

# The Turkey Analyst

---

BI-WEEKLY BRIEFING

VOL. 1 NO. 4

9 APRIL 2008

---

## ANALYSIS:

### WHAT ANIMATES TURKEY'S SECULAR OPPOSITION?

As the confrontation in Turkey over secularism deepens, the psychology and dynamics of the secular opposition need to be better understood. The seculars are animated by the perceived need to defend an identity, which lends the stand-off an intractable character. Democracy risks being imperiled if the moderate Islamist AKP government abstains from taking decisive steps to allay what amounts to existential fears – be they exaggerated or not – of the seculars.

### TURKEY AND THE EU: BEYOND THE CYPRUS IMBROGLIO

In December 2006, citing Turkey's refusal to extend its customs union to Cyprus, EU Foreign Ministers suspended talks on eight of the thirty-five negotiation chapters in Turkey's accession negotiations. But the importance of Cyprus has been overblown: Cyprus was only the superficial reason for the 'slowdown' decision. Both parties to the accession talks in fact needed to gain time and tend to internal matters. What does the current Turkish turmoil imply for the Cyprus issue and the broader future of Turkey's EU accession negotiations?

### THE FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW: NEWS DIGESTS ON DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLITICS

The reverberations of the court case to close down the ruling AKP dominated Turkish domestic news. The AKP at first reacted vehemently, only to gradually tone down its rhetoric. Meanwhile, foreign press and politicians' reactions to the case, overwhelmingly negative in nature, received widespread coverage. The EU's reaction to Turkey's turmoil was a leading issue, with EU ambassadors seeking to calm down the AKP and make it adopt a less unilateralist approach to governance. The European Court of Justice's decision to strike down the EU inclusion of the PKK on its list of terrorist groups also was widely reported.



*Central Asia- Caucasus Institute*  
*Silk Road Studies Program*



# The Turkey Analyst

BI-WEEKLY BRIEFING  
VOL. 1 NO. 4  
9 APRIL 2008

## ANALYSIS

### **WHAT ANIMATES TURKEY'S SECULAR OPPOSITION?.....3**

As the confrontation in Turkey over secularism deepens, the psychology and dynamics of the secular opposition need to be better understood. The seculars are animated by the perceived need to defend an identity, which lends the stand-off an intractable character. Democracy risks being imperiled if the moderate Islamist AKP government abstains from taking decisive steps to allay what amounts to existential fears – be they exaggerated or not – of the seculars.

### **TURKEY AND THE EU: BEYOND THE CYPRUS IMBROGLIO .....7**

In December 2006, citing Turkey's refusal to extend its customs union to Cyprus, EU Foreign Ministers suspended talks on eight of the thirty-five negotiation chapters in Turkey's accession negotiations. But the importance of Cyprus has been overblown: Cyprus was only the superficial reason for the 'slowdown' decision. Both parties to the accession talks in fact needed to gain time and tend to internal matters. What does the current Turkish turmoil imply for the Cyprus issue and the broader future of Turkey's EU accession negotiations?

## THE FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW

### **I. Domestic Politics.....11**

Summary: The reverberations of the court case to close down the ruling AKP dominated Turkish domestic news. The AKP at first reacted vehemently, only to gradually tone down its rhetoric. Meanwhile, foreign press and politicians' reactions to the case, overwhelmingly negative in nature, received widespread coverage.

### **II. Foreign Relations.....15**

Summary: The EU's reaction to Turkey's turmoil was a leading issue, with EU ambassadors seeking to calm down the AKP and make it adopt a less unilateralist approach to governance. The European Court of Justice's decision to strike down the EU inclusion of the PKK on its list of terrorist groups also was widely reported.

# THE TURKEY ANALYST

## Editors

Svante E. Cornell  
Halil Magnus Karaveli  
M. K. Kaya

*The Turkey Analyst* is an English language journal. It is a publication of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Joint Center, designed to bring authoritative analysis and news on the rapidly developing domestic and foreign policy issues in Turkey. It is published biweekly, and includes topical analysis, as well as translations and summaries of selected Turkish news reports.

*The Turkey Analyst* aims to provide our industrious and engaged audience with a singular and reliable assessment of events and trends written in an analytical tone rather than a polemical one. *Analyst* articles reflect the fact that we have a diverse international audience. While this should not affect what authors write about or their conclusions, this does affect the tone of articles. *Analyst* articles focus on a newsworthy topic, engage central issues of the latest breaking news, and are backed by solid evidence. Articles should normally be based on local language news sources. The lead analyses appearing in the *Turkey Analyst* are unsigned, being written by one, two, or all of the three Editors.

The *Turkey Analyst* occasionally publishes signed guest analyses, which are normally solicited. Each 1,000-1,500 word analytical article offers a concise and authoritative statement of the event or issue in question. An article must provide relevant, precise and authoritative background information. It also must offer a sober and analytical judgment of the issue as well as a clinical evaluation of the importance of the event. Authors must cite facts of controversial nature to the Editor who may contact other experts to confirm claims. Since *Analyst* articles are based on solid evidence, rather than rumors or conjecture, they prove to be reliable sources of information on the region. By offering balanced and objective analysis while keeping clear of inflammatory rhetoric, the *Turkey Analyst* does more to inform our international readership on all sides of the issues.

The Editors reserve the right to edit the article to conform to the editorial policy and specifications and to reject the article should it not be acceptable to our editorial committee for publication. The copyright for the article will reside with the *Turkey Analyst*. However, the author may use all or part of the contracted article in any book or article in any media subsequently written by the author, provided that a copyright notice appears giving reference to the contracted article's first publication by the "Turkey Analyst, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program Joint Center."

## Submission Guidelines:

Analytical articles require a three to four sentence Key Issue introduction to the article based on a news hook. Rather than a general, overarching analysis, the article must offer considered and careful judgment supported with concrete examples. The ideal length of analytical articles is between 1,200 and 1,400 words. The articles are structured as follows:

**KEY ISSUE:** A short 75-word statement of your conclusions about the issue or news event on which the article focuses.

**BACKGROUND:** ca. 500 words of analysis about what has led up to the event or issue and why this issue is critical to the region. Include background information about the views and experiences of the local population.

**IMPLICATIONS:** 500 to 700 words of analysis of the ramifications of this event or issue, including where applicable, implications for the local people's future.

**CONCLUSIONS:** ca. 200 words that strongly state your conclusions about the impact of the event or issue.

Those interested in submitting an article to the *Turkey Analyst* should send their submission, or an article query describing the main arguments of the article, together with a CV to: [info@silkroadstudies.org](mailto:info@silkroadstudies.org).

## Editorial Correspondence should be direct to:

Editor, *Turkey Analyst*  
Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program  
Institute for Security and Development Policy  
V. Finnbodavagen 2, SE-13130 Stockholm-Nacka, Sweden  
[info@silkroadstudies.org](mailto:info@silkroadstudies.org)

## WHAT ANIMATES TURKEY'S SECULAR OPPOSITION?

*As the confrontation in Turkey over secularism deepens, the psychology and dynamics of the secular opposition need to be better understood. The seculars are animated by the perceived need to defend an identity, which lends the stand-off an intractable character. Democracy risks being imperiled if the moderate Islamist AKP government abstains from taking decisive steps to allay what amounts to existential fears of the seculars – be they exaggerated or not.*

**BACKGROUND:** The threat of dissolution against the ruling Justice and Development party, AKP, has lent credibility to the assumption, prevalent among Western observers, that the confrontation in Turkey is one that pits democracy against an intrinsically authoritarian secularism. That there are seculars who seek refuge in authoritarianism is beyond doubt. But like their Islamist counterparts, the Turkish seculars in fact come in different shapes. While the successive dissolutions of Islamist parties seem to confirm the established perception of Turkish secularism as uncompromisingly Jacobin, such an interpretation fails to take its history fully into account. Indeed, historically, the secular response to the challenge of religious conservatism has not been unequivocally prohibitive.

It is worth recalling that Deniz Baykal, leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP), the main secular opposition party, declared himself to be in favor of lifting the ban on the Islamic headscarf in universities during the 2002 election campaign. The fact that this very issue lies at the core of the current political crisis in Turkey – and that Baykal and his party have raised a row over the issue – is hence largely to be attributed to the current political context. Following the AKP's success in

elevating Abdullah Gül to the presidency, a move perceived by the opposition as proof of a have-it-all attitude, the lifting of the headscarf ban has come to symbolize the perceived thrust against secularism, all the more so since it was executed by a constitutional amendment and forced upon the political system in a single-issue move rather than in a broader package of democratic reforms.

In the eyes of large segments of Turkish society that had not initially been prejudiced against the party, these moves have contributed to shatter the image of the AKP as a moderate party. Indeed, it was not until 2007 and the crisis triggered by the presidential election that a strong secular opposition galvanized. The AKP's self-declared determination to elect a "religious" president, taken together with other declarations about "redefining" secularism, awakened suspicions that the moderate Islamists were about to abandon moderation. These moves, significantly, attracted substantial attention to the ongoing Islamicization of the cadres in the bureaucracy and judiciary, where religious observation has in practice come to serve as a requirement for employment. This, in turn, has raised fears that citizens who are not believers will ultimately have to conform to religious norms in their dealings with the courts

and the authorities, and as employees. Ahmet Hakan, a columnist in the daily *Hürriyet* and himself a former Islamist, recently observed that Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan committed a mistake by not taking seriously widespread concerns that “religion may become an instrument of oppression even without any religious laws being enacted”, thus turning seculars who did not harbor any resentment against the AKP into a virulent opposition.

*Laiklik*, secularism in Turkish, strikes a strong, emotional chord. Emulated on the French *laïcité*, it is a constitutive element of the national identity, as conceived by those who adhere to the idea of a

significant, as articulated by the liberal writer and journalist Haluk Sahin: “To apply secularism and gradually have it internalized by different sections of society is no mean feat in the context of Islam which aspires to have a say in every walk of life.”

However, critics of Turkish secularism maintain that it is a success which has come at a high price, that traditions and values held dear by the population have been discarded, resulting in a lingering, popular resentment against the republican elites. Undoubtedly, the Islamist parties have been adept at tapping into the wells of popular discontent, whatever its origins. Almost forty years ago, late social democratic leader

Bülent Ecevit remarked that religion had become a point of reference for the socially and economically disadvantaged. But neither has religion ever been absent from the official, republican discourse and practices since the transition to democracy in 1950.

**IMPLICATIONS:** Rather than being insensitive to religious feelings, successive secular governments in fact paid homage to Islam and since the

1970s engaged in a frenzy of mosque-building and inauguration of religious imam-schools. Education in the tenets of Sunni Islam was made compulsory in 1974, a violation of the rights under official secularism of non-believers and of the significant, heterodox Alevi minority. The Islamicization of the education system gathered pace during the military regime of the early 1980s, which actively sought to promote a “Turkish-Islamic synthesis” as a new state ideology, and provocatively built mosques in Alevi villages (Alevi do not frequent mosques). The accommodation of Islam was meant to fend off the challenge of left-wing



*Erdogan and Büyükanit: Friends or Foes?*

“Western” Turkey, and believed to be the essence of the republic. It has a long history, stretching back two hundred years, when the Enlightenment ideas of rationalism and freedom began to be appropriated by intellectuals and politicians in the dying Ottoman Empire. Indeed, the subsequent birth of a Turkish national identity is inseparable from these modernizing aspirations. With the founding of the Turkish republic, the break with the theocratic tradition was completed, as sovereignty was explicitly displaced from the Almighty to the people. The experience of secularism as something that sets Turkey constructively apart in its Muslim environment is

radicalism, but resulted in Islamism being unintentionally strengthened.

The state establishment, where a nationalist, centre-right ideology has traditionally dominated, has been confronted with an Islamist challenge on the ascendancy since the late 1970s, but electorally significant since 1994. In 1997, the General staff intervened against radical Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, who courted Iran and Libya, posing a threat to Turkey's alliances with the United States and Israel. But a few years later, then Chief of staff General Hilmi Özkök was instrumental in actually strengthening the hold of the AKP on power. In 2004, together with the present chief of staff. Yasar Buyukanit, General Özkök allegedly faced down junior generals who would have liked to unseat the AKP government. These generals were notably incensed by the government's readiness to "give up" Cyprus, and by its embrace of EU reforms that they saw as a threat to Turkish nationalism. The full details of the 2004 episode are yet to be disclosed, but there can be no doubt that General Özkök's intervention is a landmark event in recent Turkish political history. It is also an event that shows how deceptive it is to portray the military as being uniformly and in programmatic opposition to civilian challenges to official state ideology.

After initially having taken an active stance against the AKP government in the current crisis, the General staff has refrained from further public interventions. Its silence has given rise to speculations in the Turkish media about a possible understanding being reached between Chief of Staff General Yasar Büyükanit and Prime Minister Erdogan. Concurrently, there are speculations that the silence of the General staff in reality is intended to allow the judiciary the lead in undermining the AKP. That both theories exist testifies to the fact that the military's ultimate ideological orientation and cohesion cannot be

taken for granted. What can be assumed is that there are differing views among the officers as to what, if any, course of action should be taken, but not that it will be possible for the military to remain disinterested if the crisis deepens and gets out of hand.

The current crisis is set apart by the popular mobilization in favor of secularism. During the "republican rallies" of spring 2007, millions gathered, chanting "no to Sharia and no to a coup d'état". Western observers have largely failed to appreciate the significance and novelty of these rallies, dubbing the participants "old Turks" supposedly searching to restore an authoritarian order. That interpretation is in part due to the fact that those representing Turkish secularism, social democrats and other "kemalists", have become isolated from the international exchange of ideas, opting for a resentful neo-nationalism, unlike the Islamists who have spent the last decade actively courting European intellectual circles. The identification of secularism with nationalism has, as explained above, its historical roots. However, a more nuanced view of the social constituency of the secular opposition reveals a potentially more promising picture.

The republican rallies were dominated by urban middle class women and Alevis, both of which are increasingly alienated by a rising conservatism that is believed to threaten a cherished, Western way of life. Sociologically, these categories represent the backbone of the Westernization of Turkey; indeed urban middle class women are its main product. Politically, these categories are far from being intrinsically anti-Western. The question is whether it will be possible to channel this popular secularism into its logical furrow between the opposing forces of moderate Islamism and isolationist nationalism. However, given the ongoing polarization, the realization of such an

alternative remains a faint possibility in the short run.

While being a welcome manifestation of the popular implantation of secularism, the downside to the secular rallies has been that they have been interpreted as an expression of hostility by the conservative classes, thus exacerbating societal polarization. But the case can also be made that this polarization reflects real differences about the

What makes the Turkish crisis seemingly intractable is the fact that ultimately, it is existential, being about identities that by definition are never easily negotiable. Not least the seculars, who fault decades of accommodation of Islamic aspirations by the state – contrary to the West’s faulting of a supposedly inflexible secularism – are inclined to perceive the crisis as a final reckoning, as the last stand of the republic.



*Republican Demonstration, April 2007*

cultural identity of Turkish society which call for a resolution that Turkey no longer can afford to postpone.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The moderate Islamists in the AKP will have to recognize that social and political stability will elude Turkey if the concerns of a secular, urban middle class that represents the best educated part of society are not taken into due account. Its fears, whether exaggerated or not, will have to be allayed. The secular side, on the other hand, must come to terms with the reality of religious conservatism. But that is easier said than done.

Thus, they are disinclined to make further concessions to an already ascendant religious conservatism. And herein lays Prime Minister Erdogan’s problem: he may have been sincere when on election night last summer he promised to reach out to society as a whole. But subsequent policies disclaiming that promise may indicate that Erdogan himself no longer controls the inevitable political reverberations of the sociological reality of an ever stronger religious conservatism.

# TURKEY AND THE EU: BEYOND THE CYPRUS IMBROGLIO

*In December 2006, citing Turkey's refusal to extend its customs union to Cyprus, EU Foreign Ministers suspended talks on eight of the thirty-five negotiation chapters in Turkey's accession negotiations. But the importance of Cyprus has been overblown: Cyprus was only the superficial reason for the 'slowdown' decision. Both parties to the accession talks in fact needed to gain time and tend to internal matters. What does the current Turkish turmoil imply for the Cyprus issue and the broader future of Turkey's EU accession negotiations?*

**BACKGROUND:** There has been no significant progress toward a solution to the Cyprus unification question since the Greek Cypriot side rejected the UN-sponsored Annan Plan in an April 2004 referendum. The problem became even more complicated in May of that year, when the Republic of Cyprus gained full EU membership. Turkey, which has always insisted on solving the Cyprus question through an international multilateral agreement under the auspices of the UN, was now confronted with a EU dimension to the problem – as a precondition to its own accession.

The December 2004 EU Summit agreed to open accession talks with Turkey by October 2005 on one condition: Turkey had to extend the 1963 EU Association Agreement to the ten new EU members, including Cyprus. Ankara's priority was to open accession talks. Thus, in July 2005, it signed the Additional Protocol extending its

customs union to new members. However, Turkey's signature did not mean a diplomatic recognition of the Republic of Cyprus. This was explicitly stated in a declaration attached to the document. The EU authorities underlined that the declaration was unilateral and did not change the legal obligations of Turkey under the signed Ankara Protocol. Turkey would still be expected to fully implement the provisions of the Protocol towards all parties, including Cyprus. Cyprus, thus, was well on its way to be one of the major problems in Turkey's accession talks.

Interestingly, EU diplomats did not allow the Cyprus problem to block the perspective of Turkey's accession. On September 19, 2005, they decided that Turkey could recognize Cyprus anytime during its accession process, estimated to take the better part of a decade. This opened the way to initiate accession talks with Turkey, as promised, on October 3, 2005. The Cyprus



problem, in other words, was not solved but consciously circumvented and postponed in order to give a message of support for Turkey..

The Cyprus problem reappeared as an obstacle to Turkey's accession negotiations in late 2006. On November 29, after the evaluation of the Implementation of the Ankara Protocol in the Progress Report on Turkey, the Commission recommended partial suspension of accession talks. Despite Turkey's offer on December 7 to open one port and one airport for trade with Greek-administered Cyprus, the EU Foreign Ministers followed the recommendation of the Commission and on December 11, suspended talks on eight of the thirty-five negotiation chapters.

**IMPLICATIONS:** The decision to slow down Turkey's accession process was necessary. It risked leading to a mutual 'train crash' for both Turkey and the EU. The Cyprus issue was the most easily definable problem and the least dangerous way to legitimize the decision. In fact, in retrospect, Cyprus was not the most important reason for pulling the brakes on the accession talks. Indeed, the EU and Turkey were not ready to fulfill their reciprocal commitments in the accession process. In October 2005, the parties showed their mutual will to further engage with each other; however, will was not sufficient. Developments within the EU and Turkey were not conducive to the advancement of accession negotiations.



*Babacan: Man of Many Tasks*

The failure of the French and Dutch referenda in May and June 2005, respectively, dashed expectations for institutional reform in the EU to be realized by November 2006. The EU entered a period of reflection, during which it was left with a limited capacity to sustain ambitious enlargement projects such as Turkey's accession. Slowing down the process with Turkey meant putting the Turkey issue off the table and focus on the overall enlargement strategy and decision-making in Justice and Home Affairs with a view to the upcoming EU summit. When the

reflection period ended in 2007, the priorities of the Finnish and German EU presidencies were the future of Europe, globalization, immigration, Kosovo, labor laws and the EU Internal Market.

On the other hand, Turkey's domestic situation was not amenable to push forward significant requirements in the EU accession process. Analyzing the latest reports on the performance of the AKP government regarding the EU process in the past two years, it becomes clear that the government lost its initial enthusiasm towards the EU. Several internal as well as external reasons contributed to this, the major factors being the ideological background of the AKP, the resistance of the opposition and the traditional state establishment to domestic reforms, the perception of double standards on the part of EU countries, as well as the upcoming presidential and general election process in 2007. Another indicator of the AKP's lack of enthusiasm is the assignment of Ali

Babacan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as the chief EU negotiator. Mr. Babacan's daily agenda is occupied with the multitude of foreign policy issues involving everything from the Balkans, the Middle East to Central Asia and the Caucasus. It is natural and inevitable that one official cannot find enough time for both running the country's foreign relations in general, and at the same time the EU accession process – itself a gargantuan task.

Nevertheless, before the closure case against AKP was opened, the government of Erdogan had displayed some will to accelerate the EU accession process and within this scope, to take some further



steps on the Cyprus issue. Sources close to the government suggested that the AKP would assign a new minister, other than Mr. Babacan, to be responsible exclusively for the negotiations with the EU. Moreover, it was said that an office would be opened in Brussels specifically to intensify negotiations with EU bureaucrats and member state representatives. Parallel to this, there was a change in the policy course about the Cyprus issue. The election of Dimitris Christofias as President of Greek Cyprus provided new hopes for negotiations to be started.

However, there appears to be little reason for overwhelming optimism. On both sides of the island, there has been no change in the positions of hawkish politicians and institutions. The most prominent hardliners, Mr. Denktas and Mr. Papadopoulos, still retain their influence even though they are not in power any longer. The speech of the Chief of the Turkish General Staff, General Yasar Buyukanit, during his visit to Cyprus in early April showed that there is no change in the staunch position of the Turkish military. The general notably stated that “Turkish soldiers will remain in their posts until a permanent and just peace is attained”. On the other hand, the closure case seems to be discouraging the AKP from making concessions other than those envisaged in the Annan Plan.

Recent AKP statements indicate that the party leadership is trying to overcome its indignation over the closure case. It seems to have opted for a strategy of introducing a broader democratization package including clauses making it harder to close down political parties. This fulfills another political purpose: by introducing a broader democratization package, long awaited by the EU, the AKP's efforts to escape closure appear to include stepping up, at least symbolically, EU harmonization efforts – and thereby hoping to attract greater support from Brussels in the domestic balance. One thing is clear: the AKP's current political strategy and Islamic-oriented policy-line has reached its logical conclusion, forcing the party to change strategy in order to be able to stay in power. A return to pro-European policies appears to be one of the AKP's most attractive options at present. The EU hence becomes an domestic political issue as well. As the deep state institutions opposing the AKP do not

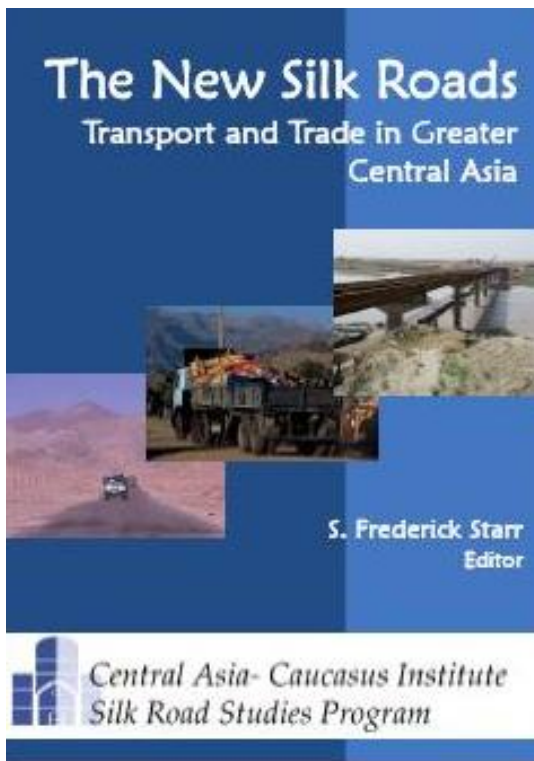
hide their skeptical or even hostile attitude toward the EU, they can be expected to undermine EU harmonization policies should the AKP try to play this in the current domestic confrontation.

Indeed, judging from the AKP's performance so far in crisis management, optimism regarding an exit strategy is not warranted. As far as Cyprus is concerned, the AKP government's preoccupation with the internal political confrontation is unlikely to make it able to formulate innovative solutions to the Cyprus problem, even if its rhetoric on the issue could very well point in that direction. Moreover, for a solution to be plausible, the right steps need also to be taken from the Greek side. As it can be expected to seek to utilize the Turkish political crisis to its advantage, this further complicates the negotiations.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The Cyprus issue remains an important problem that will cause several

bottlenecks in the future of Turkey's EU accession process. However, it is not the standalone issue hindering these talks. It should be recognized that the true reasons for the suspension of accession talks lie in more crucial problems in the area of both Turkish and EU internal affairs. Neither party was ready for the consequences of the process they had initiated.

In the meantime, the political turmoil in Turkey has a real potential to influence the negotiations on the solution of the Cyprus problem. While there is a slight chance of an AKP return to enthusiastic pro-European policies that would include positive steps on the Cyprus question, it is more likely that Turkey's internal woes will further postpone real progress on the subject matter.



New Book:

***The New Silk Roads:  
Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia***

This 510-page volume containing 14 chapters examining the role of Eurasian countries from Turkey to China and Russia to India in the development of trade in Greater Central Asia is Edited by S. Frederick Starr.

The volume's chapters can be downloaded free at [www.silkroadstudies.org](http://www.silkroadstudies.org). Hardcopy requests should be addressed to Katarina Lesandric at [katarina@jhu.edu](mailto:katarina@jhu.edu).

## THE FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW

### SECTION I: DOMESTIC POLITICS

*Summary: The reverberations of the court case to close down the ruling AKP dominated Turkish domestic news. The AKP at first reacted vehemently, only to gradually tone down its rhetoric. Meanwhile, foreign press and politicians' reactions to the case, overwhelmingly negative in nature, received widespread coverage.*

#### CONSTITUTIONAL COURT ACCEPTED THE CASE TO BAN THE AKP

**31 March**

The Vice President of the Constitutional Court, Osman Alifeyyaz Paksüt, stated that the case submitted in order to ban the AKP has been accepted by the court. In his statement four hours after the meeting of the court, Mr. Paksüt said, "The case was accepted by unanimity except on the section regarding Abdullah Gül. That section was accepted with the majority of votes, 7 out of 11." The Vice President stated that they would not take any questions after he had made his speech and added, "I especially request that no questions and comments be made." (Milliyet)

#### ÇIÇEK: THERE IS A DEMOCRACY CRISIS IN TURKEY

**31 March**

Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Çiçek stated that Turkey is currently experiencing a democracy crisis. Mr. Çiçek defended his party and said there were some circles that arbitrarily benefited from the capabilities of the state before the AKP's term, which were now hiding behind

fundamental values, harshly criticizing and pointing their guns towards the AKP. Mr. Çiçek pointed to these circles as being those who are disturbed by the policies pursued by the AKP. Mr. Çiçek said that although Turkey was experiencing a democracy crisis, the crisis could also be regarded as an opposition crisis. He underlined that the AKP continues its activities and services despite the crisis environment. Mr. Çiçek stated that certain circles look forward to and are hoping to benefit from the closure of the AKP. (Radikal)

#### DTP DOES NOT SUPPORT THE AKP IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE PROPOSAL

**31 March**

What will be the stance of the Kurdish rooted DTP (Democratic Society Party) if the AKP goes through with plans to implement a constitutional amendment making it more difficult to ban political parties? Their stance is important since they have 21 seats in the parliament. A number of DTP deputies discussed the party's position vis-à-vis the proposal. Ahmet Türk, the DTP Group

Leader, stated that they wanted the constitution to be entirely revised instead of partially amended, which they believe will not solve any problems. Deputy Selahattin Demirtaş said that the DTP would not back an amendment that would only support the AKP. Another deputy, Hamit Geylani, said that the AKP's move to rescue itself by changing the law was illegal. (Sabah)

### **THE AKP IS PREPARING FOR A REFERENDUM IN JUNE**

**1 April**

The AKP is formulating a constitutional amendment to make it more difficult to ban political parties. The AKP attracted criticism for this as it is regarded as an attempt to bypass the safety mechanisms of the constitutional order. The amendment package features an article concerning the removal of the five-year political ban and one that would make a closure case dependent on the approval of the parliament. The package also aims at a redefinition of what being a "focal point of anti-secular activities" amount to and includes an additional condition relating to supporting terror and violence as reasons for the closure of political parties. In addition to this, the current cases are to be closed when the amendment is applied. In accordance with the constitution, a referendum will be called if the amendments are not supported by between 330 and 367 votes. However, the AKP needs the support of at least one other party to avoid a referendum on the amendment package. The AKP is planning to take the package to a referendum in June and is expected to implement the planned amendments to the Constitution by mid-April, reducing the duration of time from decision to referendum from 120 to 45 days. Analysts warn that a referendum would only further heighten tensions and is likely turn the turmoil into a crisis. (Hurriyet)

### **DTP AND PRIME MINISTER ACCUSE EACH OTHER FOR THE EVENTS DURING NEVRUZ**

**1 April**

The DTP (Democratic Society Party) claims that security officers used force during Nevruz celebrations and distributed police videos to the

media. DTP Vice Chairman Emine Ayna stated that there is a growing antagonism against Kurdish citizens and blamed the actions as being racist and fascist. Ms. Emine holds the Prime Minister and the government responsible. Conversely, Mr. Erdoğan criticized the DTP because of the events during Nevruz celebrations. He indirectly accused the DTP of turning the Nevruz celebrations into a place of protest and violence. While expressing his sorrow over the events during Nevruz, Mr. Erdoğan stated that those attempting to create damage out of these events certainly failed and will fail in the future. (Radikal)

### **CONSTITUTIONAL COURT SENT THE INDICTMENT TO THE AKP**

**2 April**

The constitutional court has sent the indictment to the AKP, which will present its preliminary defense within a month. Chief Prosecutor Abdurrahman Yalçınkaya will then specify his view about the substance of the case. His view will be sent to the AKP, which in turn will indicate its view about the substance. AKP officials and Mr. Yalçınkaya will make verbal statements at a date that will be determined later on. After that, the rapporteur will prepare his report about the substance of the case based on the information and evidence gathered. A decision will be taken after the report has been discussed among the eleven members of the constitutional court. In order to apply the decision to close the AKP, seven out of eleven votes are needed. The constitutional court may then decide on the partial or entire withdrawal of the AKP from the state aid, instead of directly closing the party. (Sabah)

### **GÜL: THERE IS NO INTENTION TO SEND MORE SOLDIERS**

**2 April**

During the press conference held at Atatürk Airport before President Abdullah Gül left the country to attend the NATO summit in Bucharest, he stated that he has no intention to send combatant forces to Afghanistan. The President underlined that Turkey will maintain its interest in Afghanistan despite that there is nothing in the agenda about sending combatant

troops there. He added, “[...] However beyond that, enhancing the relations with Afghanistan in every aspect, improving our capabilities there and helping the Afghan people are in line with the foreign policy of Turkey.” (Hurriyet)

### **THREE IMPORTANT MESSAGES FROM ERDOĞAN**

#### **3 April**

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan delivered three important messages during his official visit to Sweden. Mr. Erdoğan, who has harshly criticized the case to close the AKP until yesterday, appeared to have changed his mind and said, “The constitutional court will do its duty and we will focus on our preliminary defense.” Mr. Erdoğan also affirmed that the long debated 301<sup>st</sup> clause of the Turkish Criminal Law, which states that humiliating Turkishness is a crime, would be amended as soon as possible. His response to the question about the efforts for the new constitution was “We are not working on a new constitution, but on a comprehensive constitutional change.” (Radikal)

### **ECONOMIST: A “DANGEROUS MISTAKE”**

#### **4 April**

The Economist described the AKP case as a dangerous mistake and wrote that Turkey was experiencing a court drama. The periodical stated, “In a modern democracy, the idea to ban a party which was reelected just nine months ago for a period of five years is slightly odd. But in Turkey this can happen.” It is said that although the AKPs line is more moderate compared to the Welfare Party, where AKPs roots lie and which was banned in 1997, and although the AKP government has been one of the best performing governments in decades, the party was faced with the wrath of the military and other secular circles. The Economist continued by saying “A reasonable court would drop this case. However, as it can be seen from the decision to prevent Mr. Gül’s presidency, the constitutional court itself is also a part of the strict secular system. In order to get out of this crisis Mr. Erdoğan should realize his plan to amend the constitution in order to make it more difficult to ban political parties. If he can demonstrate that democracy comes first

over secularism once and for all, then Turkey can be a modern European country.” (Sabah)

### **ÜSKÜL: WE DO NOT DEAL WITH THE JUDGE**

#### **6 April**

Prof. Dr. Zafer Üskül, the Head of the Human Rights Observation Commission in the Turkish Parliament and the AKP Parliamentarian for the province of Mersin, declared that he would defend all the persons, one by one, for whom a ban from the party or politics itself was asked as part of the case for banning the AKP. “We know that in Turkey half of the indictments prepared by the judge remain without any result,” he said. “Our duty is to defend ourselves. We have no deficiency related to our defense”, Mr. Üskül declared. Mr. Üskül stated that the AKP would continue its work toward establishing a democracy of European standards. “In the coming period, we will prepare the ‘democratization packages’, both on the level of the constitutional and normal legislation and we will bring them to the parliament. Parallel to the legislation for economic and social development, we will devise the laws that are needed in the way to democratization. We have formed groups from the parliament and the party leadership. (Radikal)

### **VURAL ÖGER: A SHAME ON DEMOCRACY, ACCORDING TO THE EU**

#### **6 April**

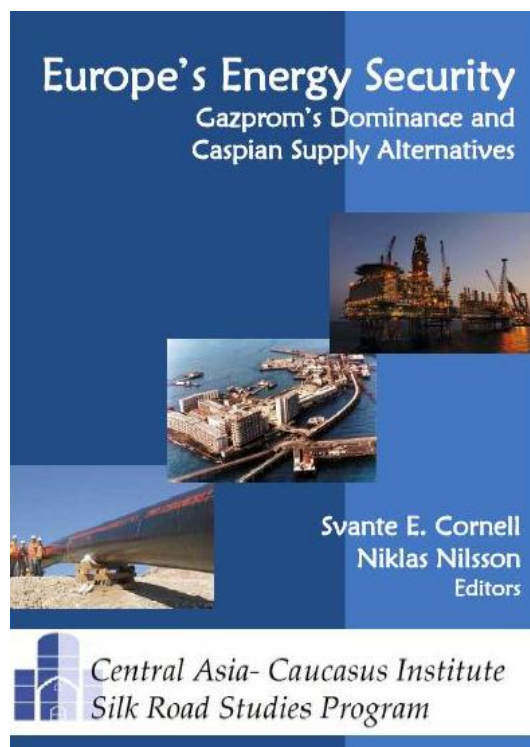
The member of the socialist group in the European Parliament Vural Öger, criticized the case opened for the dissolution of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) saying, “The ban of a party that has acquired 47 percent of peoples vote is unacceptable in all parts of the world”. Mr. Öger stated, “This is considered as a democratic disgrace in Europe. It is said that the judiciary has taken the role of the opposition. Those who do not like the AKP should know that the only way passes through the ballot box”. Mr. Öger stated that if the AKP government continues with the reforms, amends the 301 Article and fulfills the Copenhagen Criteria, Turkey would join the first world league with the EU. On the subject of secularism, Mr. Öger underlined the importance of taking into account the fears of the portion of society that defends secularism. He repeated that

the European Christian Democrats did not have warm feelings about the eastward enlargement of Europe, and pointed out that the Europe of the 21<sup>st</sup> century could not be built with such outdated thoughts. He noted that the opposition of Mr. Sarkozy and Ms. Merkel is taken as proof in Turkey that the EU is against Turkish membership, but reminded that the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, the Scandinavian countries, the new EU members, the vast majority of the European Parliament and the 2/3 majority of the European Commission support Turkey in its aspirations to join the EU. While stating that Turkey will become an EU member after finishing all its 'homework', Mr. Öger also emphasized the fact that Turkey attracts considerable foreign investment and capital because of its anchor to the EU. (Sabah)

## THE SUPREME COURT WILL DISCUSS THE CIVIL CONSTITUTION

6 April

The constitutional court, which is preparing to discuss cases such as the regulation of the Islamic headscarf and the ban of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), is preparing to hold an extraordinary meeting. Celebrating the 46<sup>th</sup> year of its foundation, the Supreme Court will organize a symposium titled "The new search for the constitution and the position of the judiciary" to be held on April 25. In the meeting where issues such as a civilian constitution, the independence of the judiciary and the structure of the constitutional court will be discussed, the representatives from the AKP, the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the National Movement Party (MHP) are invited to make speeches. (Zaman)



New Book!

***Europe's Energy Security: Gazprom's Dominance and Caspian Supply Alternatives***

**168 pages, Edited by Svante E. Cornell and Niklas Nilsson**

With contributions by Pavel Baev, Zeyno Baran, Robert Larsson, Nicklas Norling, Volkan Özdemir, Vladimir Socor, Elin Suleymanov, Mamuka Tsereteli, and Temuri Yakobashvili.

The volume is freely available online through [www.silkroadstudies.org](http://www.silkroadstudies.org).

## SECTION II: FOREIGN RELATIONS

*Summary: The EU's reaction to Turkey's turmoil was a leading issue, with EU ambassadors seeking to calm down the AKP and make it adopt a less unilateralist approach to governance. The European Court of Justice's decision to strike down the EU inclusion of the PKK on its list of terrorist groups also was widely reported.*

### REHN WILL INFORM THE EU COMMISSION MEMBERS TOMORROW

**1 April**

The EU commissioner responsible for the enlargement, Olli Rehn, is expected to inform the Commission members about the case to ban the AKP after the constitutional court accepted it. However, at this stage it is not expected that the Commission will ask for a pause in the accession negotiations. Halting the negotiation process is only possible with a qualified majority vote in the EU Council after receiving advice from eight member states or the Commission. In the meanwhile, the efforts of the AKP to amend the constitution under the pretext of political reforms are recognized. But it is unlikely that the EU will react to such a limited reform. An EU ambassador said, "At this stage I think that we should not be very concerned if the AKP proposes a package that will only deal with the prevention of the closure of political parties and leaves the rest of the reforms to be conducted at a later stage. The AKPs efforts are logical and the developments are rather absurd. The EU does not think that secularism is endangered in Turkey" (Sabah)

### EU WANTS AGREEMENT OVER THE CONSTITUTION

**2 April**

The constitutional court's acceptance of the AKP case has generated a number of reactions from Europe. The European Parliament's Turkey rapporteur Ria Oomen-Ruijten said that Turkey is gradually undermining the parliament's

position. The rapporteur requested that a new constitution be prepared in an environment of agreement. The Turkey-EU Joint Parliament Commission Co-President Joost Lagendijk stated that 2008 also appeared to develop into a lost year with regard to the EU process. Regarding the climate in Turkey Ms. Oomen-Ruijten said, "The current developments affect the market in Turkey. This situation should not slow down the reform efforts of Turkey, which declared the year 2008 as the year of reform. This political crisis is undoubtedly slowing down the reforms." (Radikal)

### LE MONDE: THOSE WHO OPPOSE TURKEY WILL USE THIS CASE

**3 April**

Reactions from abroad regarding the case to close the AKP continue to be voiced. In its analysis on latest developments regarding the AKP case, the French newspaper Le Monde stated, "Closing a political party which acquired 46.6% of the votes in the 2007 parliamentary elections is a veritable legal coup." The newspaper identified those who oppose a Muslim country's membership to the EU as insincere and stated that it was predictable that the case against the AKP would be used as an argument to question the state of Turkey's democracy. Le Monde further argued that if the Kurdish-rooted DTP (Democratic Society Party) were closed, 54% of the votes would brutally be cut off. The newspaper also reported that the AKPs decision to abolish the Islamic headscarf ban instantly after its victory in the elections gave way to the emergence of suspicion among

secular and liberal circles on whether the AKP had a concealed agenda. (Milliyet)

### **IN TURKEY WE SUPPORT DEMOCRACY, NOT THE AKP**

**3 April**

EU commissioner responsible from the enlargement, Olli Rehn, stated that they were supporting democracy, not the AKP in Turkey. While pointing to the charter of the Venice Commission regarding the closure of political parties, Mr. Rehn said, "According to the charter, in order to close a political party the party must have conducted activities including violence and must have acted in violation with the democratic constitutional orders. The case opened by the Chief Prosecutor does not fit these criteria." Mr. Rehn stated that in accordance with EU standards, member states should address political concerns such as the Islamic headscarf issue discussed in Turkey in the parliament, and not in the courtrooms. (Sabah)

### **TURKEY REACTS TO THE EU COURT'S DECISION TO REMOVE PKK FROM THE LIST**

**3 April**

The Luxembourg-based European Court of First Instance has decided to withdraw the PKK from their list of terrorist organizations. The decisions attracted harsh criticism from Turkey and Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Çiçek said, "The decision of behalf of Europe, who constantly refers to justice and democracy, is deplorable. We should ask them if the PKK is a charity institution if it is not a terrorist organization." The court stated that the inclusion of the PKK on the terrorist organizations list lacked "an adequate statement of reason". It said the PKK and its political wing, known as KONGRA-GEL, were not in a position "to understand, clearly and unequivocally, the reasoning" that led EU governments to add them to the terror list. The Turkish Foreign Ministry said on Thursday that the PKK remained on the EU list of terrorist groups regardless of the decision of the court. A written statement held that "Our initial analysis of the ruling suggests that the court issued an opinion on whether the European Council's decision complied with the

EU laws, not on whether the PKK/KONGRA-GEL is a terrorist organization". (Hurriyet)

### **ERDOĞAN: THE RULING WILL NOT EFFECT EU'S DECISION**

**4 April**

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan stated, "The decision of the European Court of Justice concerning the terrorist organization is not related to the substance of the issue. This is just a statement to correct a procedural mistake." He continued by saying that the decision would not affect the position of the EU concerning the terrorist organization PKK. The Luxembourg-based European Court of First Instance, the EU's second highest court, annulled the inclusion of the outlawed PKK on a list of terrorist organizations whose funds must be frozen in accordance with the fight against terrorism. The court said the EU had not properly justified its decision. Both the Turkish Foreign Ministry and the EU said that the ruling would not have any practical effect. (Hurriyet)

### **UNITED STATES: THE PKK DESERVES TO BE IN THE TERROR LIST**

**4 April**

A spokesman for the U.S. Department of State, Tom Casey, stated that the PKK is on the U.S. Department of State's list of terrorist organizations and added that they have no plans to change it. Mr. Casey said, "As you know, we are making a list of foreign terrorist organizations in line with U.S. jurisdiction. There is no plan on the agenda of the U.S. Congress. I think that the PKK deserves to be on that list and with regard the decision (of the EU court) I do not believe that it will have any effect on American policy toward the PKK." When asked a question about Cyprus, Mr. Casey stated that they were pleased with the opening of the Lokmaci gate. Mr. Casey said, "We are encouraged to see the Turkish and Greek Cypriot Leaders come to an agreement. This will increase the opportunities for the economic and social transformation of the two societies. We applaud the two leaders for their efforts to begin the negotiations for a comprehensive solution under the supervision of the United Nations." (Vatan)

## **EU AMBASSADORS: GIVE UP ‘MY WAY OR THE HIGHWAY’ APPROACH**

**6 April**

The ambassadors of the EU member states assembled at a meeting in Ankara to evaluate recent developments in Turkey. “There is the freedom to cover your head but also the freedom not to cover it. The ‘my way or the highway’ approach to freedom should be eliminated”, the ambassadors stated.

The Ankara ambassadors of the EU member states decided that the common message the President of the EU Commission José Manuel Barroso and the High Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn needed to deliver to the AKP government was that “the EU should not come to your mind only when you need it”. During their visit to Ankara on April 10-12, Mr. Barroso and Mr. Rehn are to remind the Turkish government that it should advance confidently in its way toward the EU. Domestic developments should not become an obstacle for this. The two-year period of inaction should be put to an end, with the acceleration of the implementation of the EU reforms. The ambassadors called for a raised awareness about the need for such reforms, and reiterated that the banning of a party is not a correct method. The ambassadors also referred to comments and evaluations in the Turkish media about “the growing neighborhood pressure (about conforming to religious norms) in Turkey and to the experience of divisions in Turkish society” due to the government’s attitude. Relating to the declaration of EU High Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn that “the process of negotiation with Turkey can be revised and even halted”, the EU-ambassadors stated, and “We have not reached this stage yet. On the contrary, the Turkish government should be all the more encouraged to continue with its EU reforms”. (Hurriyet)

## **BARROSO AND REHN WILL VISIT TURKEY**

**7 April**

The President of the EU Commission José Manuel Barroso and the EU commissioner responsible for enlargement Olli Rehn, will visit Turkey on April 10-11. Among the issues featuring on their agenda are the AKP case and 10<sup>th</sup> EU harmonization package. The visit will begin on Thursday when Mr. Barroso and Mr. Rehn will meet Turkish President Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Meetings will also include the CHP (Republican People’s Party) leader Deniz Baykal and other political leaders as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations. During the visit, which the EU Commission stressed was planned long ago and has nothing to do with the recent developments, Mr. Barroso and Mr. Rehn will underline the importance of the reform process and deliver messages supporting the reform efforts. Commission officials will issue a warning for the policy makers not to jeopardize the EU negotiations process. (Sabah)

## **TURKEY MAY BE INCLUDED INTO THE RIVAL PROJECT OF NABUCCO**

**7 April**

Turkey’s inclusion in the Russian alternative to the Nabucco pipeline project, South Stream, is on the agenda. Studies on the route of the pipeline demonstrate that it must include either Turkey or Ukraine to the project. It is said that Moscow prefers Ankara to Ukraine. It was understood that the project, designed by Russia and Italy as an alternative to the Nabucco project, aims to transfer natural gas to EU countries via Turkey, and thus cannot exist without the inclusion of Turkey. If the pipeline is built directly under the Black Sea, its route traverses Ukrainian economic territory. The other alternative traverses Turkish economic space. While experts underline that the project is still at development stage, they mention that Russia would prefer to work with Turkey instead of Ukraine. (Zaman)