the contrary, it is the assurance of democracy. Liberal democracy limits the power of the state and individual freedoms and rights to secure the rule of law.

Emphasis on liberal democracy

Another point of attraction in Kılıçdaroğlu's letter, or rather communiqué is this: He uses "liberal democracy" five times in the text in order to create an impression that they have nothing against the term.

By doing so, Kılıçdaroğlu highlights the power of political authority not to cause any misunderstanding, yet draws a line between the executive and the judiciary. Therefore, the CHP points out a change in its understanding of state and democracy.

The popular vote to be held on the constitutional amendment package on Sept. 12 has caused resignations from the party; for instance Eşref Erdem resigned the other day. The CHP adopted a more leftist-nationalist party line in the 2007 elections. If the party steers the wheel toward liberal democracy prior to the 2010 referendum and the 2011 elections, that may also end with some more resignations.

It seems, however, Kılıçdaroğlu is taking the risk. In fact, risks need to be taken.

As the CHP shifts from the left to the center in political axis, if they renew the center-left line of the 1970s and, in addition, adopt a liberal line; if they express themselves well enough, the CHP might expand the party's grassroots and put its mark on Turkish politics.

If the CHP intends to change and transform, gains, rather than losses, will revive the party.

And I hope Arınç's letter allows discussions of concepts rather than fruitless patterns of debate.

Murat Yetkin is a columnist for the daily Radikal in which this piece appeared Tuesday. It was translated into English by the Daily News staff.

Turkey should lead in global agriculture reform

Wednesday, August 11, 2010
FROM THE BOSPHORUS: STRAIGHT
HURRIYAT

We should be reassured by the conclusion we reported yesterday of the government's wheat board, that Turkey's supplies of wheat are "sufficient" to avoid any shortages and that the decision by Russia to ban wheat exports will not affect us. We are not.

For as we have reported, most recently in a series in May, Turkey's agriculture sector is in dire straits. Farm indebtedness is skyrocketing. Bankruptcy among farmers is spreading. Migration to the cities is unabated and in many once-prime agricultural areas, more than half of arable land has gone fallow.

Turkey is theoretically self-sufficient in most commodities. But imports of all categories of food are fast-growing and among them is wheat – a product that originated in Anatolia. Last year Turkey produced 20.6 million tons of wheat, but still had to import 3.2 million. Production of barley, Turkey's second most important grain crop, has been declining as well. Last year's total of 7.3 million tons was down from an average of more than 9 million tons in the 1990s.

Two years ago, protests erupted in Turkey when prices for rice skyrocketed amid a global jump of food prices triggered by declining production and demand for non-food uses, principally bio-fuels.

That Turkey's own agricultural house is in serious disorder at a time when experts are warning of growing turmoil in the international food supply and security systems is a matter of urgency.

Part of the global problem is that of Turkey: serious neglect of long-term investment, poorly executed subsidy policies and shifting consumer tastes that put Chinese garlic and Swiss-made breakfast cereals on Turkish tables. Another part is what experts have called the "financialization" of the global food trade. Speculation in housing or financial derivatives may have been reined in as a result of the 2008-2009 global financial crisis. But speculation in grain futures, commodities and even food products is now a new source of interest in high finance circles.

As hedge funds move out of bonds and into wheat and soya, this spells trouble down the road.

Turkey's agricultural policy should not turn inward as in Russia, toward ultimately self-defeating protectionism. But we should turn inward in terms of creating new and long-term policies to protect and nurture a once-strong farming sector that is now at the edge of ruin.

We also think Turkey's policy-makers should turn outward, toward the European Union as it reconsiders its own Common Agricultural Policy. Turkey can and should lead at the nearing G-20 summit to ensure that an accountable, innovative and coordinated international system of international food and commodity regulation is put in place. Let's not wait for disaster to happen, as it did in the financial markets. Turkey can help fix its own and the world's food system now.

Expert reports confusing

Font Size: [Larger](#)|[Smaller](#)

Wednesday, August 11, 2010

SEDAT ERGİN

HURRIYAT

A person with limited information about computers and software technologies will be confused if he reads the “Balyoz” (Sledgehammer) indictment.

The reason is various expert reports on CDs and DVDs of evidence to see if documents are original or fake. Unfortunately, the reports are contradictory.

To show the contradictions let me share the essence of such reports included in the indictment:

1. The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, or TÜBİTAK, reports belong to the pre-2003 period. Upon the request of the Office of Public Prosecutor, TÜBİTAK set-up a three-party commission consisting of Erdem Alparslan, Tahsin Türköz and Dr. Hayrettin Bahşi. The group, in a report dated Feb. 19, 2010, presents their opinion that all CDs were prepared at once and no addition was made afterwards. The date of recording is said to be prior to 2003. TÜBİTAK’s report provides critical support to prosecutors against the thesis which claims that the CDs were recorded following a seminar organized by the 1st Army Commandership on March 5-7, 2003. The seminar is part of a coup plan, the prosecution claims.
2. The 1st Military Expert, “TÜBİTAK report is deceptive.” The 1st Army Office of the Military Prosecutor asks of Combat Lt. Col. Birol Çelik to prepare a report. In the report, dated March 11, 2010, Çelik claims that the TÜBİTAK report has serious flaws. The military expert says, “Documents prepared with the use of other military texts and CDs were mixed with the originals on purpose. Therefore, fake documents and CDs were created.”
3. The 2nd Military Expert, “Fraud is very likely.” The Military Prosecutor’s Office asks Combat Col. Yavuz Fildiş to prepare a report. The report dated March 26, 2003 reads that it is impossible to prove if these documents were originals. “It is possible to change the last saving time, day and period, owner of the file or date of print of every document created on a computer. The documents in question might be easily created.”
4. The 2nd TÜBİTAK report, “No trace of fraud.” Upon military experts’ strong claims, the prosecutor’s office asks for a second report from TÜBİTAK. A list of experts is sent by TÜBİTAK to the office for selection. The office selects Burak Bayoğlu, Ünal Tatar and Yılmaz Çankaya. A report by the said experts, dated June 16, 2010, in support of the previous one, reads that data are consistent, contradictions claimed by the military experts do not exist and no trace of fraud has been found.
5. The Security Dept. report, “Documents date back to pre-2003.” Upon the request of the Office of Chief Prosecutor, the Security Dept. prepares a report on Feb. 17, 2003. The Security Dept. decides that the first document in CDs and DVDs was saved on Apr. 8, 1996 and the last one on March 4, 2003. As it is reiterated that the 1st Army seminar took place on March 5-7, 2003, the Security Dept. report reads, the last document was saved the day before.
6. The 3rd Military Expert report: Lastly, a five-expert team including Engineer Lt. Hüseyin Erol, is formed with the directive of the 1st Army Commandership. In the report dated June 28, 2010, counter-opinion to TÜBİTAK and the Security Dept. is expressed: “Official military documents in CDs and DVDs were confiscated by the ill-minded. We have decided for the existence of strong evidence that documents, including an action plan and appendix, are not the originals. They might have been fabricated after confiscation.”

It is not difficult to see that the court might have a hard time because of the contradictions in the expert reports. Setting-up a new experts team consisting of representatives from top engineering faculties in Turkey might be a way out.

To be continued.

Sedat Ergin is a columnist for daily Hürriyet in which this piece appeared Wednesday. It was translated into English by the Daily News staff.

CHP and the referendum

Today's zaman

Fatma DISLI ZIBAK

As the date of a referendum at which government-sponsored reforms will be presented to the public draws near, political parties opposing the reforms are increasing their efforts to urge voters to say "no."

The Republican People's Party (CHP) and its leader, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, are pushing a campaign against the package and trying to explain to the public why the reforms should be stopped, but many find their efforts not very successful because their arguments lack any coherence and reason. In addition, resignations from the party caused by a disagreement between the CHP administration and party members over their attitude towards the reform package make the party's campaign even less likely to succeed. Sabah's Emre Aköz dwells on the reasons Kılıçdaroğlu cited in a text to explain why the CHP is pursuing a campaign against the reforms. Accusing Kılıçdaroğlu of using dirty tactics, he says: "He distorts all the proposals in the constitutional reform package. He brings forward arguments that have nothing to do with the debated text. He says the amendments in the package are not that advanced and that more radical amendments could be made. He presents the referendum as a vote of confidence." Without elaborating on the details of Kılıçdaroğlu's opposition text, Aköz says it is written as if no party other than the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) will ever come to power in Turkey because it makes claims such as the establishment of a civilian dictatorship with the approval of this limited constitutional reform package and alleges that the judiciary will be taken over by the AK Party. "This is simply nonsense because Kılıçdaroğlu does not back up his allegations. It seems that there lies a fear of failure behind the imaginary picture drawn up by Kılıçdaroğlu because a politician never thinks -- under normal circumstances -- that his rival will remain in power forever," Aköz says.

Star's Ergun Babahan comes to some conclusions in the wake of the resignation of CHP deputy Eşref Erdem after he was referred to the party's disciplinary board because he voiced support for the reforms. According to Babahan, this is a heavy blow to the CHP and its aim is to lower the percentage of the "no" votes and prevent presenting Kılıçdaroğlu as a hero because many will associate the percentage of the "no" votes in the referendum with newly elected CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu's success. Babahan thinks Erdem's move was a result of an intraparty conflict because longtime CHP leader Deniz Baykal, who resigned in the wake of a video scandal early this year, does not want his successor to be successful and Erdem is an ally of Baykal.

12 August 2010, Thursday

Is it money that keeps Turkey denying what happened to Armenians?

ORHAN KEMAL CENGİZ

When the conversation on Turkey reaches a certain level of sophistication, I always get the same questions from intelligent American and European friends. They say: “Every nation has dirty things in their history, why is it such a big deal for Turks to confront the Armenian genocide? Is it because of its possible financial consequences?”

In my opinion, money/compensation is a secondary issue. Let us assume that the European Union has just created a special fund to help Turkey compensate the families of Armenian survivors and this fund would cover most of the financial burden on Turkey in the case of “recognition;” do you think this would automatically lead Turkey to the acceptance of the 1915 events as genocide? You would be mistaken if you thought so. So what prevents Turkey from confronting its past? Why on earth do Turks find it so difficult to talk about what happened in this country almost a century ago? Why is it relatively easier for an American to talk about slavery or the massacres of Native Americans, or for other nations for what they did in the countries they colonized, whereas Turks have created such a big taboo out of their past with Armenians? What makes the Turkish case so different?

Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink was a constant irritant in the eyes of the Turkish deep state. He was constantly talking about what happened in Anatolia in the past and he spoke from the bottom of his heart. However, no matter how irritating, it was not his words about genocide or other things that brought him to his death. It was one particular allegation that moved mountains and the deep state unleashed all its evil upon Dink. These were his remarks about Sabiha Gökçen, Atatürk’s adopted daughter and the first woman fighter pilot in Turkey. Dink claimed that Gökçen was indeed an Armenian orphan, a survivor of the Armenian massacres. It was this linkage that he made that took him from this life in 2007. He threatened the very foundations of the status quo in Turkey by making a reference to the relationship between an Armenian orphan and the founder of the Turkish Republic.

What happened in Turkey in 1915 is not only a past atrocity, like it is for Americans or Europeans in their history, it is still at the center of Turkish identity; it is a knowledge that should be kept in the dark corners of the social subconscious in order to maintain the status quo. Confronting the past is not only coming face-to-face with some shameful acts, but also being willing to witness the shattering of so many national myths and taboos. This confrontation means questioning the identity of the founders of the Turkish Republic, the Turkish War of Independence, modernization, the Ottoman past and so many other things.

By making all these analyses I am not suggesting that we are far from questioning these things. The Ergenekon case destroyed the “killing capacity” of the deep state. The Turkish military’s unquestionable place was shattered some time ago. Kemalism and so many other taboos are now being questioned in Turkey. Therefore, we are now able to hear the allegations of some historians in the mainstream media about the possessions of Armenians. This week in the media, the allegation that the presidential palace and some other well-known buildings had actually belonged to Armenian families was able to find its place in the news. This of course, like Dink’s claim, touches a nerve in the Turkish identity. And in the last three years Turkey has come to this juncture where this kind of allegation can be made without being threatened by a deadly deep state attack.

It will of course take a long time to come to a full realization about the meaning of the 1915 massacres and the expulsion of non-Muslims from Anatolia. However, as long as Turkey's progress in the direction of democratization continues, I am hopeful that we will be increasingly confronting our past and our realities. Turkey and Turks will have to look at every ingredient in their identity in order to get rid of the unhealthy and add more healthy elements to it. Turkey's confrontation with its past is not only necessary for justice for the victims of past atrocities but also for the Turks to establish a real identity which is a living one, which frees itself from the chains of illusions, which is able to mature and which orients itself to its own reality. Then we will all be free.

11 August 2010, Wednesday

[The morning of Sept. 13] What if the referendum results in a 'yes'?

EKREM DUMANLI

It must be acknowledged that Turkey does not have an established referendum culture. As a result, referendum rallies are conducted with the atmosphere of a general election. However, voters are supposed to make up their minds by examining the content of a referendum. The decisions that the parties they are sympathetic to may make about the referendum do not bind individuals in the least. Of course, NGOs and political parties may conduct "yes" or "no" campaigns, but the essence of these campaigns should rely on the concrete articles that will be voted on in the referendum. Any campaign that does not make any mention of the content of the referendum will fail to go beyond vicious political rivalry and end up fueling partisanship.

If the referendum produces a "yes" on the morning of Sept. 13, this will contribute to the further establishment of a referendum culture. This is because the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) are collectively opposing the Sept. 12 referendum. These diverse parties' acting in one accord and focusing on "no" campaigns are not motivated by any specific article in the referendum package. If such had been the case, this too would have been regarded as a gain for the sake of the development of a referendum culture.

The reason the CHP is urging its supporters to say "no" is clear: It does not want to lose its domination in the Supreme Board of Prosecutors and Judges (HSYK) and the Constitutional Court and it does not want the special structure there to be destroyed. It does not want international legal standards to be introduced to the judicial system so as to abolish the judiciary's illegitimate impositions on political power. From their own point of view, they can even be excused for seeking to permeate this domination system, which provides them with power without any real effort or public support. Indeed, sovereignty obtained via the judiciary does not require them to conduct election campaigns or convince voters to support them. Thus, even if they do not derive this sovereignty from the nation, but from the judiciary, they can maintain their scorn over the democratically elected government, implying, "We are the true power, whoever assumes the political power."

Does the CHP's excuse for saying "no" to the referendum mean anything to the MHP? Does the BDP oppose it because it similarly benefits from the high judiciary's illegitimate involvement in politics? No. This means that these parties have different reasons for saying the same "no." So why do the MHP and the BDP disapprove of the

constitutional amendments to be voted on in the referendum? This is a question that does not have a good answer.

The MHP argues that Parliament should draft a constitution after it is recomposed following the next general election. This is fine. It is another proposal, but it can hardly be used as a pretext for saying “no” to the current package of constitutional amendments. The MHP, whose base had been greatly victimized by the military coup of Sept. 12, 1980, urges its supporters to say “no” to the referendum without offering them any concrete justification, which means that it confuses the referendum culture with general election habits. This is unneeded.

The BDP’s excuses are both superficial and feeble. Lowering the election threshold of 10 percent is one thing. Saying “no” or “yes” to the 26-article package of constitutional reforms in the referendum is another. To voice irrelevant demands and then say, “Our expectations were not fulfilled,” is to ignore the new freedoms that the constitutional reform package will introduce. Moreover, to boycott the referendum with hopes of fears to be created by the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) terrorist organization in the region represents a total failure for the BDP.

To wake up to a “yes” on the morning of Sept. 13 actually means this: the Constitution drafted by the coup perpetrators may be amended as needed. The powers that will perform these amendments are the Turkish Parliament and the Turkish nation via referendums.

If the “yes” votes are in a majority, this will encourage politicians to draft a new constitution, and this is very important. Triggering new hope and enthusiasm amongst NGOs and academics for a new constitution is dependent on a “yes” outcome in the referendum. The country is obviously in need of a new constitution. It is not in vain that the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen’s Association (TÜSİAD), the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodities Exchanges (TOBB), and many other NGOs are waiting for a new constitution. All political parties promise in their election manifestos to draft a new constitution. This is because the Constitution of 1982 has certain basic dilemmas. The primary focus of the Constitution, drafted after a military coup, was to protect the state, put individuals in the background and wound democracy with different interpretations. A lot has changed since 1982. The Cold War ended, concepts of internal and external enemies have changed and great progress has been made with respect to individual rights. For this reason, the current Constitution cannot serve a modern and developed Turkey, and even prevents it from making further progress and taking its due place among the world’s nations.

Waking to a “yes” on the morning on Sept. 13 will not only bury the tradition of coups in the dusty pages of history, but also introduce new rights for the people of this country. These rights include positive discrimination for disabled citizens, women and children, trade union rights for civil servants, the right of appeal against Supreme Military Council (YAŞ) decisions, and more.

The benefits the package will bring are not limited to these in the new period that will start with a “yes.” For instance, the constitutional amendments provide guarantees for the protection of personal information and data. Thus, no personal information can be recorded without permission of the individual concerned. Moreover, no one will be able to label or categorize people according to their ideological views. Thanks to the amended Constitution, people will not be obliged to apply to the European Court of Human Rights

as they will be able to file their complaints individually with the Constitutional Court, which will be cast in a more pluralistic and participatory structure.

In addition to rights for citizens, there will also, of course, be political repercussions. The political party administrations that opt to turn a deaf ear to the demands of their voters and urge them to say “no” to the referendum without offering them any reasonable explanation will understand the need for abiding by the demands of their base, which will be a positive development with regard to the establishment of a referendum tradition.

What if the referendum results in a ‘no’?

One needs to think carefully about what will happen on the morning on Sept. 13 in order to make a good choice on the referendum slated for Sept. 12. The messages to be sent by a “yes” or “no” outcome in the referendum will affect Turkey’s future. The attitudes political parties adopted concerning the referendum will make themselves felt at all times. In order to avoid having to say in the future, “What have we done to suffer such a loss of prestige?” political parties should give serious thought to their attitudes toward the referendum.

Suppose the referendum campaigns were sacrificed to political ends, partisanship killed the referendum culture and the ballot box produced a “no.” Who will suffer losses from this outcome? Who will regret it? Who will lose prestige?

In the face of a negative outcome, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) will say that the referendum culture in the country is weak, that the opposition -- the CHP, the MHP and the BDP -- created a bloc and that the AK Party fought alone against this bloc, but they still secured substantial support despite negative propaganda and provocations. They will explain that the “no” camp fueled partisanship with a dedication to a certain end even though they consist of opposed -- and even hostile -- groups. They will spice their defense with occasional words of self-criticism, but they will suspend their new constitution project for an indefinite period.

In the long run, we are compelled to make the following conclusion: the heavy price of saying “no” to the referendum will be paid first by Turkey and then by the “no” camp. Such an outcome will certainly bring Turkey’s democratization to a standstill. Even now no one backs the current Constitution. “Amending the coup Constitution” is the most obvious and unchanging item on the agendas of all Turkey’s political parties. Given the fact that of this widely shared hope for changing the Constitution of 1982, it is not a consistent policy to argue that the Constitution should not be amended. To say that this will produce a certain loss of prestige, only from an ethical perspective, is to underestimate the outcome. Indeed, the burden that a “no” outcome will bring will fall on the shoulders of all political parties. Why?

It must be acknowledged that the reform package was the not first solution that came to mind. When work on a new constitution started, the opposition vociferously raised their voices and the project being presided over by Professor Ergun Özbudun had to be suspended. The current referendum was designed as an “interim formula,” as a full-fledged constitution could not be drafted. Even this partial arrangement contains provisions that will give relief to Turkey and raise the bar of democracy. If politics is today unable to amend a coup Constitution scorned by everyone, how can they make a new one tomorrow? A “no” outcome will bury in darkness the country’s need for a new constitution, despite the fact that the Constitution of 1982 cannot serve Turkey.

Perhaps the “no” camp is not aware of this, but the sad truth is that a “no” outcome facilitated by the MHP, CHP and BDP bloc will ensure that the coup Constitution will survive many more years. Won’t the CHP’s voters ask the CHP administration on Sept. 13, “How can we change the coup Constitution after such an outcome?” This also applies to the MHP voters: “Is it our duty to accept the coup Constitution that victimized us so much in the past?” How can the people who support the BDP believe in the party’s victim complex about “closures”? Won’t they lambaste the party administration that still uses the horrible torture cases in Diyarbakır prison during the military rule of the 1980 coup for political ends?

Clearly a “no” on the referendum will give a kiss of life to the Constitution drafted by the subversive generals of the 1980 coup, even though it cannot serve Turkey anymore, and the blame for this grave act will haunt Turkish democracy. After such an outcome, anyone who attempts to amend the Constitution will face the claim, “People do not want to change it.” Kenan Evren recently said of the Constitution of 1982, “It is not a sacred text that came from the sky and, of course, something may change.” While even the commander of the coup said this, how can political parties justify their backing of this antiquated coup Constitution, saying that “the Constitution shall never change”?

Every political party should prepare itself for internal self-examination that will last for several decades concerning any potential “no” outcome. In this context, the MHP administration will face the toughest test. If the constitutional amendments are blocked because of the MHP’s efforts, the matter will not be restricted to the sufferings of the MHP supporters during the military coup of 1980. The questions that the party administration will have a hard time answering will include: Did you launch a “no” campaign because you are OK with the unfair decisions and political acts of the Constitutional Court? Did it bother us that the military officers who are unfairly dismissed from the military by YAŞ would be able to file an appeal to a higher court to seek compensation? Was this the reason for our saying “no” to the referendum? Why was the MHP administration so uncomfortable with the HSYK acquiring a more pluralistic structure -- even if it is commonly believed that the HSYK exerts a judicial tutelage over the country and meddles with critical cases? These questions will multiply, giving much trouble to the MHP administration. The supporters of the MHP have the right to seek answers to these and similar questions.

Each party’s test will be different. The MHP, the BDP and the CHP will not be able to save themselves from the accusations of “protecting and watching over the coup Constitution.” There can be only one reasonable justification to avoid these troubles: “Some specific articles would have damaged the country, and we decided to say no.” But no such concrete justification has been provided. The CHP is the most fortunate party in the “no” camp. It can persuade some of its supporters to vote “no” by saying that it benefits from the politicization of the high judiciary and that the people working at these institutions have similar ideological views to them. What about the MHP? Or the BDP? A “no” outcome will be a nightmare, not a victory for these two parties. The people who fail to closely monitor their supporters’ perceptions, are they entitled to manage their parties?

08 August 2010, Sunday

Democratic control of the Turkish Armed Forces

ABDULLAH BOZKUT
TODAYS ZAMAN

It was long overdue. At last, this government, in the eighth year of its rule, stood firm against the futile attempt of generals and admirals to promote military officers who were allegedly involved in grave crimes such as attempting to overthrow a democratically elected administration in a NATO-member country by targeting minorities.

To the relief of many, none of the generals who were accused of crimes in a court indictment and faced bench warrants for their arrests were promoted to higher ranks. This was itself an important message to all the rank and file of the Turkish military that in the future any shady deals an officer might be tempted to be involved in will, in all likelihood, ruin his career.

The man who was in the middle of a high stakes poker game between the government and top brass is Gen. Hasan İğsız, who was accused of masterminding an Internet smear campaign against the ruling government. He ordered setting up bogus web sites targeting the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) and its chairman, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. He had done all this with taxpayers' money.

The allegations were unearthed when an anonymous whistleblower sent a letter to the media that the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) had set up 42 websites as part of their propaganda campaign against "dangerous" civilian groups, which were categorized as "reactionary," "separatist," "pro-AK Party" and "anti-TSK." The armed forces also monitored the activities of more than 400 Turkish and foreign language websites.

The plan was devised by the General Staff's Third Information Support Unit by a number of colonels and was coordinated by then Deputy Chief of General Staff Gen. Hasan İğsız, according to the officer. Chief of General Staff Gen. İlker Başbuğ was also reportedly informed about the plan. Some of these web sites were active as late as 2009.

The smear campaign was not denied by the TSK and in fact acknowledged by Brig. Gen. Hıfzı Çubuklu, the General Staff's legal adviser, who said the websites had been established following directives from the Prime Ministry in 2000, when the government was led by a coalition under former Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit. There was no such directive, however, according to Prime Ministry archives. Now prosecutors are seeking his testimony in an ongoing investigation into this matter.

The prime minister, who was the prime target in this campaign, understandably made it clear at the outset of the Supreme Military Council (YAŞ) meeting that he wanted İğsız gone and asked the council to deny İğsız a promotion to the next post as land forces commander. He was unequivocally blunt in saying that he would not sign off on a decision to promote him, and, in fact, he did not approve a decision to that effect on Wednesday night. Outgoing Chief of General Staff Gen. Başbuğ, who was persistent on promoting İğsız to the position of land forces commander, threatened the government with his resignation along with other force commanders.

The government called Başbuğ's bluff and dared him to resign prematurely before his term expires at the end of month. The only man who offered his resignation was Gendarmerie General Commander Gen. Atilla Işık, whose name was circulated as a potential nominee for the land forces command post. There are plenty of candidates to fill the vacant posts in case of individual or collective resignations, and this might even make the government look better in the eyes of the public. After all, the decision and final

authority to approve top generals in the military rests with the civilian government and the president. The top military brass' appointment list is ultimately only a suggestion. Part of the problem in this country is that no civilian government dared to challenge YAŞ recommendations, with the exception of two individual cases under a different set of conditions. It has long been a tradition that top commanders determine the upper echelons of the military and the civilian body merely rubberstamps it without any objections. Against the backdrop of heavy charges leveled against some high-ranking generals, the current government has, for the first time, decided to invoke the rights granted to it by the law.

I think it was the right decision as the government is sworn in to serve the 72 million citizens of this country. If some of these generals had attempted to overthrow the political body that was elected by the clear will of the public and were promoted nonetheless, the government would be in dereliction of its duty to protect its citizens' rights. What we saw during the YAŞ proceedings is that the military is finally coming into submission to the civilian authority and democratic control, which should have been done a long time ago. The main disagreement in the current debacle ultimately boils down to the fate of over 100 active duty and retired officers who are facing arrest in the investigation of the Sledgehammer coup plan, as part of which plotters targeted minorities and non-Muslim communities to wreak havoc in the country. The TSK is providing shelter to these suspects and refuses to turn them over to the police. What will happen to these officers when new appointments to the upper echelons are made is at the top of the agenda. Başbuğ wants some kind of deal to save these officers, creating a line of defense in case the investigation and evidence eventually does lead to him.

But times have changed. Prosecutors and judges in this country are not afraid to take independent action to follow the trail of evidence to the very end. The government has no authority to shut down the investigation or order prosecutors to stop digging into illegal military activities. Nobody is above the law and no institution should act with impunity. I think we are finally about to secure the democratic control of the TSK not only in theory, but in practice as well.

07 August 2010, Saturday

