

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD
TURKEY

Weekly Report on Turkey's Political, Geo-Strategic, Economic and Social Issues,
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SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

SUMMARY-POLITICAL NEWS

The Media Association has released a report called "Turkey's Internet Censorship Problem," in Turkish and English, demanding freer web access for the country.

The main opposition party CHP has proposed a change to the law governing the internal operations of the Turkish Armed Forces, or TSK, that it says is needed to de-legitimize future military coups in the country.

The Republican People's Party, or CHP, said in a statement to Parliament,

The proposal is aimed at preventing the wrongful interpretation of Article 35 and keeping it from being viewed as providing justification for coups.

SUMMARY-GEO-STRATEGIC NEWS

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has denied the existence of any long-lasting diplomatic crisis with the United States, either currently or in the past, saying the two countries' strategic priorities and approaches instead overlap. The foreign minister said no problem has occurred in Turkish-U.S. relations in the wake of Turkey's "no" vote against the sanctions imposed on Iran by the U.N. Security Council. He added that the uranium swap deal brokered by Turkey and Brazil, known as the Tehran Agreement, did not lose its meaning in the wake of the sanctions vote and was still valid.

A group of Turkish doctors who travelled to Tanzania to provide medical aid have distributed 3,000 mosquito nets to Tanzanian villagers to protect them from malaria-carrying mosquitoes.

China placed Turkey among European countries as a tourism destination in 2010 although Turkey was placed in Middle Eastern and African catalogues in the past.

The foreign minister of northern Cyprus said Wednesday an alternate plan has been drawn up in the event there is a failure in Cyprus reunification talks.

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle pledged his full support Wednesday to Turkey's EU accession bid.

Turkey is holding regional and international consultations to diffuse tension in Lebanon that erupted over the issue of an indictment against Hezbollah by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and fiery speeches made by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, Lebanese media reported, citing "informed sources."

The bankruptcy of Cyprus Turkish Airlines, or KTHY, has dealt a heavy blow to the tourism industry in northern Cyprus, which is only recognized by Turkey.

Israel will not cooperate with a team of experts appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council to investigate a commando raid on an aid flotilla that was trying to break a blockade of Gaza. Citing a senior official, Israeli daily Haaretz said on Sunday that the Foreign Ministry, the Defense Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office all appear to agree that cooperating with the investigation committee would only confer legitimacy upon the UN Human Rights Council, which Israel claims is biased against it.

Turkey took a key step on Friday toward expanding its diplomatic outreach to Southeast Asia, signing a cooperative agreement with the main forum in the region, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Armenia has asked Turkey to fulfill its responsibilities in the Turkish-Armenian reconciliation process, claiming it has already demonstrated its own political will to live up to its obligations in their rapprochement.

Turkish Red Crescent aid society will provide 4.2 million USD of assistance to Kyrgyzstan for the construction of new buildings after many buildings were badly damaged in the recent Kyrgyz-Uzbek clashes in the south of Kyrgyzstan.

Israel decided on Friday to give aid ships back to Turkey. Israel will make required logistic arrangements to set free the three Turkish ships which it seized with a raid on May 31 when the ships were carrying aid to Gaza, and inform Turkey about the details in coming days. Three Turkish ships have been kept at Israeli ports since May 31.

SUMMARY-ECONOMIC NEWS

The number of individuals smuggling unlicensed red meat into Turkey increased sharply after the price of red meat has increased highly in recent days and weeks.

Trade relations between Turkey and Turkmenistan are likely to exceed \$2 billion in 2010 despite the global economic crisis, said Turkish Foreign Trade Minister Zafer Çağlayan on Tuesday.

United Kingdom Trade & Investment (UKTI) stated that it aimed to double the commerce with Turkey. It would work to double the trade within the next five years, and help investors within that scope.

There is no change in income distribution of Turkey, a research by Turkish Statistical Board, TurkStat, said.

Turkish investments abroad have reached 17.3 billion USD, the Treasury Undersecretariat said on Sunday.

SUMMARY-SOCIAL NEWS

A recent survey reveals that 2.6 million out of 18 million total Turkish households has neither a computer nor Internet access. Istanbul's first city museum opens Saturday on the largest of the Princes' Islands, Büyükada.

POLITICAL NEWS

Convoy from pro-Kurdish party turned away from Turkey's Dörtöyol

Thursday, July 29, 2010

ISTANBUL - Daily News with wires

HURRIYAT

A group of representatives from the main pro-Kurdish party has been turned back from the tension-hit southern district of Dörtöyol by the provincial governor, citing security concerns.

“We are not here to break, hit or damage [things]. We came here to remind the Kurds in Dörtöyol that they are not alone,” Selahattin Demirtaş, the head of the Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP, said Thursday after state authorities refused to allow his convoy of around 30 vehicles to enter the city.

Tension escalated in the southern district Monday after four police officers were killed, allegedly by members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK. Properties belonging to Kurdish people were attacked and the Dörtöyol office of the BDP was set on fire.

Security forces stopped the BDP convoy near the Erzin district, where Demirtaş, party deputies and other members of the group met with the deputy governor of the city, the regional military commander and the police chief. Officials made no statement to the press after the meeting.

Following the meeting, Demirtaş met with his party members and announced the convoy would return to Diyarbakır.

Tensions in the city flared up again while the BDP convoy was en route to Dörtöyol, as a group gathered and chanted slogans against the outlawed PKK. After the BDP turned back to Diyarbakır, Kurdish groups gathered in the city and barricaded roads until the police intervened.

The PKK is recognized as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

11 arrests in İnegöl

A total of 11 people were meanwhile arrested Thursday in the İnegöl district of the northwestern province of Bursa on charges of “violating the law on meetings and rallies,” “showing resistance to an officer on duty” and “damaging public property” following street fights Sunday.

Following the conflict in İnegöl, 52 people were taken into custody and sent to the courthouse, where the judge decided to arrest 11 of them, Doğan news agency reported Thursday. The number of arrested people increased to 12 when another previous suspect was arrested by the court.

Turks and Kurds fought in the streets of İnegöl on Sunday after a quarrel in a coffeehouse, according to initial media reports.

The urban unrest in the northwestern district was not “political or ideological” in origin, said Interior Minister Beşir Atalay, who blamed provocateurs spreading rumors that outlawed Kurdish militants had killed locals.

Visiting the Bursa district Wednesday, Atalay said the events were a routine incident of public disorder that could have happened anywhere in Turkey.

Three Turkish citizens face prison for ideas on Kurdish issue

Thursday, July 29, 2010

ISTANBUL - Daily News with wires

HURRIYAT

An academic and an editor-in-chief are facing prison time for allegedly making propaganda for a terrorist organization in an article, while a prominent musician has been given the same charge for a speech regarding the Kurdish issue.

Due to a recent article entitled “The national self-determination and Kurds,” published in the Law and Society in Our Time journal by the Istanbul branch of the Contemporary Lawyers’ Association, or ÇHD, İsmail Beşikçi and the editor-in-chief of the journal, Zeytan Balcı, could face between 2.5 and 7 years in prison for “making propaganda for a terrorist organization,” daily Taraf reported Thursday.

Beşikçi, who previously spent 17 years in prison due to his ideas concerning the Kurdish issue, appeared before a judge Wednesday for the latest article.

During the case at the Istanbul 11th High Criminal Court, Beşikçi said in his defense that the Kurdish issue was Turkey’s most significant problem.

“The prime minister says today that denying politics is not valid anymore. Nevertheless, the depth of the issue is not analyzed. Today, heated debates have been experienced regarding the Kurdish issue,” he said.

“Discussions on how it can be solved are taking place in the press. However, the problem itself should be talked about,” he said. “Why has it arrived to our day without being solved? The article in the magazine is about what the Kurdish issue is, the content of the problem, the explanation of thoughts and a critique of Kurdish political life.”

The writer’s lawyer, Leven Kanat, said Beşikçi was an academic with around 30 books and drew attention to a statement from an “illegal armed terrorist organization” in the criminal charges, but added that the name of the organization was not stated.

“The name of the PKK [the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party] is used only once in the 45-paragraph-long article. Is this propaganda for an organization? İsmail Beşikçi made an investigation in his article. However, the Prosecutor’s Office evaluated this as propaganda,” said Kanat. After the lawyer’s defense, the case was postponed until a further date.

Meanwhile, Musician Ferhat Tunç, who was investigated because of a speech he made during the First Eruh-Çirav Nature and Culture Art Festival, is also being tried, Anatolia news agency reported Wednesday.

Tunç faces up to 15 years in prison for “committing an illegal act without being an organization member” and “making propaganda for a terrorist organization.”

At the trial in Diyarbakır’s 4th High Criminal Court, Tunç presented a seven-page-long written defense.

“It’s not hard to see that these accusations are outside of the law because the perception of crime and punishment are shaped by traditions of the mind,” said Tunç.

Indicating that the defense was “not related with the compendium of the claim,” the judge asked whether the allegations and the speech cited in the charge belonged to him.

Tunç responded positively, but his lawyer said the written terms in the criminal charges did not constitute a crime.

Because of this argument, his lawyer demanded Tunç’s acquittal; the court, however, postponed the case pending a review of the trial.

CHP proposes changes to 'coup-justifying' article

Thursday, July 29, 2010

ANKARA - Hürriyet Daily News

The main opposition party has proposed a change to the law governing the internal operations of the Turkish Armed Forces, or TSK, that it says is needed to de-legitimize future military coups in the country.

“The proposal is aimed at preventing the wrongful interpretation of Article 35 and keeping it from being viewed as providing justification for coups,” the Republican People’s Party, or CHP, said in a statement to Parliament.

Critics interpreted the move, however, as a way for the party to avoid being seen as pro-coup because of its opposition to the Sept. 12 constitutional referendum, which the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, has sought to position as a referendum on the 1980 coup.

The CHP submitted a parliamentary motion Thursday requesting a partial change to Article 35 of the TSK’s Internal Service Law, which currently describes the task of the Armed Forces as “to watch over and protect the Turkish country and the Turkish Republic designated by the Constitution.”

The motion proposed by the CHP would change this to read: “The task of the Armed Forces is to protect the Turkish country and the Turkish Republic designated by the Constitution within the operational framework of a democratic parliamentary system, abiding by the Constitution.”

In submitting the proposed change, party figures noted that Article 35 has been in effect since 1935 and said they could provide documents that prove the clause “has been used as a legal basis for military coups.”

Turkey experienced military coups in 1960, 1971 and 1980. In addition, the military pressured the governing coalition to step down in 1997 but did not seize power itself. Coup leaders in both 1971 and 1980 referred to Article 35 as a justification for their actions, saying the coups were part of their lawful duty to protect the country.

The CHP said the change to Article 35 is needed because the progress of democracy since the introduction of the multi-party system has been halted by military interventions. Some commentators, however, say the “legislative intention” of the Constitution can be derived from its phrases saying “sovereignty, without any condition and reservation, belongs to the nation,” and “no person or body can use governmental authorization without using the Constitution as a source.”

Based on this, some observers say that the CHP’s measure is unnecessary, because the Constitution contains no clauses that allow a military coup.

Media Association releases Turkish Internet censorship report

Thursday, July 29, 2010

ISTANBUL - Hürriyet Daily News

The Media Association has released a report called "Turkey's Internet Censorship Problem," in Turkish and English, demanding freer web access for the country.

The report listed significant past events regarding Internet censorship in Turkey, such as the YouTube ban and the tax problem with Google.

The Media Association proposed a change in Law No.5651 to make it more liberal and to coincide with the innately free nature of the web.

The final part of the report brings suggestions for a more free internet access from across Turkey, such as: "Websites that play a major role in the dissemination of thoughts and ideas on the Internet should be evaluated as part and parcel of democracy and pluralism," "Internet journalists should be able to benefit fully from all the rights and freedoms provided other journalists under the law" and "Specialized expert courts should be established to deal with Internet-related issues."

The report may be read in English in .pdf format by following the links through the site www.medyadernegi.org

Turkey's main opposition to take Dolmabahçe meeting to court

Thursday, July 29, 2010

ANKARA — Hürriyet Daily News

Turkey's main opposition party will file a complaint next week against the former chief of the General Staff and the Turkish prime minister in relation to the April 27, 2007, e-memorandum and the Dolmabahçe meeting.

Atilla Kart of the Republican People's Party, or CHP, said the complaint would refer to two issues, namely the e-memo which was posted by the General Staff on its website on April 27, 2007, and the meeting between Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and then-Chief of General Staff Gen. Yaşar Büyükanıt on May 4, 2007, at Dolmabahçe Palace.

Büyükanıt later said he was the author of the e-memo, which led to snap elections from which the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, emerged victorious.

CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu claimed that Erdoğan and Büyükanıt made a deal over the 2007 e-memo in an effort to perpetuate the government's rule during a secret meeting at Dolmabahçe Palace.

The CHP leader said Thursday Büyükanıt would be judged on his role in the Dolmabahçe meeting if his party came to power.

Kılıçdaroğlu also criticized the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, for providing Büyükanıt an armored vehicle after his retirement.

Kart said Büyükanıt's claim that he wrote the e-memo represented a constitutional crime and that the Dolmabahçe meeting was intended to manipulate the political cadre and landscape of the Turkish Republic.

The CHP official also said the details of the three-hour meeting were not recorded.

'CHP once applauded Büyükanıt'

Speaking to daily Milliyet on Thursday, Büyükanıt said Kılıçdaroğlu's allegations that he and Erdoğan jointly prepared the e-memo did not reflect the truth. The former top soldier also said the allegations were an insult and condemned the claims.

Büyükanıt then said he did not want to add anything to his earlier statements on the issue, which consisted of his claim that as chief of the General Staff, it was his duty to hold such meetings with prime ministers, and that he had held similar talks with former leaders Bülent Ecevit and Mesut Yılmaz. The Dolmabahçe meeting was about state matters, he said.

Regarding the e-memo of 2007, Büyükanıt said it was neither an e-memo, nor a military intervention into the administration of the state via the website announcement, that facilitated the government's desire to see then-Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül installed as President.

Büyükanıt said the military was merely expressing sensitivity to secularism on its website.

Speaking to news channel Habertürk on Thursday, Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç said, contrary to Büyükanıt's remarks, that the military had posted an e-memo on its website on April 27.

According to Arınç, the government then responded to the e-memo while the CHP applauded the move.

The CHP had begun to slander Büyükanıt, whom they once applauded, Arınç said, adding that armored vehicles were provided to every retired chief of General Staff and that Büyükanıt, if necessary, should be able to determine whether the vehicle should be taken back from him.

GEO-STRATEGIC NEWS

Turkish FM says 'no crisis' with US now, or in past

Thursday, July 29, 2010

ANKARA - Hürriyet Daily News

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has denied the existence of any long-lasting diplomatic crisis with the United States, either currently or in the past, saying the two countries' strategic priorities and approaches instead overlap.

"No long-lasting crisis has occurred between Turkey and the U.S., neither in the past nor now," Davutoğlu said in an interview with CNNTürk television late Wednesday, adding that the strategic priorities and methods employed by the United States, and the language used by U.S. President Barack Obama, had much in common with Turkey's approach. The foreign minister said no problem has occurred in Turkish-U.S. relations in the wake of Turkey's "no" vote against the sanctions imposed on Iran by the U.N. Security Council. He added that the uranium swap deal brokered by Turkey and Brazil, known as the Tehran Agreement, did not lose its meaning in the wake of the sanctions vote and was still valid.

"The process has already begun, and technical negotiations have been underway," Davutoğlu said. "We agreed in principle that a meeting could take place in September. But the date can change. Both parties want Turkey to be involved in the process." Following his trilateral meeting with the foreign ministers of Iran and Brazil on Sunday, Davutoğlu said a meeting between Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, and the EU's foreign-policy chief, Catherine Ashton, could take place in early September. In the interview with CNNTürk, Davutoğlu also touched upon the terrorism issue, describing the country's fight against terror as the most vital issue on the agenda. "We want to maintain our fight against terror without narrowing democracy and making any restrictions about human rights," he said.

Asked a question about the Israeli raid on the flotilla of ships carrying aid to Gaza, Davutoğlu said: "As the government, we made all necessary warnings. But we do not have the right to prevent a nongovernmental organization [from organizing the flotilla]. Israel today experiences the biggest isolation in its history since it has contradicted with the conscience of humanity."

Turkish doctors distribute 3,000 mosquito nets to Tanzanians

A group of Turkish doctors who travelled to Tanzania to provide medical aid have distributed 3,000 mosquito nets to Tanzanian villagers to protect them from malaria-carrying mosquitoes.

As part of a joint project of the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) and the Aegean Health Association (ESADER), 20 doctors departed İstanbul on Saturday for Zanzibar, where they were greeted by local doctors who studied medicine in Turkey and by executives of Turkish schools in the country.

Visiting a hospital in the country, Turkish doctors were warmly welcomed by the hospital administration. Stating that they were happy to host Turkish doctors, Jamala Taib, the general manager of the hospital, remarked on how much he enjoyed seeing people who devoted themselves to volunteer medical services.

ESADER's executive board chairman, Metin Akdağ, said they are planning to extend their helping hand to many countries throughout the world. Stating that they gave Taib a ceramic clock with the Turkish flag on it as a gift, Akdağ underlined that the Turkish doctors will also hold workshops and training for Tanzanian doctors.

Noting that 25 percent of deaths in the country are due to malaria, the Turkish doctors emphasized that they took action against mosquitoes by distributing mosquito nets to locals. Akdağ said that one mosquito net can protect three children from malaria, underlining that their aim is help curb incidences of malaria in Tanzania. Akdağ added that they will provide medical assistance to Tanzanians through the first week of August.

29 July 2010, Thursday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

China places Turkey among European countries in tourism

29 July 2010, Thursday

TODAYS ZAMAN

China placed Turkey among European countries as a tourism destination in 2010 although Turkey was placed in Middle Eastern and African catalogues in the past.

In an exclusive interview with the Anatolia news agency, Culture Attache at the Turkish Embassy in Beijing, İlknur Yiğit, said that Turkey allocated the greatest amount of funds for tourism promotion for China among all other Asia Pacific countries.

This great amount of funds shows the importance Turkey attaches to China. We will soon open a tourism office in Shanghai, Yiğit said.

In 2010, we began marketing Turkey in European and Mediterranean destinations. We are developing Turkey-Greece package as an Aegean product in tourism. Further, we are working on promoting Morocco-Turkey-Tunisia as a Mediterranean package in tourism, Yiğit said.

Thanks to Turkish Airlines' flights to Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong, Turkey will be placed in various other packages, Yiğit underlined.

We have been promoting Turkish tourism in China for the past decade. As of now, we want to participate in fairs on congresses, golf and honeymoon, Yiğit said.

Turkey successfully hosts many important organizations, forums and sports events. In August, 2010, Turkey will host the "2010 World Basketball Championship". Turkey and China are playing in the same group. We will erect large TV screens in most populated centers of China so that the Turkey-China basketball game is watched by thousands of people and Turkey gets promoted, Yiğit said.

In 2009, 69,336 Chinese tourists visited Turkey. We want to increase the number of Chinese tourists visiting Turkey, Yiğit also said.

The year 2012 will be celebrated in Turkey as "the Year of China".

The year 2013 will be celebrated in China as "the Year of Turkey".

Turkish Cypriot FM: 'Plan B' ready in Cyprus talks

Thursday, July 29, 2010

NICOSIA – Anatolia News Agency

HURRIYAT

The foreign minister of northern Cyprus said Wednesday an alternate plan has been drawn up in the event there is a failure in Cyprus reunification talks.

Foreign Minister Hüseyin Özgürkün, however, did not elaborate on the plan, saying, "We are not expressing it due to our intention [of reaching] a settlement on the island."

Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders have been continuing United Nations-sponsored Cyprus talks since September 2008 to reunify the island. Leaders discussed the "property issue" at their recent meeting on Wednesday.

The Turkish Cypriot side has repeatedly said talks cannot continue forever and must conclude with a settlement by the end of 2010.

In an interview with Turkish Cypriot state-run TV channel BRT, Özgürkün said the Greek Cypriot side wanted to link the property issue with territory and settlers from Turkey, in a move to put talks on a difficult course.

"Greek Cypriots are trying to evade a deal," he said. "They have never said 'yes' to a state based on equal partnership with Turkish Cypriots. Their aim is to recognize Turkish Cypriots as a minority and claim right to the whole island."

Stating that the Cyprus problem could only be resolved by two alternatives, Özgürkün said, "either two separate states are accepted or a new partnership should be formed."

At this point, he said, the international community should warn Greek Cypriots that the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus would be recognized if Cyprus reunification talks fail in the end.

"Someone must give a deadline to the Greek Cypriot side. This is not a threat, but facts must be seen," he said.

Meanwhile, Turkish Cyprus President Derviş Eroğlu hosted a dinner in honor of the leader of Greek Cypriot administration, Dimitris Christofias, and his wife late Wednesday.

Speaking to reporters following the dinner, Eroğlu said meeting with Christofias aside from the negotiation table was crucial for friendship. This friendship would pave the way for a fair solution at the negotiation table, Eroğlu stressed.

Social activities, such as the dinner, have a positive reflection on the negotiation table, Eroğlu said. Eroğlu said Christofias invited him to a dinner but added that no date had yet been fixed.

Christofias, for his part, told the press corps that the dinner, which lasted 2.5 hours, on Wednesday took place in a nice and sincere atmosphere.

"The dinner will contribute to our social relations," Christofias said.

German FM pledges to support Turkey's EU bid

Wednesday, July 28, 2010

Diverging from the stance of his country's top leader, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle pledged his full support Wednesday to Turkey's EU accession bid. Underscoring that Turkey's "direction is [toward] Europe," Westerwelle told a joint press conference with his Turkish counterpart, Ahmet Davutoğlu, that developing relations with Turkey and its joining the European Union are of key importance to Germany. German Chancellor Angela Merkel has repeatedly offered a "privileged partnership" to Turkey as an alternative to full EU membership.

The two foreign ministers held their press conference following a breakfast meeting at Istanbul's Çırağan Palace. Davutoğlu said the German foreign minister had confirmed his country's support for Turkey's EU accession bid, adding that he had informed Westerwelle during the meeting about Turkey's initiatives regarding visa procedures. "I also told him that we appreciated the EU's efforts in the recent period on the liberalization of visas, but Turkey's being excluded from these efforts does not have any legitimate basis," the Turkish foreign minister said.

Davutoğlu said he told Westerwelle that the two parties in Cyprus should be treated equally in order to attain a lasting solution for the island. "I also said we attach great importance to Britain's and Germany's support on the matter for progress on the issue," he added.

Noting that Germany appreciates the success Turkey has had in recent years, Westerwelle said the two countries have common interests as allies and that the strategic dialogue between them is very important. He added that 3.5 million Turks are living in Germany and more than 4 million Turks are visiting Germany each year, numbers he said showed the sound basis of the relations between the two countries.

During his meeting with Davutoğlu, Westerwelle said the two top diplomats also discussed the establishment of a Turkish-German university in Istanbul, as well as international matters including the standoff over Iran. Germany welcomes the efforts of Turkey and Brazil to establish dialogue with Iran, he added, though he said Iran's having nuclear weapons was not an acceptable solution and would pose a regional danger. Davutoğlu said Westerwelle and he also discussed regional issues in their meeting. He recalled, "Turkey, Iran and Brazil held talks in Istanbul within the scope of Iran's nuclear program. The following day Iran responded to Vienna Group and EU decided on new sanctions the same day."

"We attach importance to continuation of this diplomacy atmosphere. Technical negotiations should start between Iran and Vienna Group as soon as possible," Davutoglu said.

Regarding the incidents in Gaza, Westerwelle said they should be clarified at an international level, adding that the EU shares this stance.

In response to a question about the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, whose actions have led to thousands of deaths in Turkey, Westerwelle said Germany would not accept any form of terrorist activities. "We share the sorrow of Turkey. We are determined to work together against terror. No one should expect us to accept or tolerate terror acts," he added.

The PKK is recognized as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the EU.

Reports: Turkey in bid to ease internal tension in Lebanon

Turkey is holding regional and international consultations to diffuse tension in Lebanon that erupted over the issue of an indictment against Hezbollah by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and fiery speeches made by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, Lebanese media reported, citing “informed sources.”

An Israeli media report on Tuesday, meanwhile, suggested that Turkey is working to prevent Lebanese ships from attempting to sail to Gaza in violation of an Israeli blockade on the Hamas-run territory. Ankara deems additional flotillas pointless after the blockade of Gaza was partially lifted, anonymous Israeli officials told the Yedioth Ahronoth daily. Officials at the Turkish Foreign Ministry in Ankara were not immediately available for comment on these reports, when approached by Today’s Zaman on Tuesday afternoon. According to the report by the Lebanon-based Safir newspaper, Turkey has stepped in to diffuse tension in Lebanon. The informed sources told the Safir daily that Turkish delegates are holding meetings in several countries, including talks in Damascus, to ease likely tension over the expected announcement of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon’s findings next fall.

The sources were apparently referring to meetings overseen by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in Damascus. While in the Syrian capital, Davutoğlu had talks with both Syrian President al-Assad and Lebanese Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri, the son of the assassinated former prime minister, Rafik al-Hariri.

Saad al-Hariri, who initially blamed Syria for his father’s death, has since tried to ease tensions with Syria and has made several trips to Damascus to meet with Assad. Syria has denied any involvement in Rafik al-Hariri’s killing.

Over the weekend, Nasrallah said he expected that many members of his group would face indictment as part of the UN investigation into the killing of Rafik al-Hariri. The indictment of Hezbollah members for Rafik al-Hariri’s killing would put severe strains on Lebanon’s unity government, led by al-Hariri’s son, and which includes Hezbollah ministers.

‘Turkey working to prevent Lebanese ships going to Gaza’

Officials in Jerusalem were surprised to learn that Turkey is working to prevent Lebanese ships from attempting to sail to Gaza in violation of an Israeli blockade on the Hamas-run territory, the Yedioth Ahronoth daily reported Tuesday.

Israeli officials said Davutoğlu, who visited Damascus last week and also met with Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri there, asked the Lebanese government to prevent the flotilla’s departure in an attempt by Ankara to ease tensions with Israel.

28 July 2010, Wednesday

TODAY’S ZAMAN ANKARA

Bankruptcy hurts Turkish Cyprus tourism

Wednesday, July 28, 2010

REETA PAAKKINEN

KYRENIA - Hürriyet Daily News

The bankruptcy of Cyprus Turkish Airlines, or KTHY, has dealt a heavy blow to the tourism industry in northern Cyprus, which is only recognized by Turkey. Sector

representatives say airline companies have started using Larnaca Airport in Greek Cyprus, a tendency that threatens the future of Ercan Airport in the north. The bankruptcy of Cyprus Turkish Airlines, or KTHY, in late June is increasingly prompting tourism entrepreneurs in northern Cyprus to use Larnaca Airport in Greek Cyprus.

Representatives of the Turkish Cypriot tourism sector say the government should focus on attracting more airlines, and especially charter flights, to Ercan Airport. There is an urgent need to add connections to Ercan to compensate for the flights that have been discontinued because of the bankruptcy.

Mehmet Dolmacı, chairman of Turkish Cypriot Hoteliers Union, or KITOB, said since the bankruptcy of Cyprus Turkish Airlines, an increasing numbers of tourists to northern Cyprus are choosing to fly to Larnaca Airport. Some 20 percent of all tourists to the north arrive through Larnaca these days. During the high season, some 2,000 tourists arrive in northern Cyprus each week.

"Larnaca is a good option as transferring from there to the resorts in the north only takes about one and a half hours. However, northern Cyprus hoteliers cannot rely on Larnaca, and we also have our own airport, Ercan, which we should really focus on using.

Although flying to Ercan usually means a stopover on the way, a transfer time of 45 minutes compensates for this," Dolmacı said.

Dangerous dependency

Özbek Dedekorkut, former president of the Turkish Cypriot Travel and Tourist Agents Association, or KITSAB, said if the Turkish Cypriot government does not now work to attract more airlines to Ercan Airport, more of the European tour operators bringing tourists to northern Cyprus will start using Larnaca Airport as the default destination from next year on. "This situation has forced us to find alternatives, of which one of the best is Larnaca Airport. However, we do not want to depend on it because of the current political situation," Dedekorkut told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review in early July.

"In order to cover the loss of seats KTHY was offering - about 800,000 a year - we must have more airlines landing in Ercan. The new route by Turkey's Onur Air, which will start flights here in a while, as well as additional flights by Pegasus Airlines and Anadolu Jet will not cover the loss. We need around five new airlines here, for example, European charters and Sun Express," Dedekorkut said. SunExpress is a joint venture of Germany's Lufthansa and Turkey's Turkish Airlines.

Dolmacı expects two new airlines to launch flights to Ercan in the near future. "In order to attract more airlines here, both Turkish and European, the government should provide incentives, and for example, reduce service costs at Ercan and apply a tax relief on these firms," he said.

Dedekorkut agreed. "If the government opens the road for charter airlines and makes regulations easier, many airlines will be happy to fly here. We need to convince current airlines to schedule more flights, use Turkish Airlines more efficiently, and use Anadolu Jet more," he added.

National carrier not a necessity

Increasing charter flights to northern Cyprus is a more reliable business model in the current situation, according to Dedekorkut. "Charter carrying is very important now as charter flight prices are more reasonable and tour operators commit themselves to fill the

seats. If we manage to run charters some eight to 10 months of the year from next spring, we can fill in the gap created by the bankruptcy of KTHY," he added.

Dedekorkut noted that the bankruptcy of KTHY was something the Turkish Cypriot tourism industry had been expecting for a few years. He believes the Turkish Cypriot government can manage without a national carrier. "Rather than opening a new airline, the government should support existing ones. KTHY was just a symbol which we do not necessarily need in this economic environment. Supporting existing routes to northern Cyprus and inviting new airlines here is of utmost priority as 90 percent of our economy depends on universities and tourism, which both partly rely on the airline business," he said.

Turkey, Brazil back in business for Iran nuclear swap deal

Tehran will send a letter today to the Vienna-based UN atomic watchdog in response to a letter it received from Vienna last month concerning the nuclear swap deal agreed by Iran, Brazil and Turkey on May 17, Turkey's FM Ahmet Davutoğlu announced on Sunday in İstanbul, following a three-way meeting with his Brazilian and Iranian counterparts.

The three ministers have reaffirmed that "Diplomacy is the first and only way out," to the dispute between major powers and Iran over the latter's controversial nuclear program, Davutoğlu told reporters, speaking after a lunch meeting with Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim and Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki.

"The Tehran agreement is a declaration which constitutes a very strong instrument for the resolution of the issue. It is still providing a basis for a positive contribution [to the process regarding the nuclear dispute.]," Davutoğlu said, referring to the deal reached in Tehran under which Iran agreed to send some of its uranium abroad, reviving a plan drafted by the United Nations, with the aim of keeping its nuclear work in check.

Mr. Mottaki informed Mr. Amorim and myself that Iran will tomorrow [Monday] convey its letter to [the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency/IAEA] Mr. Yukiya Amano, intended to respond to questions posed by the Vienna Group," he said, in remarks aired live on NTV news channel.

Mobilization vis-à-vis the fuel swap deal through the trilateral meeting in İstanbul came at a time when some international media suggested reluctance on the side of Brazil to become involved in further negotiations on the issue, while also controversial reports were posted from Washington claiming that the US administration requested that Turkey stay out of international efforts to resolve the Iran deadlock. Both Ankara and Washington denied such a request, with the latter saying that Ankara and Washington have a "mutual understanding" regarding the course of affairs concerning international efforts to resolve the dispute on Iran's nuclear program and what the next step should be within this process.

The accord failed to prevent intensified sanctions from the United Nations, European Union and United States adopted over the past two months. The Security Council imposed a fourth round of sanctions on Iran on June 9, which Brazil and Turkey voted against, angry at the West's dismissal of their deal which they said made new sanctions unnecessary. Within days after the signing of the deal, Iran had officially notified the IAEA on May 24, of its nuclear fuel swap declaration with Turkey and Brazil. On June 9,

IAEA chief Amono received a letter from France, Russia and the US posing some questions and conveyed it to Iran.

Ankara indicated that the Turkey has urged Iran to have a positive tone in its response letter to the Vienna Group -- comprising the US, France, Russia and the IAEA.

“We hope that both this [Iran’s] letter and the process initiated by it will pave the way,” for a diplomatic solution to the overall dispute, Davutoğlu said.

Underlining that there are two tracks regarding Iran’s nuclear issue, one being the Tehran fuel swap deal and the other being the negotiation process between Iran and the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany) over the former’s nuclear program, Davutoğlu more than once stressed that the role being played by Brazil and Turkey was a “facilitator” role.

In relation to the two countries’ possible involvement in both tracks in the upcoming period, Davutoğlu stated that Turkey would be pleased to exert “facilitating” efforts only if all parties in the dispute request such involvement.

Regarding the process between Tehran and the P5+1, Davutoğlu said Mottaki had reaffirmed his country’s willingness for talks with the European Union about its nuclear program after the end of the holy month of Ramadan, probably in the first half of September.

Catherine Ashton, the EU’s foreign affairs chief, wrote to Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili last month inviting him to resume negotiations.

İstanbul is likely to be the venue for the meeting between Ashton and Jalili as there is a broad consensus for having the meeting there, Davutoğlu said, adding: “As we have always been, we would only be glad to be the address for any diplomatic solution.”

26 July 2010, Monday

TODAY’S ZAMAN ANKARA

Turkey informs P5 1 countries on talks with Iran

Turkey informed the P5 1 (five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France, as well as Germany) on Turkey-Brazil-Iran meeting in İstanbul.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim and Iranian Foreign Minister Manuchehr Motaki met in İstanbul on Sunday. It was their first meeting since the three signed the Tehran Agreement in May.

Engin Soysal, deputy undersecretary of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, met with representatives of P5 1 countries in Ankara and informed them on the talks in İstanbul. Soysal also gave information about Davutoglu's diplomatic efforts and contacts to find a solution to the issue.

P5 1 countries expressed their satisfaction with Turkey's coordination.

The European Commission was also informed on the talks.

26 July 2010, Monday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Report: Israel won’t cooperate with UN flotilla probe

Israel will not cooperate with a team of experts appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council to investigate a commando raid on an aid flotilla that was trying to break a blockade of Gaza.

Citing a senior official, Israeli daily Haaretz said on Sunday that the Foreign Ministry, the Defense Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office all appear to agree that cooperating with the investigation committee would only confer legitimacy upon the UN Human Rights Council, which Israel claims is biased against it.

"This is an unnecessary committee," the unnamed official was quoted as saying, "which is the product of an obsession with Israel." Israel has not yet made an official statement about the UN fact-finding team, announced on Friday. While announcing the appointment of experts to the investigation committee, the UN Human Rights Council also called on all parties to cooperate.

"The expertise, independence and impartiality of the members of the mission will be devoted to clarifying the events which took place that day and their legality," Thai Ambassador Sihasak Phuangketkeow, the current council president, said on Friday. "We call upon all parties to fully cooperate with the mission and hope that this mission will contribute to peace in the region and justice for the victims."

The 47-country council voted to set up the independent inquiry on June 2 to look into what it called a violations of international law in Israel's commando attack on May 31, in which eight Turkish and one American activists were killed.

The fact-finding team comprises three independent experts -- Sir Desmond de Silva of Britain, a former chief war crimes prosecutor at the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone; Karl Hudson-Phillips of Trinidad and Tobago, a former International Criminal Court judge; and Mary Shanthi Dairiam of Malaysia, a women's rights activist.

The three-member committee is expected to travel to Israel, Turkey and Gaza in August to interview witnesses and gather information before reporting back to the council in September. The council opens a three-week session in Geneva on Sept. 12. It is not clear whether Israel will allow the fact-finding team to visit.

Israel, which has a long history of rejecting UN probes as one-sided, has rejected Turkish demands for a formal apology and an international investigation and launched an internal probe instead. A separate Israeli military inquiry released on July 12 found intelligence and operational errors in the raid but defended the use of force against activists on the Mavi Marmara.

On Friday, Israel agreed to release the Mavi Marmara and two other Turkish ships that were part of the flotilla. Talks to return the ships had been previously held up by Israel's demand that the owners not sail them against the blockade, which it says will help prevent arms smuggling to Hamas in Gaza.

26 JULY 2010

TODAYS ZAMAN

Turkey signs cooperation agreement with ASEAN

Turkey took a key step on Friday toward expanding its diplomatic outreach to Southeast Asia, signing a cooperative agreement with the main forum in the region, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu signed a deal on Turkey's accession to ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Vietnam, where a meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum, a group of 10 ASEAN nations in addition to 17 others, took place.

"Accession to the treaty marks a historic step in Turkey's process of opening up to the Southeast Asian-Pacific region," a statement from the Turkish Foreign Ministry said,

“Thus, our country has established, for the first time, an institutional relationship and has the opportunity to further deepen its political, economic and cultural ties with the region.” Turkey’s efforts build institutional ties with ASEAN date back to 1999, but it was in 2008 that efforts gained momentum when Turkey formally expressed its readiness to accede to the TAC in a letter to the Foreign Ministry of Thailand, which chaired ASEAN activities that year.

In another step to increase relations with ASEAN, Ambassador Aydın Evirgen, the Turkish government’s representative in Indonesia, which hosts the ASEAN Secretariat, presented his credentials to ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan on Friday, thus becoming the accredited Turkish ambassador to ASEAN. Davutoğlu and Pitsuwan had a meeting on Friday and discussed ways to step up cooperation between Turkey and ASEAN.

ASEAN was founded in 1967 and currently comprises Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The TAC, the ASEAN’s founding pact of non-aggression, was signed in 1976. It was amended Dec. 15, 1987, by a protocol to open the document to accession by states outside Southeast Asia. China joined the TAC in 2003, being the first country outside the region to accede. A number of countries have also taken part in the TAC including India, Japan and Pakistan among others; the US joined last year, while the EU is currently in the process of joining.

The ASEAN spans an area of about 4.5 million square kilometers with a population of approximately 580 million people, or 8.7 percent of the world’s population.

24 July 2010, Saturday

TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Armenia says Turkey’s turn to take steps in normalization

Armenia has asked Turkey to fulfill its responsibilities in the Turkish-Armenian reconciliation process, claiming it has already demonstrated its own political will to live up to its obligations in their rapprochement.

Armenia demonstrated political will towards normalization of ties with Turkey and expects Turkey to undertake a return step,” Armenian President Serzh Sarksyan said on Wednesday during a meeting with Armenian diaspora youth, members of the Miasin movement and the Return Home program, Armenian news portal Panarmenian.net reported.

Turkey and Armenia sealed historic twin protocols in October of last year with a hope to bury their century-long animosity while establishing diplomatic relations and opening their long-shut border. Turkey has kept the doors closed since 1993 as a sign of solidarity with its Turkic brethren in Azerbaijan during the Armenian assault on the Azerbaijani territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Pointing to international pressure on Turkey to ratify the protocols -- currently at a standstill after Turkey pegged its ratification to the solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute -- Sarksyan said the whole world is urging Turkey to demonstrate political will in ratifying the protocols. “Ankara is turning a deaf ear,” Sarksyan said, “calling on Armenia to show political will.”

The most sensitive issue for Turkey within the protocols is the opening of the borders with the impoverished South Caucasian country, which was at war with Turkey’s ally

Azerbaijan in the early 1990s. Azerbaijan stridently opposed the opening of the border, further complicating the process.

“Despite Turkish authorities’ statements, Armenia is ready to accept any expression of friendship,” Sarkisyan said.

23 July 2010, Friday

TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Turkish Red Crescent Aid Society Extends Assistance To Kyrgyzstan

Wednesday, 28 July 2010

Turkish Red Crescent aid society will provide 4.2 million USD of assistance to Kyrgyzstan for the construction of new buildings after many buildings were badly damaged in the recent Kyrgyz-Uzbek clashes in the south of Kyrgyzstan.

Speaking to the AA during a three-day visit to Kyrgyzstan, Director General of the Turkish Red Crescent Omer Tasli said that the aid society would provide financial assistance to Kyrgyzstan so that new buildings could be constructed.

We have come to Kyrgyzstan to help the country and offer the charity of the Turkish people, Tasli underlined.

In clashes in south of Kyrgyzstan last month, 351 people were killed and more than 2,000 were injured. During the clashes, around 2,500 homes, businesses and public institutions were destroyed.

Wednesday, 28 July 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

Turkish Finance Minister: Turkey's Passing Through A Big Change & Transformation In Recent Period

Wednesday, 28 July 2010

Turkish Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek said on Wednesday that Turkey had been passing through a big change and transformation in recent period.

Similar change and transformation in Syria would be very beneficial for the stability and prosperity of the region as well as for the future of both Turkey and Syria, added Simsek who completed his talks in Aleppo and proceeded to Damascus where he held meetings with Syrian Finance Minister Muhammad al-Husayn, Transportation Minister Yarob Badr and Assistant Vice President Hassan Turkmani.

Simsek welcomed the recent developments in Syria, and said that important reforms were made and a strong economic performance was recorded as an outcome of those reforms in recent years.

Upon suggestions of Syrian minister al-Husayn to share experiences on tax and budget issues and to cooperate in banking and insurance sectors, Simsek said that a Turkish delegation could visit Syria or Turkey could host a Syrian delegation regarding the tax issue. He added, "we should certainly organize this in August or September."

"We also would like to share our experiences in budget issue," said Simsek.

Recalling that visa was lifted between Turkey and Syria, Simsek said that infrastructure in custom gates should be modernized to meet the rising demand.

Meanwhile, al-Husayn said that Syria attached importance to jointly establish a bank with Turkey's Ziraat Bank, adding that efforts were under way in this issue.

Syrian Transportation minister also said that they had very good relations with Turkish Transportation Ministry, adding that an important step was taken by starting railway trips between Turkey and Syria.

Wednesday, 28 July 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

Israel To Give Back Turkey's Aid Ships

Saturday, 24 July 2010

Israel decided on Friday to give aid ships back to Turkey.

Israel will make required logistic arrangements to set free the three Turkish ships which it seized with a raid on May 31 when the ships were carrying aid to Gaza, and inform

Turkey about the details in coming days.

Three Turkish ships have been kept at Israeli ports since May 31.

An Israeli Foreign Ministry executive confirmed the decision, which had been made with the consent of all concerned authorities.

The executive said the decision was made in line with efforts to better relations and rebuild confidence.

The military spokesperson is expected to make the official statement regarding the decision.

Nine people, including eight Turkish and one U.S. citizen of Turkish descent, were killed when Israeli forces raided a Gaza-bound aid flotilla on May 31. Around 30 people were wounded in the attack.

Israel detained the passengers of the ships for a few days after the raid, and sent the majority of the passengers to Turkey.

The aid in the ships were sent to border crossings to be distributed in Gaza.

"Mavi Marmara" ship has been kept at Haifa port, and the other two Turkish ships "Defne" and "Gazze (Gaza)" at Ashdod port

Saturday, 24 July 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

ECONOMIC NEWS

Red meat smuggling into Turkey rises after high prices

The amount of unlicensed red meat imports in Turkey in the first six months of 2010 increased by five fold when compared to the same term last year.

Thursday, 29 July 2010 11:52

WORLD BULLETIN

The amount of unlicensed red meat imports in Turkey in the first six months of 2010 increased by five fold when compared to the same term last year.

The number of individuals smuggling unlicensed red meat into Turkey increased sharply after the price of red meat has increased highly in recent days and weeks.

In the first half of 2009, Turkish security forces confiscated 1.8 tonnes of unlicensed red meat. This figure went up to 9.7 tonnes in the first half of 2010.

In operations conducted at customs points in the first half of 2010, Turkish security forces confiscated unlicensed goods and illegal drugs worth 268.8 million TL (1 USD is equal to 1.516 TL).

Below is a list of certain goods confiscated at Turkish customs points in the first six months of 2010 and the minimum value of such goods:

Type of good Value (Thousand TL)

Vehicle 61,153

Weapon 113

Tobacco alcohol 10,140

Drugs 27,529

Food 30,846

Fuel oil 18,132

Electronic good 7,847

Valuable mine 2,746

Textile 28,389

Medical equipment 2,129

Machinery 24,989

Misc. goods 53,318

Turkey, Turkmenistan commit to increased trade relations

Trade relations between Turkey and Turkmenistan are likely to exceed \$2 billion in 2010 despite the global economic crisis, said Turkish Foreign Trade Minister Zafer Çağlayan on Tuesday.

Trade between the two countries grew by 52 percent in 2009 and soared to \$1.6 billion in the first half of this year. Turkey is currently Turkmenistan's second-largest trade partner. Çağlayan recently hosted a delegation of Turkmen ministers and other regional officials led by Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet Ministers of Trade, Commerce, Textiles and Customs Hojamammedow. He is currently in Ankara to attend at the third meeting of the Intergovernmental Economic Committee.

The Turkmen delegation included Trade and Foreign Economic Relations Minister Bayar Abayev; Oil and Gas Industry and Mineral Resources Minister Bayramgeldi Nedirow; Economy and Development Minister Basimmyrat Hojamammedow; Culture, TV and Radio Minister Gulmyrat Myradow; and Turkmen Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) Chairman Palvan Taganov.

Çağlayan said: "Turkish contractors are responsible for 90 percent of all construction projects in Turkmenistan. They have completed 608 projects worth \$17 billion there so far and last year's projects alone totaled \$2.5 billion." The minister plans to pay a visit to Turkmenistan from Aug. 30 to Sept. 1 to open a fair on Turkish export products and to attend the Turkey-Turkmenistan Business Council Meeting.

In his speech, Çağlayan called on Turkish businesspeople to raise their investments in Turkmenistan's industry, trade and tourism sectors. He further expressed his desire to increase cooperation between the two countries to include more sectors, instead of limiting cooperation to construction projects.

Çağlayan conveyed his desire to create a partnership between the CCI and the Ankara Chamber of Industry (ASO) to the Turkmen officials; he emphasized that relations should extend to technical industries too.

Turkish Energy and Natural Resources Minister Taner Yıldız also delivered a speech at the opening of the Intergovernmental Economic Committee Meeting to say that the relations between the two nations must be carried to a higher level to develop beyond

“simple patterns.” Yıldız said, “Turkey is gaining strength with a well-operating market economy and has proven resilient amidst the harsh global economic crisis,” “Like Turkey, Turkmenistan has survived the crisis well compared to other countries,” the minister asserted, “and Turkmenistan’s strength is imperative to the success and stability of the entire region.”

28 July 2010, Wednesday

TODAY’S ZAMAN ANKARA

UKTI: United Kingdom aims to double trade with Turkey

United Kingdom Trade & Investment (UKTI) stated that it aimed to double the commerce with Turkey.

UKTI said on Wednesday that it would work to double the trade within the next five years, and help investors within that scope.

It stated that the current trade between the two countries was nine billion USD.

UKTI Chief Andrew Cahn said that Turkey, which was an economic power, was a big potential for UK companies. He added that Turkey, with its 11 percent growth rate, hinted that it could be the second biggest economy of Europe by 2050.

Cahn noted that Turkey, as it took place between western and eastern worlds, would help companies to open to the Middle East, Europe and Central Asia markets.

Within that scope, UKTI stated that it will help UK companies which will invest in Turkey.

UKTI works with UK-based businesses to ensure their success in international markets.

UKTI was formed in 1999 as British Trade International, comprising two parts: Trade Partners UK (for export) and Invest UK (for inward investment).

28 July 2010, Wednesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Signs of new economic records in Turkey: the safe haven

Turkey’s status as a safe haven for investors is bolstered with every passing day, a fact reinforced by the country’s economic indicators frequently reaching new all-time highs. Turkey’s most recent records include being the country that recovered most quickly from the global crisis, a country with one of the two highest growth rates (along with China) in the world, its rating as a country with the most solid financial system and a country that managed to bring down its budget deficit by 33 percent in just six months. It is the only country that has managed to rapidly decrease its unemployment rate by creating jobs for 1.8 million people.

There are two important signs that indicate new records are around the corner: an upcoming referendum and country ratings. The İstanbul Stock Exchange’s (İMKB) record last week, analysts say, is related to these.

I spoke with some of my friends, politicians with a background in economics. They say deputies from the opposition believe the expectation that unemployment will fall to 6 percent -- which is what I wrote last week -- is a far-fetched ambition. However, Justice and Development Party (AK Party) economics deputies cite recent positive indicators in the economy one by one and say that the economy will take off and simply fly after the referendum.

However, the opposition's economists point to the vulnerability of the economy, asserting that positive developments are simply seasonal. But a close friend of mine told me in all his earnestness: "If these developments are indeed permanent and not seasonal, Turkey's economy will then really take off. If unemployment falls to 8 percent, let alone 6, we won't have anything to talk about in next year's elections."

Whether the positive indicators are temporary or here to stay is a matter of debate, but both sides agree on one thing: Turkey is a safe haven for investments. There is also unanimous consensus that international credit rating groups were late in raising Turkey's ratings. As the wait for higher credit ratings continues, the opinion that these organizations are cautious about Turkey to such an extent that it seriously casts doubt on their impartiality is becoming more widespread.

But what is the practical benefit of higher credit ratings? Well, higher ratings will be a reference for foreign direct investment (FDI), which is in a downward trend at the moment. A "yes" result coming out of the referendum would mean that Turkey will cross an important threshold in terms of increasing direct investment because the changes in the constitutional package will save Turkey from its image as a country where investment decisions can be challenged at and even halted by the judiciary.

In the past, court decisions have frequently hindered economic reforms, with transfer of management rights, build-operate and build-operate-transfer (BOT) models canceled by the courts.

If the Constitution is amended, the domination of the judiciary and bureaucracy over the legislative and executive branches' economic decisions will end. This will allow both local and foreign investors to realize their plans, which would in turn decrease unemployment and the current account deficit (CAD).

Financial investors have already been turning toward Turkey without waiting for the referendum and higher credit ratings.

Last week, the İMKB broke a new influx record of \$2 billion. Opposition economists say they will leave as fast as they came, but AK Party economists say they would have never come here had Turkey not been safe haven for investors. A positive result from the referendum and higher credit ratings will boost Turkey's economy.

Sept. 12 will be remembered as a historic milestone

The CHP and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which see the referendum as an instrument to kick the AK Party out from the government, quickly organized "no" campaigns against the referendum. The Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) also calls for the rejection of the changes, saying the amendments would only contribute to prolonging the life of the "coup constitution."

A point parties against the package have in common is that they all have groups in Parliament. Meanwhile, political parties outside Parliament, including the Equality and Democracy Party (EDP), the Grand Unity Party (BBP) and the Rights and Freedoms Party (HAK-PAR), have launched pro-package campaigns.

Turkey has long been divided between those who are pro-status quo and those who are for change, rather than along the lines of left-wing and right-wing politics. The constitutional amendment referendum has taken on a meaning that no other election or referendum has taken on. It is assuming a mission that has never before been undertaken in Turkish political and social history.

The Sept. 12 referendum, which will bring the pro-status quo against the pro-change, will be remembered for this very reason, regardless of its outcome. Even if many boycott it and even if participation is below 50 percent, this will not change its significance. With the meaning of the package of such historic proportions, the losers will really have lost. Even if the “no” vote, supported by the CHP and the MHP, wins by one point, it will start the process that will cost the AK Party the government. If, however, the people vote “yes” on the referendum, as the AK Party expects, with 60 percent, this will not only indicate the opposition’s sure loss in the next elections, but will also herald the start of the dissolution of the status quo it represents.

26 JULY 2010

TODAYS ZAMAN

Inequality in income distribution of Turkey still remains

There is no change in income distribution of Turkey, a research by Turkish Statistical Board, TurkStat, said.

Thursday, 29 July 2010 12:23

There is no change in income distribution of Turkey, a research by Turkish Statistical Board, TurkStat, said on Thursday.

The income inequality between the top 20 percent of income earners and the bottom 20 percent did not change in 2008, with the top quintile making 8.1 times more than the bottom quintile.

According to the research, 45.5 percent of population cannot buy new clothes and 88.8 percent of population cannot afford one week holiday away from home.

The results reveal that the top 20 percent of income earners make 46.7 percent of all income in Turkey, while the bottom 20 percent earn only 5.8 percent.

Turkish investments abroad reach 17.3 billion USD

Turkish investments abroad have reached 17.3 billion USD, the Treasury Undersecretariat said on Sunday.

According to figures of the undersecretariat, Turkish companies invested in European Union (EU) member states, Russia, the United States, China, Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana and Colombia.

Around 3,271 Turkish companies invested 17.3 billion USD abroad from 2000 till March 2010. The companies made 1.6 billion USD of the investments in 2009.

The Netherlands was the country where Turkish capital was invested the most in the mentioned years with 4.8 billion USD, whereas Azerbaijan with 3.8 billion USD and Malta with 1.3 billion USD with Malta, and Germany with 726 million USD followed the Netherlands.

Turkey made the highest capital transfer on energy industry. Turkey invested 3.9 billion USD on energy since 2000 till March 2010, and 2.8 billion USD on banking, 2.5 billion USD on manufacturing, 1.5 billion USD on informatics and communication, 1.4 billion USD on financial services, and 1.4 billion USD on trade.

Below are the amount of capital outflow from Turkey:

- YEAR NUMBER OF FIRMS CAPITAL OUTFLOW (MLN USD)
- 2000 1,136 3,822.9

• 2001	109	1,452.8	
• 2002	118	474.6	
• 2003	142	412	
• 2004	202	857.1	
• 2005	203	1,381.8	
• 2006	328	908.3	
• 2007	348	3,068	
• 2008	275	2,763.9	
• 2009	289	1,655	
• 2010 (MARCH)	19		93.6
• TOTAL		3,271	17,310.8

25 July 2010, Sunday
TODAYS ZAMAN

SOCIAL NEWS

Over 4 million Turks have no internet access

Thursday, July 29, 2010

ISTANBUL – Radikal

HURRIYAT

A recent survey reveals that 2.6 million out of 18 million total Turkish households has neither a computer nor Internet access. The research inspires the largest Internet provider of Turkey, where ADSL connection has been available for the past seven years, to launch a campaign that would allow users to have Internet access for as little as 2 Turkish Liras per day

Only 32 percent of the 41 percent of Turkish households with a computer have web access, according to research sponsored by the country's largest Internet provider.

The research, which was sponsored by TTNET, found that 2.6 million out of 18 million total Turkish households, or 4.3 million people, had neither a computer nor Internet access.

The findings inspired TTNET to launch a campaign that would allow users to have Internet access for as little as 2 Turkish Liras per day used.

The number of Internet users varies drastically between urban and rural areas. Some 6 million of 11.6 million urban dwellings have at least one computer, while 4.6 million of these computers have an Internet connection. ADSL access, meanwhile, makes up 38 percent of these Internet connections.

In rural areas, 1.2 million out of 6.4 million homes have a computer, and 1 million of these homes are connected to the Internet.

The research estimates that there are 12.2 million Internet users who can access the web from their homes. Some 9 million Internet users, who include both people who have a computer but no Internet access, as well as those with neither a computer nor Internet access, do not have an Internet connection at home but use the web elsewhere.

Some 77 percent of all Internet users use the web for social networking, while 54 percent use Internet for research. Meanwhile, another 35 percent say they use the Internet for email communication. Another 13 percent use the Internet to do school work, while 4 percent use the web to gain access to e-devlet, an online government tool that provides

citizens with services such as state insurance support, bill management, and university entrance exam results and placement information.

Meanwhile, 36.2 percent of Internet users who have Internet access at home read newspapers online. Another, 33.6 percent play games on the Internet, 21.6 percent download music, 18.6 percent download films and 10.6 percent read and post in forums on the web.

Some 9 percent of all internet users use online banking, 8.4 percent run errands for work, 6.6 percent follow blogs, 5.7 percent look up recipes, 5.2 percent listen to online radios, 4.7 percent watch re-runs of TV programs and 4.4 percent watch TV.

For those with no Internet connection at home, 45 percent said they could not afford the connection. Another 37 percent say they had no need for it, 30 percent said they did not own a computer, and 9 percent said they preferred not to use the Internet. Four percent say they used to have an Internet connection but terminated their subscription to an Internet provider later.

ADSL connection in Turkey has only been available for the past 7 years, said Tahsin Yılmaz, manager of TTNET.

The company, meanwhile, has 6 million subscribers, Yılmaz said, adding that it was trying to improve services by introducing an online TV portal in addition to the already up-and-running music portal that receives 500 thousand hits a day.

Istanbul gets its first city museum on Princes' Islands

Tuesday, July 27, 2010

ISTANBUL - Hürriyet Daily News

Istanbul's first city museum opens Saturday on the largest of the Princes' Islands, Büyükada. The museum's exhibitions will aim to relate the islands' story for future generations. At the same time, the area will host a three-day culture and arts festival from Friday to Sunday with the participation of national and international artists and writers. Looking to pass on local stories to future generations, Istanbul's first contemporary city museum is opening on the Princes' Islands with the goal of documenting and preserving the area's heritage.

Located on the island of Büyükada, the Islands Museum opens this Saturday with the aim of presenting the Princes' Islands, a retreat renowned for its unique natural, historical and multicultural heritage.

The Islands Museum Project will operate in conjunction with the Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar House on Heybeliada and the Sait Faik Museum on Burgazada. The undertaking is a collaborative project of the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency and the Islands Foundation.

Since April 2009, around 40 specialists from various universities have been actively participating in efforts to establish the Islands Museum. Local volunteers, meanwhile, have also contributed greatly to the museum with their impressive knowledge and collections.

Exhibitions on the history of the islands

The museum's exhibits will be displayed chronologically and thematically and will be kept as permanent exhibitions telling the story of the islands.

At the same time, however, there will also be temporary exhibitions organized two or three times a year. These exhibitions, which will be focused on a single theme, will each provide in-depth information about a particular subject.

The Islands Museum will further feature visiting exhibitions from various city museums and thematic museums from all over the world.

40-day, 40-night events

The opening events of the Islands Museum will start Saturday and continue for 40 days and 40 nights, bringing a fresh air to Istanbul's culture and art. The events kick off on Büyükada and will include concerts, competitions, documentary film screenings and discussions.

The first temporary and permanent exhibitions of the museum will open on the same day and will be visited for free on an area of 800 square meters.

The opening of the Museum at the Aya Nikola Hangar, which includes the Island Museum's chronological and thematic sections, will be held on Sept. 10 on Büyükada and provide visitors a chance to examine the past 600 years of the islands' history.

First festival on the Princes' Islands

As part of the Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture events, the Adalar (Princes' Islands) Municipality is organizing "Istanbul's European Siblings – Istanbul Islands Culture and Arts Festival." The festival starts Friday and will continue until Aug. 1 at various locations on Büyükada.

The islands, which consist of nine islands, namely Büyükada, Heybeliada, Burgazada, Kınalıada, Sedefadası, Sivriada, Yassıada, Kaşıkadası and Tavşan Adası, will host the residents of the islands as well as local and international tourists.

The festival is organized with support from the Greek Consulate General in Istanbul and with the participation of artists from the Greek city of Orestiada, the Laogrifiko Musio Orestiadas music, chorus and dance group.

The group will open the festival with a performance in the Port Square before making way for a concert by the Tekfen Philharmonic Orchestra at Büyükada Kültürevi Turing. The same venue, meanwhile, will host a jazz music concert by TRT Jazz Orchestra on Saturday while the Port Square will feature an Apostrophe concert and a Buzuki Orhan Osman performance on Sunday.

Food lovers will rejoice as well with Kınalı, Burgaz, Heybeli and Büyükada dishes ready for tasting during events on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 1 to 10 p.m. Meanwhile, festival participants from Greece will also prepare their own dishes.

At the same time, fans of literature will have the opportunity to hear Aris Çokanat, Orhan Türker and Ataoğlu Behramoğlu speak on the islands and literature on Saturday at the Büyükada Turing İskele Café.

Furthermore, there will be a specially organized tour each day of the festival for those with an interest in gardens. Visitors to Büyükada will have the chance to enjoy different garden types from the 19th century to the early republican period.

Among events for children, a book by writer and illustrator Betül Sayın will be introduced Saturday from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Port Square while there will also be a cabaret for children by the Heybeliada Primary School and the Büyükada Greek Primary School from 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the same location. On Sunday, meanwhile, children will have the chance to attend a painting workshop from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.

COMMENTARY

The next big thing: Turkish separatism

Tuesday, July 27, 2010

HURRIYAT

MUSTAFA AKYOL

For years and years, the Turkish state and media complained about the “separatism” of Kurdish nationalists. But now it seems that even some Turks themselves are joining the club.

An interesting sign was a recent piece by Ertuğrul Özkök, a columnist for the mainstream daily *Hürriyet*, where he was also the editor-in-chief until recently. As a prominent name among “white” (Westernized and upper-class) Turks, Mr. Özkök posed a critical question: “Do we have to live together?” Referring to another likeminded piece in *Cumhuriyet*, the arch-Kemalist daily, Özkök argued that it was perhaps time to think whether Turks and Kurds should go their own ways.

A dangerous idea:

Özkök’s piece sparked controversy in the media, with more criticism than praise, but it was revealing just the tip of an iceberg. As one can see clearly on the internet, there is a growing ethno-nationalism within the Turkish majority. Being fed up with not just the quarter-century-long terrorism and guerilla warfare of the PKK, but also the ever-expanding political demands of the Kurds, some Turks started to dream of a “Kurderein” (Kurd-free) Turkey.

For my part, I am strongly against that dream — not because that I sanctify any national border, but that I know that such a partition among ethnic lines would be disastrous.

There are two main reasons. First, in Turkey there is no clear internal border that would define a would-be independent Kurdistan (Unlike Kosovo, which was a well-defined autonomous region in Serbia). So, in the case of a partition, Kurds will inevitably want as much land as they can get, whereas Turks would be willing to leave as little as possible. Hence there will be conflict.

The even greater problem is that most Kurds in Turkey now live outside of a would-be independent Kurdistan. Millions of them have migrated to Western cities, making Istanbul the largest Kurdish city on earth. An ethnic separation in such a mixed population will lead to mass exoduses, and, most probably, ethnic clashes.

In other words, if an independent Kurdistan is ever carved out of Turkey, it won’t be like the 1991 secession of Slovenia from Yugoslavia, which happened with just a few dozen casualties. It will be, God forbid, something like the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan, during which almost a million people died. The ethnic tension we have seen this week in two separate towns should be sobering enough.

That’s why, I think, no sane person should neither ask for the partition of Turkey, nor pave the way to it. But who said nationalism, especially ethno-nationalism, goes hand in hand with sanity?

On the Kurdish side, we have a fervor that is characteristic to all late nationalisms. Some Kurds passionately believe that their salvation will come only through an independent nation-state. (Whereas it will probably bring them only poverty and slavery under the

dictatorial rule of what is today the PKK. Nation-states, as we Turks have also seen, are ruthless leviathans unless tamed with liberal democracy.)

Yet still, most Kurds in Turkey seem to be content with full cultural freedom, some form of regional autonomy, and a settlement with the PKK. But then comes the problem on the other side: Most Turks are not willing to accept any of these.

The hatred to the PKK is understandable, and is actually the smaller problem. The bigger one is that most Turks have been brainwashed to believe that; a) there is either no such things as Kurds, b) if there is any, then they have to assimilate into the “Turkish nation.”

A Kurd-free Turkey?

For those who realize that this assimilation project has failed indefinitely, there are two options. The first one is pluralism, which is to accept “a nation of Turkey,” with various identities. The second one is Turkish ethno-nationalism, which is to seek a Kurd-free country.

This second trend fuels Turkish separatism, which is likely to grow. Staunch Kemalists will be its foremost champions, for their highest value is the “preservation of Atatürk’s Republic,” which has no place for any non-Turkish identity.

The pluralist trend, for which my heart goes, has two assets. The first are the secular liberals, who are inspired by EU norms and even post-modern thoughts. They are fine, but they are also quite marginal. (The last time they found a political party, they received less than one percent of the votes.)

The other group that is sympathetic to pluralism is the Muslim conservatives who make up almost half of the country. They are not bleeding heart liberals, but they have a good frame of reference in the Ottoman Empire, in which the Kurds had all the freedoms they now yearn for.

That’s why that I keep exploring themes from the Ottoman era. I don’t seek “reestablishing the Ottoman Caliphate,” or some other utopia. I just know that the tree of democracy only grows on a soil nourished by history and tradition.

NOTE: In his latest article, fellow columnist C. Cem Oğuz referred to my “We need a deal, not war, with the PKK,” piece. I appreciate his courtesy and indeed mostly agree with the refinement he brought to my argument by pointing to risks. If only all inter-columnist exchanges were like this.

Turkey-NATO relations and NATO's new strategic concept

Tuesday, July 27, 2010

M. VECDİ GÖNÜL

The world is facing a rapidly changing security environment. This process of change has gained momentum particularly with the spread of globalization.

Globalization will continue to affect security dynamics in many ways. Climate change will put many of our key resources like food, water and land under considerable strain. The global competition for energy and natural resources will redefine the relationship between security and economics. In addition, our growing reliance on information technology will make our societies more vulnerable to cyber attacks.

Increasingly, over the past few years, all our nations have come to realize that globalization is not only a means of opening up economies, lifting people out of poverty, and promoting democratic values. We have seen that globalization is also, unfortunately, a vehicle for importing radicalism, and the techniques of terrorism into our societies. It

has also facilitated the free flow of material, including the most dangerous ones, supporting nuclear, biological or chemical weapons programs.

So how do we respond? There is really only one answer, and that is to pursue new approaches to security cooperation. Bold and innovative approaches, which go beyond established geographical, cultural or institutional boundaries, and which promote a qualitatively new level of cooperation between nations and organizations.

Turkey endeavors to support all the tasks and roles assumed by NATO, to the maximum extent possible. Being a member of NATO for 58 years, Turkey has clearly demonstrated her commitment to peace and security in the world. We will continue our efforts along these lines on the basis of common values and aims adopted by all Allies. NATO has always been perceived not only as a security organization but also as an important political tool due to its deterrence aspects.

In this era when the world began to discuss the future of NATO, its transformation gained importance in order to create new structures and mechanisms addressing the requirements of the new security environment. Transformation will be shaped according to the estimates of future security environment and its requirements. Structural and conceptual transformation that will add to flexibility and reduction of bureaucracy are supported by Turkey as well.

NATO is on its way to becoming a global organization. Enhanced cooperation with countries out of its conventional area of responsibility under the auspices of "Contact Countries," with Gulf Countries as a result of the "Istanbul Cooperation Initiative" and relations with Mediterranean Dialogue countries, expanded NATO's area of interest considerably. In the future this framework can be broadened. But NATO has to work more to strengthen the essence of these partnerships.

The International Security and Assistance Force, or ISAF, operation in Afghanistan has been a significant mission for NATO since 2003. I believe that peace and stability in Afghanistan have great importance not only for the region, but for the whole world. Therefore, we are of the opinion that failure in Afghanistan would be a serious handicap for the Alliance and the entire world.

Turkey has tried to provide support to NATO's operations in Afghanistan from the very beginning. In this context, we assumed the leadership of both ISAF Command and Kabul Regional Command twice. As Turkey, within our capacity, we continue to give our utmost support during this new period by taking over the responsibility of Kabul Regional Command until November 2010.

Now, I would like to express my views on the new Strategic Concept of the Alliance. The new Strategic Concept, which is to contain the main aims and responsibilities of NATO, is expected to include revised policies on issues of vital importance such as nuclear policy, partnerships, transformation and future command and force structures of the Alliance.

Taking the dynamics of the changing security environment and the current economic circumstances into account, the issues below have gained more importance for us in the context of NATO's New

Strategic concept

First of all it should emphasize Alliance solidarity, unity and cohesion in the strongest terms and should also clearly define the future roles and tasks of NATO. The areas where NATO can add value in the new security environment should be defined as well.

The historical success of NATO and its uniqueness stems from its core purpose, as stipulated under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. In any case, there seems to exist a common understanding among critics that Article 5 is indeed the continuing basis for Alliance cohesion. We welcome this approach to Article 5.

Non-Article 5 responsibilities should not be allowed to overshadow this core responsibility of the Alliance.

The principle of “solidarity” is fundamental and directly related to the credibility of the Alliance.

The combination of the five fundamental security tasks enumerated in the 1999 Strategic Concept reflects NATO’s nature. At the same time, an open debate within the Alliance on how these tasks can better be carried out is much needed.

It is of key importance that NATO should remain the main forum for transatlantic dialogue. NATO should continue to be the essential transatlantic forum for security consultations among Allies.

Consensus-based decision-making is viewed as the most important cement of the Alliance by Turkey. Therefore, we also welcome the common understanding among allies on this.

We need a more politically involved NATO, not a military Alliance dealing only with military and technical details of ongoing operations. Enlargement should continue and the continuation of open-door policy should be reiterated.

New global players should be included in the network of partnerships. Thus, a geographically wider (China, India, Pakistan and Japan among others to be included) and a more comprehensive network of partnerships should be established for the ongoing relevance of NATO. Partnerships and the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) should be considered among the essential elements of the new Concept.

New threats and challenges such as energy security, maritime security, cyber security, climate change, diseases to name a few, should be given an appropriate place within the new Strategic Concept.

Terrorism must also be given a prominent place in the Strategic Concept as a threat to international security. Terrorism must remain one of the main threats on the Alliance’s agenda. NATO should intensify its efforts on defense against terrorism.

Another issue of importance for Turkey is the NATO-EU relationship. The agreed framework of NATO-EU strategic cooperation as established in March 2003 is based on this balance. It is comprehensive. It covers all aspects of NATO-EU interaction. The agreed framework should thus continue to provide the modalities through which NATO and the EU cooperate on all issues related to security, defense and crisis management.

- Mr. M. Vecdi Gönül is the Turkish Defense Minister. The original version of this article was published in the Spring 2010 issue of Turkish Policy Quarterly.

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UK to fight for Turkey’s seat at EU table

AMANDA PAUL

TODAYS ZAMAN

The UK has always been a strong supporter of Turkish membership in the EU. During his recent visit to Turkey, British Prime Minister David Cameron pronounced his great passion for the country and promised to fight for Turkey.

He said he was angry at the slow approach of the EU to the negotiation process and with some other member states which seem to have a biased and unprincipled approach. Turkey's relationship with the EU stretches back decades. The EU has always been resistant to Turkey's desire to join. However, finally, the EU ran out of excuses as to why progress could not be made and in October 2005 Turkey began membership talks. The road so far has been full of potholes, meaning Turkey is taking the "scenic route" rather than the "autoroute" to Brussels. While a number of key member states continue to state that Turkey is a valued partner of great strategic importance, at the same time they believe the country is just too different. Apparently, the EU slogan "strength in diversity" does not apply to Turkey.

The UK itself is no stranger to hostility from other European friends. When the UK first applied for membership in the 1960s, the then-leader of France, Gen. Charles de Gaulle, was having none of it. As Cameron pointed out during his passionate speech in the Turkish Parliament, De Gaulle described the UK as a country that was "not European. ... Its history, its geography, its economy, its agriculture and the character of its people -- admirable people though they are -- all point in a different direction. ... This is a country which ... cannot, despite what it claims and perhaps even believes, be a full member." He went on to veto the UK's bid to join. The UK made it in the end, so there will always be hope for Turkey, or so Cameron would have us believe.

Cameron clearly has a "business first" approach and was accompanied by a group of businessmen. Only a few weeks ago he spoke about how Britain's foreign policy under his watch would be driven by business interests and he is keen to boost trade and business ties with one of the world's fastest growing economies. As British Foreign Secretary William Hague stated during a meeting with his Turkish counterpart a few weeks ago, "Turkey is one of the countries with whom we believe elevated ties are strategically highly desirable." Turkey and the UK already have quite strong economic ties and a strategic partnership. In 2008 there was approximately \$13 billion in foreign trade between the two, which dropped somewhat in 2009, but is predicted to increase again to well over \$13 billion in the coming years.

Mr. Cameron also said that Turkey would be vital for European security, for the future of the European economy and for British relations with the Middle East and beyond.

Turkish membership would make the EU stronger and more secure (for example, borders would be strengthened, reducing illegal migration) and the EU would certainly not be poorer as a consequence of its membership. While Turkey is undergoing a massive transformation and I am not sure anybody really knows what the end result will be, at the same time Turkey is certainly not a Third World country, drowning in poverty -- although this remains the image of the country to many in the EU. Indeed, Turkey weathered the global financial crisis far better than many EU countries. But still, Turkey is predominantly viewed as a nice place to go on vacation but absolutely not the sort of country we would want as part of our club. Turkey is misunderstood and in some cases even feared. Changing this perception will be hard work and for those opposed to Turkish membership it is an image they are more than happy to maintain.

Cameron also congratulated Turkey on its dynamic foreign policy, which he described as East and West together rather than Turkey choosing one over the other. While it is clear not everything has gone to plan and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has not delivered on everything he wanted at the same time, in order to make a fantastic omelet

you need to break a few eggs along the way. Overall, Turkey's omelet seems to be coming along quite nicely. Cameron was careful not to criticize Turkey on the areas of foreign policy where there are differences -- on Iran, for example. While Turkey opposes new sanctions on its neighbor Iran, the UK continues to see Iran as a considerable threat. Can Cameron deliver anything tangible? Turkey may ask him to prove his words are more than lip service. This could be done by, for example, pushing him on the issue of Cyprus. The Cyprus problem has become the biggest single stumbling block to Turkey's membership bid. Ankara may ask him to push the Greek Cypriots to accept a deadline for the ongoing peace talks or to open direct flights to northern Cyprus, but I am not confident they would get a positive result.

The EU and Turkey are on a rollercoaster ride. There have been many ups and downs, with many more to come. Unfortunately, roller coasters never go anywhere; they are destined to keep going around and around with the odd stop in between. This may also prove to be the case with Turkey-EU relations and, unfortunately, the likes of Cameron, even with his good intentions, will be unable to prevent it.

28 July 2010, Wednesday

The PKK's latest proposal: request for UN supervision

EMRE USLU

On July 16 the imprisoned leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Abdullah Öcalan, proposed that his soldiers lay down their arms under the supervision of the United Nations. Öcalan has made the proposal known to Turkish authorities and claims they have not accepted his offer to open the doors of communication in return for withdrawing PKK fighters.

Murat Karayılan, acting head of the PKK, told the BBC he will order his soldiers to lay down their weapons with the help of the United Nations, provided that Turkey agrees to a cease-fire and meets conditions set out in a new agreement. His demands include an end to both attacks on Kurdish civilians and the arrests of Kurdish politicians in eastern Turkey.

Karayılan's offer has surprised many Western observers with what they perceive is a new approach by the PKK. David O'Byrne of the BBC in his analysis states, "This offer may be treated differently, as the conditions offered do not include freeing jailed PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, a move which no major Turkish political parties will countenance." However, many Turkish and Western observers feel that Karayılan's "new" deal is less innovative than appears on the surface. Just days after Karayılan's discussion with the BBC, Öcalan made clear that he wants more than just a cease-fire; in addition, he made demands for a democratic constitution and a commission to investigate pending court cases against Ergenekon suspects and the release of those [pro-Kurdish politicians] arrested in Kurdish Communities Union (KCK) operations, from Imrali where he is held in prison. Öcalan considers this to be a roadmap for a democratic constitution.

The only "new" part of the proposal is the suggestion of UN supervision. UN assistance would go a long way in helping the PKK to achieve their future objectives. The UN would also benefit, due to the PKK's strong presence in the UN's refugee camp in Markhour, northern Iraq. Öcalan and Karayılan also point out that without support from the UN, it is possible that the PKK militants could be withdrawn from the Makhmour camp, which, at present, provides them with a safe haven.

By including the UN as a cooperative partner, the PKK would have the opportunity to earn respect from an international organization that could afford them some legitimacy and help to ensure their success.

With this approach, Öcalan and Karayılan, by not making their demands fully explicit (for example, insisting that Öcalan be released from prison) are manipulating the political powers-that-be to serve the PKK's ultimate interests. The proposal also places Turkey in a difficult position in the eyes of the European Union if it does not accept the PKK's offer.

Furthermore, bringing PKK militants under UN supervision would provide them with extra security.

The divided Turkish political system makes it difficult for the civilian government to keep its promises. For instance, it was reported there was an attempt in the 1990s to bring a PKK camp under the supervision of Massoud Barzani. However, the decision makers in Ankara could not find a middle ground, and so hard-liners conducted operations on the PKK militants in the camp.

Certainly, the PKK does not want to see something similar happen again.

27 July 2010, Tuesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Will Article 35 become history?

SULU KULU

27 July 2010, Tuesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has managed to divert debates on the upcoming referendum to a different focus.

The CHP leader last week called on Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to "abolish Article 35 of the Turkish Armed Forces [TSK] Internal Service Code, which served as a basis for previous coup leaders intervening in politics in the past, if he wants to truly settle accounts with the Sept. 12, 1980 coup d'état."

The ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) aims to deal a severe blow to the current Constitution, a byproduct of the 1980 military takeover, with a reform package to be presented to the public -- coincidentally -- on the 30th anniversary of the coup. The package also for the first time paves the way for the trial of the perpetrators of the 1980 military coup, the bloodiest coup d'état in the history of the Turkish Republic and still fresh in the minds of people due to the atrocities that were committed in its wake. While the government thinks the main opposition leader is using Article 35 as a political means to challenge the government, the ruling party is not averse to Kılıçdaroğlu's suggestion. Bugün daily columnist Ahmet Taşgetiren thinks that one of the most positive outcomes of the referendum is that "everyone has been engaged in a competition of democracy" and that Kılıçdaroğlu's proposal to abolish Article 35 is a concrete example of this competition. Stressing that a constitutional amendment is not needed to make the controversial article history, Taşgetiren criticizes the main opposition party leader's effort to use Article 35 as a justification for his opposition to the constitutional changes. "Yes, Article 35 should be changed. This is a mandatory requirement in Turkey's democratic journey. It would be better if the opposition and the government cooperate to change it. If the CHP, which left a dark stain on Turkish political history with its controversial

‘army+CHP=coup’ formula, pioneers this issue, it would make up for its past slips,” Taşgetiren says. Stating that Kılıçdaroğlu’s proposal would be as valuable as it is sincere, he says the CHP should be frank on the issue.

According to Hakan Albayrak from the Yeni Şafak daily, both the army and politics will emerge stronger in Turkey if Article 35 is challenged and the military’s basis for an intervention is removed. “Yes, the military will also be stronger because the effort exerted today to intervene in politics and social life will be diverted to training better soldiers, establishing stronger military posts and advancing the local weapons industry,” he says.

Turkey and Pakistan: Two countries, one nation

After a recent trip from İstanbul to Ankara, I told a group of friends that Turkey is no less than Switzerland. Suat Erguvan of the Rumi Forum here smilingly quipped: “It is a lot more. ... Turkey is Switzerland with minarets.”

Having withstood the tests of time, wars and natural disasters, Islamabad and Ankara remain the closest of allies and the best of friends. Any debate remains incomplete without reference to the thoughts of Amir Khusrow and Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi. At a time when Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar and Muhammad Ali Jinnah were struggling for Pakistan, many Muslims in the British army absconded and fought alongside the Turkish troops and even risked their lives. Those who survived chose to stay in Turkey.

While some refer to Turkey as Pakistan with a red flag, others find similar nostalgia reflected in the logo of the PakTurk International Schools & Colleges that reads: Two Countries, One Nation! Turkey unequivocally backed Pakistan over the Kashmiris’ right to self-determination, and Islamabad has always stood by Ankara on the Cyprus issue. Both nations secretly but courageously extended vital military support in testing times of war amid US arms embargoes.

Undoubtedly, the relationship seems too good to be true on the political and diplomatic fronts. Believe it or not, the situation is quite the contrary on the people-to-people level, while trade between two inseparable nations remains at a meager \$782 million. The İstanbul-Islamabad train line, to resume service on Aug. 2, offers a pragmatic promise for the future.

Now that Turkey is pursuing a trade goal of \$1 trillion with its sizzling growth rate and expanding diplomatic outreach, Pakistan can be a catalyst in realizing the Turkish dream. The non-Arab Muslim countries of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey had established the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) between 1964 and 1979. Revival of the RCD-era land link via the 6,500-kilometer-long rail line passing through Iran can be vital to Turkey’s trade with China, Afghanistan and the rather distant nations of Central Asia. The ambitious, yet doable, \$1 trillion trade goal surely needs a sizeable increase in trade with China. Trade with this country approaches only \$2.5 billion today. With the land route offering a safe, cheaper and faster channel for exports from China to Turkey and even to Europe, both of these major players and close allies of Pakistan will benefit from this win-win scenario. For China, trade with Turkey via rail offers increased access to the Iranian market, not to mention the strategic advantage and bargaining power over the United States.

For a successful land link between Turkey and China, the Karakoram Highway (KKH)

would play a pivotal role. Islamabad and Beijing are already working to widen the road in addition to upgrading facilities for freight trucks and passenger comfort. The more ambitious project of an Islamabad-Urumqi train line can even promote Turkish interest in the technological and investment sectors.

Moreover, the revived rail link can also ease costs and the time span for Turkish goods to enter Afghanistan and Tajikistan, if not other nations.

On the more crucial and delicate subject of Pakistan-Turkey trade, traders and investors from both sides are stuck with stereotypes. The Pakistanis generally believe that the two nations have parallel economies and that enhanced trade is too idealistic. Until recently, the ill-intentioned American phrase “AfPak” has created a misperception about the lifestyle and security situation in Pakistan.

If history is any guide, the two sides’ businessmen have failed to take part in many feasible ventures due to the language barrier. The Turks don’t understand any language but Turkish, which a rare number of Pakistanis can speak. There is no way of finding even one legal expert who knows Urdu and Turkish in both nations. Many trade deals signed with good intentions have fallen prey to differing interpretation of the agreements. For that matter, the respective boards of investment and chambers of commerce need to hire experts who not only excel in agreement drafting but who have also mastered the Turkish and Urdu languages. Such a timely measure can translate emotional and political bonds into a functional one.

For Turkish investors, there is a lot to learn from the Chinese success story in Pakistan. For a nation with great taste buds, the Chinese brought their food before their products invaded Pakistan’s streets and villages. I have yet to savor a cuisine more suited to the Pakistani culinary taste than the Turkish one. Despite American security warnings and soaring anti-US sentiment here, fast food outlets such as Subway, Nandos, Pizza Hut, McDonald’s and KFC continue to post high profits. For those who have tasted Turkish pizza (lahmacun), İskender or döner kebab, American-style fast food would soon become a thing of the past. Ironically, Turkish food chains are oblivious to this reality. Hardly any Turk can ignore the enticing smell of Pakistani-style biryani rice or chicken pulao (“pilav” in Turkish) if sold in a narrow street near Taksim Square. Two people with a sweet tooth can mutually swap Pakistani sohan halwa with Turkish delight and their blends of tea. To cut a long story short, the route to the Pakistanis’ pockets goes through their stomach.

While Chinese products bring many levels of quality and cost, the Pakistanis love to live beyond their means and prefer buying expensive items of European brands. Turkish brands such as Beko can easily compete with their Chinese counterpart Hiar or Korean Samsung.

Turkey, with a proven record of excellence in construction projects, is exactly what Pakistan needs to replace its worn-out structures. Except for the Allama Iqbal International Airport Lahore, all of Pakistan’s main cities need bigger, futuristic and spacious airport terminals and runways.

Turkey sees its future as a keen investor in energy products, and Pakistan has untapped potential for run-of-the-river and wind energy projects. Presently, a Turkish company has installed windmills in Jhimpir, Thatta district, in the south of Pakistan.

Decades of negligence have finally worn out most of Pakistan Railways’ 7,791 kilometers of track, while 559 stations need modernizing. One wonders as to how wise it

would be for Turkey to leave it to the aggressive Chinese investors. Such investments can bring hope and jobs, thus helping reduce the flow of illegal immigrants to Europe via Turkey.

For an innovative approach to mutually beneficial business, the Pakistanis and the Turks need to travel beyond İstanbul and Ankara, and Karachi and Islamabad, respectively. The two economies are not parallel at all -- and even if there are commonalities, the two can greatly complement each other.

Thankfully, the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) is nearing completion of its travel documentary across Pakistan to introduce this 180-million-strong nation to its viewers, while the producers of a popular drama series, “Khuda Zameen se Gaya Nahin” (God Has Not Dumped Us), are keen to share it with a private Turkish entertainment channel.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s Davos walkout and the Humanitarian Aid Foundation’s (İHH) flotilla initiative bring renewed warmth for the Turkish nation. Pakistani media channels are already contemplating opening bureaus in İstanbul and Ankara.

In the absence of Turkish satellite channels and music in Pakistan, cultural programs at the PakTurk educational institute offer a mild but pleasant reference to a similar and yet unknown culture. More is eagerly awaited.

Turkish higher education hardly acknowledges the degrees of many leading Pakistani universities, thus reducing the level of educational exchange compared to the ‘80s and ‘90s. Not only does greater interaction for youth and media have to increase manifold, Turkey can help Pakistan in the realm of sports. For example, offering coaching to football clubs here or holding a non-European football event for teams from Central Asia, Pakistan, Iran and maybe Afghanistan could offer multiple business and cultural dividends.

While the Turkish focus has expanded beyond the European Union, it surely needs to give special attention to the 180 million people in Pakistan, which is more a part of the Middle East and Central Asia than culturally distant and religiously remote South Asia.

**The writer is an Islamabad-based journalist with special focus on diplomacy, trade and security issues. He won the UN X-Cultural Reporting Award 2010 for a joint project with the non-profit organization Silent Heroes, Invisible Bridges.*

25 July 2010, Sunday

NAVEED AHMAD

TODAYS ZAMAN

The new Turkey

“Is Davutoğlu’s vision failing?” asks İbrahim Kalın, foreign policy advisor to the prime minister, in a recent column for this newspaper.

It won’t come as a shock to hear that the answer he gives is “no.” At the same time he admits that the question is not entirely rhetorical. Turkish foreign policy is under a meteor shower of attacks in the form of an ad hominem assault on the reputation of the foreign minister. Commentators at home and analysts abroad now accuse Ahmet Davutoğlu of having lost the plot -- “over-confident, idealistic, overambitious, stubborn” is the way Mr. Kalın puts it, and he suggests that these are attributes which critics would dearly love to tar the “new Turkey” which Mr. Davutoğlu serves with.

Mr. Kalın both champions the foreign minister (“plunged into the world of optimistic uncertainties, altruism and idealism”) and defends the “new Turkey” as one which is unashamed of its past or its current values: “The vast majority of Turks no longer see their history and geography as a curse or a burden. To the contrary, they see them as assets that few nations in the region have.” It is the defenders of the “old Turkey” who bristle when they see a Turkey more comfortable in its natural skin, Mr. Kalın suggests, and he warns those who scoff that they risk finding themselves in the cul-de-sac history reserves for a discredited old guard.

I am sure Mr. Kalın is too wise to see the world as entirely polarized between “old” and “new,” “for us” or “against us,” black or white. There is such a thing as well-intentioned criticism. An example this is a recent report produced by Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA), the think tank close to government circles of which Mr. Kalın was, of course, once the head. The authors of “Why Welcome Al Basheer? Contextualizing Turkey’s Darfur Policy” are given the thankless task of trying to puzzle out why Ankara seemed to be so hospitable to a man who presided over anywhere up to 400,000 deaths and whom the International Criminal Court (ICC) first accused of war crimes and latterly of genocide and how the prime minister could utter the sentiment which has come to haunt every article critical of Turkish foreign policy, that Muslims don’t do genocide.

The conclusion Mehmet Özkan and Birol Akgün come to is that when you are trying to make so many omelets “multi-dimensionally,” you are bound to break a few eggs. Turkey’s new standing both in Africa and among Islamic countries and its efforts to balance a more ambitious role in world affairs meant that its Darfur policy became “precariously positioned.” It is hard being all things to all men and Ankara was obliged to choose whether to support the ICC (whose authority it does not yet recognize) or adopt the rhetoric of a region in which it tries to cultivate influence. The authors defend Ankara’s efforts to coax the Sudanese president through “passive quiet diplomacy” behind closed doors. Another, not entirely intuitive conclusion they reach is that the real fault the Turkish government made was in not communicating to the press just how subtle their diplomacy has been.

It is not just over Darfur that Turkish public diplomacy appears to have hit the shredders. Were Turkey to draw from a newly replenished well of cultural confidence to address the problems which matter to it most, no one could complain. And if Turkey really no longer regarded its history and geography as a burden, it could make brisker progress in dealing with Armenia and even its own Kurdish population. For all his old school, patrician ways it was another foreign minister, İsmail Cem, who oversaw the radical and positive transformation of Greek-Turkish relations in 1999. Despite the Turkish Foreign Ministry’s efforts today, the Armenian border remains sealed.

“What we are witnessing is not the emergence of an Islamist foreign policy but rather the rise of a populist government that caters to and exploits Turkish frustration with America and Europe,” the Financial Times quotes Ömer Taşpınar, another columnist for this paper and no supporter of the “old Turkey,” as saying. There may well be a legion of yesterday’s men who want to see Turkey turn the clock back to the crusty certainties of the Cold War. But there are also those who suspect, more in sorrow than in anger, that the “new Turkey” is not quite as innovative as it pretends.

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