

The Turkey Analyst

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THE TURKEY ANALYST

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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.

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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.

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WILL CLINGING TO EU AND ATATÜRK SAVE THE AKP?

Just as it has been faced with the threat of dissolution, the AKP's faith in Europe has been rekindled. More remarkably, the party is even clinging to the Atatürk legacy in an unprecedented way. The AKP's change of heart is testimony to the party's distress. Although displays of "kemalism", in particular, are confusing, the new rhetoric has not convinced analysts that the party's ideological orientation has been altered.

BACKGROUND: Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan and other leading representatives of the ruling Justice and development party reacted viscerally when the chief prosecutor at the High Appeals court recently submitted his case for the dissolution of the AKP. Plans were made for constitutional amendments – ultimately to be decided in a referendum – changing the composition of the Constitutional court and abridging its rights to ban political parties. Yet, while still keeping its options open, the AKP has instead come to opt for an approach presenting an image of moderation aimed at easing political tensions. The AKP has deployed a dual strategy, on the one hand reconnecting with the European Union, and on the other, going as far as suddenly paying homage to the founder of the republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

As European leaders and EU officials issue statements of support for the AKP, the government is preparing a re-launch of EU harmonization efforts. The infamous article 301 of the penal code (which criminalizes "insults" to "Turkishness") is expected to be revised and reforms strengthening women's and children's rights are to be enacted. "The only good thing to come out of the court case against the AKP is that both sides – the AKP and the EU – have renewed

their relationship", comments Ertugrul Özkök, editor-in-chief of *Hürriyet*.

The AKP's reconnection with the EU is logical and fits well into the traditions of the party. During their first two years in government, the moderate Islamists prioritized relations with Europe. Significant efforts were made to further Turkey's membership bid. The EU's decision to initiate membership negotiations with Turkey crowned the AKP government's policies. Thereafter relations cooled. While European heads of state and government voiced second thoughts about Turkish membership, the Turkish government on its part seemed to have lost much of its initial European zeal. It may be that the 2004 ruling of the European court of Human rights, upholding the ban in Turkish universities on the Islamic headscarf, contributed to cooling the AKP's attitude towards European institutions. The ruling was in any case a reminder that these institutions could not always be counted on to serve as levers against republican secularism. The government stalled the EU reforms, refraining from making any changes in the penal code, significantly not decriminalizing insults to Turkish identity.

Liberal columnist Cüneyt Ülsever in *Hürriyet* recently remarked that the AKP "has not lifted a



finger for the EU during the past two years”. “Getting a date for the start of membership negotiations was enough for securing its internal and external legitimacy”, speculated Ülsever. Undeniably, Europeanization has given way to a more pronounced religiously conservative orientation, at full display since the general and presidential elections of 2007. Initially however, the European and Islamic tacks ran together.

Breaking with the traditional hostility of Turkish radical Islam to Europe and the West in general, the founders of the AKP assumed the role as the vanguard of the EU in Turkey, and courted European intellectual and political circles. Indeed,

the notion of moderate Islamism itself was validated and legitimized by the European orientation of the AKP. The AKP’s EU fervor and the encouragement it received from Europeans bestowed a liberal legitimacy on the party, lending credibility to the break with radical Islamism.

IMPLICATIONS: However, it is doubtful whether Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan will succeed in repeating the original feat of the AKP, making the wedding of moderate Islamism and Europeanization credible in the eyes of the secular middle class that mobilized against the government last year, and which is increasingly alienated from the EU. There is no longer a vast

reservoir of popular support for EU accession into which the AKP could tap, as it did when first elected in 2002. And given the AKP's record during the past year, it is inevitable that the question will be raised whether the party, if saved from dissolution, will not revert to policies that subordinate Europeanization to Islamicization.

Above all, the way in which European support for the AKP has been expressed at the present juncture risks being counterproductive. It makes it more, rather than less difficult for the government to dissipate the fears of those who believe secularism to be under threat. The statements of EU officials and European politicians have been interpreted by secular Turkish commentators as one-sided, and as testimony to a mentality which is seen as lacking in secular sensitivity. If perceived as a safeguard of secularism, the EU may be able to accord legitimacy to an AKP which orients itself towards Europe. But with that perception contested, it is unlikely that efforts at Europeanization will secure the AKP.

While there is a certain consistency in the AKP's rediscovery of Europe, the same cannot be said of Prime Minister Erdogan's tributes to Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the republic, and his brand of secularism. Stating that "our nation has no problem with secularism", and that "secularism was instituted by Atatürk together with the people and has been fully internalized by the people", Erdogan has seemingly departed from the post-kemalism and the explicit questioning of the Atatürk legacy which had been lauded by not least European observers. Indeed, paying tribute to Atatürk's secularism contrasts sharply with Erdogan's rhetoric to date. Only last year, the prime minister stated that "individuals cannot be secular". Neither did Erdogan distance himself from the speaker of parliament at the time, Bülent Arinc, who called for a "redefinition of secularism". Erdogan's reaction to the European

Court of Human Rights' ruling in favor of the ban against the Islamic headscarf in universities – that this was not a matter for European institutions but "something to be decided by the Ulema (Islamic scholars)" – did not indicate any adherence to secularism.

It is obvious that the tributes to secularism and Atatürk are dictated by tactical necessity. In a spectacular, rather bizarre display of "Kemalism", the opening of the recent congress of the youth organization of the AKP in Istanbul was accompanied by delegates singing the "10th year march" (a hymn celebrating the 10th anniversary of the republic) and the song "We follow in the steps of Atatürk". The "un-Islamic" character of the gathering was further underlined by the fact that the delegates were not separated according to gender, which is otherwise customary at AKP gatherings.

The "10th year march" is not only associated with Atatürk's achievement; it was recycled by the military during the process that eventually led to the downfall of Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan in 1997. Since then, the march has been a symbol of the secular opposition.

Deemed the "most important political event of the week" by Deniz Baykal, leader of the opposition Republican People's party, the appropriation of Kemalist songs by the AKP youth has drawn heavy criticism from within the moderate Islamist ranks. Islamist commentators have issued warnings that far from securing the respect of those wanting to close down the party, displaying such "weakness" will only embolden them further.

The "Kemalism" of the AKP is clearly overdone, and it is a telling sign of the party's distress. But it is also indicative of a phenomenon that transcends the AKP: the common political use – or rather misuse – of the memory of Atatürk. Atatürk has been appropriated by a wide variety of political

movements from left to right. Even a radical Islamist politician such as Necmettin Erbakan used to assert that Atatürk would have been a member of his party had he been alive in the 1990s. The generals in power between 1980 and 1983, who introduced a “Turkish-Islamic synthesis” as state ideology and encouraged Islamic movements as a counterforce to Communism, concurrently never stopped referring to “Atatürkism”, inserting it into the constitution.



Opposition leader Deniz Baykal rejoiced in AKP's clinging to Atatürk: “Atatürk was such a great man that even they (the moderate Islamists) have to concede to his ideas and force eighty years later.” However, there is little to indicate that the AKP is conceding to the ideological heritage of Atatürk. Rather, Erdogan has had to acknowledge the impossibility of surmounting the founder of the republic as a symbol of the nation. As AKP

member of parliament Zafer Üskül put it last year, “Atatürk is our founder and our common value. But there is no need to make place for his principles and reforms as an ideology in the constitution”.

Paying allegiance to secularism does not dispense with the need to define its content. Foreign Minister Ali Babacan stated last week that it is a problem that there is no clear definition of secularism. As other AKP representatives have done before, Babacan declared “I see it as freedom of religion”. Secular critics of the AKP have countered that freedom of religion has in fact never been restricted, that nothing has prevented Muslims from fulfilling their religious obligations. What Turkish secularism has done – in principle, though not consistently in practice – is that it has restricted the freedom of religion to interfere in public affairs. Taha Akyol, a prominent conservative columnist in *Milliyet* supporting the AKP, recently gave a clue as to what the redefinition of secularism sought by the AKP would entail: Calling for the introduction of “democratic secularism”, Akyol writes that old fashioned secularism which confines religion to “the conscience and the shrine” should be abandoned.

CONCLUSIONS: The AKP can be expected to go to great lengths in order to disarm the case against it. As a way of defusing the regime crisis triggered by the lifting of the ban on the Islamic headscarf in the universities, constitutional amendments pointing out that the symbols of radical Islam will remain banned from elementary and secondary schools as well as from public offices are said to be under preparation. Ultimately, however, Turkey will not come to rest until religious conservatism has made its peace with the confinement of religion to the conscience and the shrine.

'BETWEEN POLITICAL CRISES: TURKISH ENERGY POLICY

Realizing the rising need for the transportation of the Caspian Basin's energy resources to world markets in the 1990s, Turkish decision-makers claimed that "Turkey should become an energy corridor and an energy hub for producer and consumer countries". All recent governments have to different degrees supported this vision. Turkey's energy hub prospects were boosted by the rapid developments in the Turkish economy, which created an increasing demand for energy resources, and forced the "Energy Strategy" to the focal point of political and bureaucratic circles.

BACKGROUND: Because of its geographical vicinity to both the major oil and gas producing region of the Caspian Sea and the Middle East, Turkey frequently declares that it is eager to be an energy corridor to the West. Its dependency on Russian and Iranian natural gas, at 65 and 20 percent, respectively, and the risk that these countries could use energy as a political instrument, pushes Turkey in the direction of searching for alternative sources that could increase its security of supply. Turkey hence decided to accelerate its search for alternatives last winter, when Iran decreased its natural gas supplies. The frequent supply disruptions were blamed on "technical problems" and occurred in an environment of Russian energy blackmail against several countries, aggravating the crisis. Turkey hence revitalized support for a series of pipeline projects presently on the agenda, most of which plan to transfer to Europe natural gas originating in Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iraq and Turkmenistan. The politically most significant of these is the Nabucco pipeline, which aims to connect Turkey's natural gas grid to the EU's, bringing supplies from the East well into Austrian territory.

During 2002-2007, the AKP government did not generate new energy projects, and the government's energy policy was hampered by several issues. First, the very serious court cases that had been brought against the former government's energy minister and

several associates over allegations of systematic corruption in the Blue Stream pipeline deal with Russia had a paralyzing effect on much of the energy bureaucracy, much of which was connected with or appointed by the now indicted officials. Simply put, in this environment, no one dared to take new initiatives. Secondly, previous governments had also launched projects, especially in the electricity sector, that had excess capacity at the time, which hampered the initiation of forward-looking projects.

However, in order to meet projected energy requirements, new energy projects, including those relying on nuclear power, were brought to the fore following the 2007 elections. Though priorities are open to discussion, Turkey's commitment to become an energy corridor is accepted by all political parties and related government institutions.

The realization of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, and the geopolitical developments connected with these projects increase Turkey's thirst for Trans-Caspian pipelines. Turkey, which has been looking to improve its regional role since the Central Asian states gained their independence, nevertheless only recently came to fully realize the potential gains from the strategic expansion of the new pipelines. Turkish political elites have grasped the importance of coming to serve as a

transportation and energy corridor for Europe, and have tried to strengthen Turkey's European integration.

IMPLICATIONS: After the 2007 general elections, the Turkish energy sector expected a radical change of program from the newly re-elected AKP government. One of the expectations was a change at the ministerial level, due to a general dissatisfaction with the performance of the minister in charge, Hilmi Guler, who was seen as not having been able to strategically harness Turkey's potential in the energy field. However, as was the case with many other ministerial positions, Prime Minister Erdogan kept the incumbent minister in place. As a result, the expected changes in the bureaucracy did not take place.

Because many former ministers and bureaucrats responsible for energy affairs have been charged with corruption cases, the current bureaucratic team in the energy ministry is uneasy about initiating or finalizing feasibility studies regarding many of the urgent energy projects that are being planned. Even projects already under way are progressing slowly, and many projects have been postponed, suspended or even cancelled.

Another weakness of the AKP bureaucratic team is its strong tendency to assign higher positions at the ministry to people affiliated with the party or with a background in the *Milli Görüş* ("National View") conservative religious movement, without taking into consideration their experience and qualifications. This is in fact endemic to the AKP's administrative style, at display not only in the Ministry of Energy but at several other governmental institutions. This practice was one of the main causes of the recent indictment of the AKP by Turkey's chief prosecutor.

Nuclear energy is the most concrete example of this phenomenon. Turkey has had plans to initiate nuclear power programs for almost three decades. However, these plans could only be realized through legislative changes, which have failed to move forward. Tenders have now been issued and firms are scheduled to compete for these mega-projects in September 2008.

Although the Turkish political arena has been suffering from growing instability lately, significant developments in EU energy policies have taken place

during the last two years. This carries great importance for Turkey, as it increases Turkey's opportunity to achieve its goal of becoming an energy hub for Europe. At last, the EU has developed a consciousness in terms of supply security and diversification of the resources, and is trying to decrease its dependency on Russian natural gas supplies. With energy security gaining importance in Europe, the possibility of realizing projects such as Nabucco, mentioned frequently by Turkish politicians, has increased. However, despite the economic and political support of the EU, these projects continue to be constrained by serious difficulties. Thus, it is still uncertain which sources will be used to fuel the constructed lines connecting Turkey to Europe.

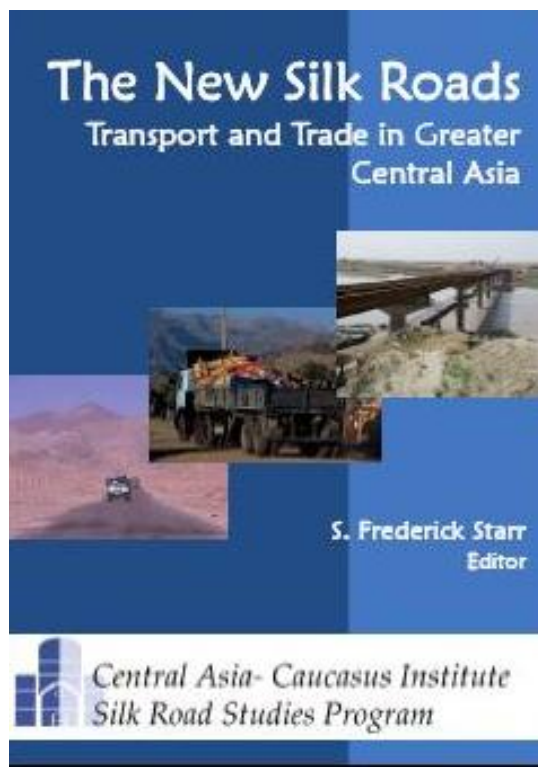
If the Iran option is set aside because of the firm U.S. policy seeking to prevent Iranian energy exports to Europe, the main credible source of gas would be Turkmen and Kazakh fields located on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea. Azerbaijani, Iraqi and Egyptian sources are all discussed, but uncertainties regarding the size of resources and their transport to Turkey have left investors unconvinced. The unclear prospects of Trans-Caspian oil and gas transportation lines, which are necessary to feed Central Asian gas into Nabucco, are a major sticking point. On the other hand, Gazprom and the Russian political leadership have worked hard to suggest that Russian gas should be pushed through to same routes either by building parallel pipelines to those proposed by the EU, or simply by feeding Russian gas into them. However, adhering to these Russian proposals would amount to nothing but the continuation and deepening of Europe's, and Turkey's dependency on Russian energy supplies..

As far as Turkey's role is concerned, it has occasionally been undermining its own claim of being an energy bridge by making exaggerated demands. Turkey is still hesitant about accepting a transit regime, because of lingering ideas at some quarters that Turkey, rather than becoming a major transit hub for Europe should opt for a role as a seller of energy bought at lesser value on its eastern frontiers. This would amount to Turkey replicating Gazprom's strategy, which has been built on acquiring Central Asian gas through a

monopolistic position at low prices, only to sell it on to Europe at a much higher price. No doubt, it is not in the interest of the EU to make itself dependent on another country while trying to break Russia's monopoly. Moreover, Turkey is not in a position comparable to Russia's with regard to its relationship with potential suppliers who would see little value in selling resources at low prices to Turkey. Unlike Central Asian states and Russia, they do have a choice. Besides, Turkey does not have any infrastructure in place that would allow it to acquire such a position. Such an approach is therefore unrealistic, and weakens Turkey's hand rather than strengthening it.

Turkey's wobbling in the energy sector, affected by the capacity deficits in both the political and bureaucratic cadres, is preventing Turkey from fully utilizing the potential of one of its strongest cards in relations with the EU: its potential to reduce European dependence on Russian energy. But Turkey's policies, or lack thereof, are instead discouraging the EU.

CONCLUSIONS: The weakness of the political and bureaucratic cadres combined with the case to close down the AKP make it unlikely that Turkey will be in a position to pursue a realistic energy policy in the short term. Experts project that already this summer, supplies will not meet the domestic demand. Under current circumstances, Turkey is unlikely to adapt to the EU energy policies; it acts in a haphazard manner and is apparently not capable even to secure its own urgent energy needs. However, the EU's newfound interest in diversification of supply could have a positive effect on Turkey. Indeed, European interest in energy projects involving both Turkey and producer countries in the Caspian could be an important factor in helping Turkey overcome the current uncertainty and paralysis in its energy sector.



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THE FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW

SECTION I: WHAT THE COLUMNISTS SAY

Turkish newspapers are bought as much for the writings of their columnists as for news. The writings of leading columnists are therefore an important indication of developments and moods in Turkey.

ÖZKÖK: DOES EU CARE ABOUT WESTERN LIFESTYLE?

While being opposed to the dissolution of AKP, Ertugrul Özkök (liberal), editor-in-chief of *Hürriyet*, admits being annoyed by the statements of EU officials that such a decision would derail Turkey's membership process. Özkök, a staunch supporter of the EU, calls on them to pay attention to the worries of Turks like himself, those who cherish a Western way of life. Addressing the president of the EU commission, Ertugrul Özkök asks whether José Manuel Barroso would have remained indifferent if millions of people in his own country had felt their way of life to be under threat. Since that is hard to imagine, Özkök asks why Barroso has abstained from displaying the slightest interest in the fate of such people in Turkey. He called on Barroso to seek their opinion as well.

AKYOL: ETHNIC DIVISION SALIENT

Taha Akyol (conservative) in *Milliyet*, writes that Turkey's division along ethnic lines is much more troubling than the secular-

religious divide. The latter could be easily solved, Akyol continues, if only traditional secularism which confines religion to the spiritual sphere would be redefined as democratic secularism. But overcoming ethnic division is a far greater challenge. Sociological modernization and economic development do not automatically mitigate ethnic and nationalist consciousness. On the contrary, nationalism has often been kindled by modernization, he notes. Akyol calls for a revision of the unitary state ideology, and sees hope in the fact that the military displays less rigidity about cultural pluralism than has been the case historically.

ÜLSEVER: AKP CONVERSION PUZZLING

Cüneyt Ülsever (liberal) in *Hürriyet*, admits being confused by the AKP's sudden conversion to Kemalism. Ülsever questions the sincerity of Prime Minister Erdogan when he refers to Kemal Atatürk and proclaims to be a champion of the secularism instituted by the founder of the republic. There is no consistency in the rhetoric and actions of the AKP, Ülsever writes. Erdogan

is either an EU enthusiast and democrat reborn in earnest, or an Islamic militant hiding his intentions behind references to Ataturk and EU. “I don’t know which is right”, he ends.

BERKAN: TURKEY’S FUTURE INSECURE, BLEAK

Ismet Berkan (liberal) in *Radikal* sees Turkey’s future as uncertain and as potentially bleak. He writes that the AKP can choose either to change the constitution as to evade dissolution or defend itself in front of the judges and public opinion. So far, the party is keeping its options open. In the longer run, the uncertainties are even greater. Turkish democracy and the stability of Turkey are at risk. We don’t know how this will end, if and how Turkey will be able to

surmount the crisis, Berkan writes. In addition, he sees an economic crisis looming.

CEMAL: CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR

Hasan Cemal (liberal) in *Milliyet* addresses three questions to those who fault the AKP government’s policies for Turkey’s crisis: Do you really find it compatible with the rule of law and democracy to threaten the AKP with dissolution? Are you really convinced that a ban would lead Turkey in a better direction? And doesn’t it occur to you that a party that you happen to dislike should be combated at the ballot box? Don’t forget that pinning our hopes on coups, on solutions outside the boundaries of the law and democracy will have results far more scary than your present fears.

SECTION II: DOMESTIC POLITICS

Summary: Much of the domestic debate was split between arguments over changes to Article 301 of the penal codes, with dissenting voices both from the opposition and within the ruling party; and the ongoing speculation of how the AKP will act to fend off the pending court case for its closure.

AKP WILL SEEK AGREEMENT WITH THE OPPOSITION IN THE FRAMEWORK OF DEMOCRATIZATION

8 April

After the case to ban the AKP was submitted, the party began to search for a way to prevent a potentially negative result via constitutional amendment. However, the AKP recently changed its direction and proposed an extended democratization package instead of one based solely on the problems that emerged due the case. The AKP is planning to offer a constitutional

amendment proposal that will include the extension of the fundamental rights and liberties in addition to changing the political party system in accordance with EU norms. The governing party also intends to reach an agreement with the opposition within the framework of democratization. After a six-hour meeting of the central administrative council yesterday, Vice Chairman of the party, Dengir Firat, repeated that the AKP government aimed to reach an agreement. Mr. Firat also emphasized the importance of the principle of secularism by

underlining that secularism is a common value and should thus be shielded from political controversy. (Radikal)

POSSIBILITY OF ABANDONING THE CONSTITUTIONAL PACKAGE

April 9

In search of a solution against its ban, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) discussed the option of giving up the extended constitutional amendment planned to be presented to the parliament after the mini-package related to the closure case. The Deputy Head of the AKP, Dengir Firat, reported that the AKPs agenda included many different solutions and added that the probability that they would give up the above-mentioned changes was fifty- fifty. The AKP general staff is intent on producing an international text of defense. Prime Minister Erdogan's directions have included conducting comprehensive research and, if necessary, to take opinions of foreign lawyers in account. It is assumed that the AKP seeks to employ an international judicial perspective that could come from the European Human Rights Court on the decision against its closure. The meeting of the executive body of the AKP has yet to decide on its strategy for the amendments that will make banning political parties more difficult. It appears that the idea of addressing the changes after the defense has more support. However, some AKP parliamentarians believe that the planned constitutional changes have been abandoned. (Sabah)

ARTICLE 301 GESTURE TO BARROSO BLOCKED

April 9

The AKP leadership wanted to pass the proposal for the amendment concerning Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, which was presented to the parliament during the visit of the Head of the EU Commission José Manuel Barroso. However, the proposal could not go beyond the Chairperson of the parliament, Güldal Mumcu of the Republican People's Party (CHP). An unusual tactical struggle on the matter of sending the proposal for the 301 amendment to the committee occurred yesterday between the CHP and AKP groups. Taking the place of the speaker of the parliament

Köksal Toptan who was in China, Mrs. Mumcu (with the signature of AKP parliamentarian Veysi Kaynak of the Kahramanmaraş province) did not send the committee the proposal presented to the Chairmanship of the Parliament concerning the amendment in Article 301. "The speaker of the parliament will send it when he comes" stated Mrs. Mumcu. AKP parliamentarians asked for the withdrawal of Mrs. Mumcu's decision, stating that their main concern was to enact the proposal into a law as soon as possible. Conversely, the CHP side dismissed their request as a gesture to the Head of the EU Commission Mr. Barroso. (Radikal)

THE SOLUTION FOR THE KURDISH PROBLEM IS DEMOCRACY

10 April

President Abdullah Gül emphasized the development of democracy as the solution for the political and economic problems in southeast Anatolia while speaking to the representatives of seventeen civil society organizations based in Diyarbakır. While describing differences as a form of "richness", Mr. Gül said, "The problems will be solved more easily when our democracy improves. We aspire for our democracy to meet EU standards". Representatives of the seventeen civil society organizations headed by the chairman of the Diyarbakır Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Mehmet Kaya, also met Prime Minister Erdogan and CHP (Republican People's Party) Leader Deniz Baykal. "I am as friendly and warm as I was in 1989. We were sometimes misunderstood because of our sensitivity about the struggle against terrorism. You must remember that we are the party that requested the state not to interfere in the ethnic origins issue in 1989. The state has no right to assimilate people," said Mr. Baykal to the group. The representatives of the civil society organizations also asked for an appointment with MHP (Nationalist Action Party) leader Mr. Bahçeli; however he rejected this request. (Radikal)

MUMCU CRISIS IN ARTICLE 301

10 April

Vice Speaker of the Parliament, CHP deputy Güldal Mumcu, obstructed the AKPs proposal concerning the amendment of Article 301

(Indicating that those who insult ‘Turkishness’ should be punished). The AKP wanted to pass the amendment prior to the visit of the President of the EU Commission José Manuel Barroso. Speaker of the Parliament Köksal Toptan who is now in China, allegedly contacted Mrs. Mumcu and said that she did not need to wait for him to approve and send the proposal. However, Mrs. Mumcu indicated that it would be more appropriate to wait for Mr. Toptan and rejected the request. When journalists inquired about the reason for not approving the proposal, Mrs. Mumcu replied, “I do not believe that this is an urgent issue. I found it appropriate to wait for the Speaker of the Parliament”. Regarding the decision of Mrs. Mumcu, Vice President of the CHP Group in the Parliament Kemal Anadol said, “We are facing a dishonorable situation. They (the AKP) want to make a gesture for Mr. Barroso by passing the amendment in Article 301 prior to his arrival. Mr. Toptan, who is currently in China, should be held responsible for this proposal. Vice Speaker of the Parliament Mrs. Mumcu found it appropriate to wait for Mr. Toptan after considering the importance of the proposal. That is all.” (Milliyet)

BAŞBUĞ: CULTURAL RIGHTS SHOULD BE INDIVIDUAL

12 April

The Chief of Land Forces, General Ilker Basbug, underlined that Turkey respects cultural differences and stated, “Nobody can ask Turkey to make political arrangements that would jeopardize the unitary state structure. General Başbuğ, who is in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to evaluate the Command Headquarters of the Cyprus Turkish Peace Forces and to participate in the annual ‘Plan Seminar’, delivered following messages at a press conference: “Turkey respects cultural differences, and in terms of culture it has realized many arrangements, some still in place today, to promote cultural richness under the condition that it remains individual and does not harm the structure of the nation-state. The country will be led to polarization if there are attempts to bring the issue of culture within the domain of politics and to organize the state along ethnic lines. He mentioned that it was his duty as a commander

responsible for the struggle against separatist terror organizations, to warn about some marginal groups that aspire to bring Turkey to such a point. (Radikal)

BAHÇELİ: AKP SEEKING EU AID TO SAVE ITS FUTURE

15 April

Nationalist Action Party (MHP) Chairman Devlet Bahçeli stated in the group meeting of his party that the strategy the AKP intends to pursue during the process of the case has begun to clarify. He accused the AKP of trying to use the support of the EU and the US as an element of threat and to influence the judiciary. He claimed that in exchange for this support the AKP would implement orders given by the EU, disguised as reforms. Mr. Bahçeli said that the first “payment” was to allow the cursing Turkish values, which is why the proposal to revise the 301st article of the penal code had been brought to the agenda of the parliament. Mr. Bahçeli stressed that the objective of the Ankara visit of Mr. Barroso was to check the AKP’s record of obedience to the EU orders, support the AKP in the banning case as well as to remind Mr. Erdogan that it is time to see some results about the pledges he had made. (Sabah)

OBJECTION TO ARTICLE 301 CHANGES

15 April

Speaker of the Parliament Köksal Toptan raised an objection to the proposal to make an amendment in the 301st article of the Penal code. Mr. Toptan based his objection on the grounds that granting the right to submit a case against those who “harmed” Turkishness to the president could put the president in problematic situations. According to Mr. Toptan, once the courts approve the indictments, a serious crime investigation must be carried out before making a decision. He stated that seeking the approval of the Minister of Justice – as it was before – would be the most appropriate way. (Hurriyet)

AKP LEFT ALONE IN 301

16 April

Democratic Society Party (DTP) Leader Ahmet Türk, who wants the 301st article of the Penal code to be entirely abolished, stated that they would not support the AKPs proposal regarding an

amendment in the article. Underlining that the government slowed down the EU reform process, Mr. Türk said, "The EU project is swimming the waters of nationalism"(?). Speaking in the group meeting of his party, Mr. Türk stated: "Society is being forced to make a decision between a nationalist-chauvinist line and a political Islamist line. What this society needs is not lines, but democracy. Only then can we save Turkey from a crisis, via a fundamental transformation." "The proposal (to amend the article 301 of the Penal code) protects the very spirit of the 301. Our stance in this matter is crystal clear. We want the murderer of Hrant Dink, Article 301, to be abolished completely. We will not support any "regulation" which does not amount to a complete abolition of the 301st article" (Radikal)

BABACAN SPOKE TO TELEGRAPH

16 April

Yesterday Turkish Foreign minister Ali Babacan spoke to The Telegraph. In the news he mentioned three issues, namely the Turkish stance in the Afghanistan issue, the fight against the PKK and EU-membership. The Telegraph wrote that Mr. Babacan discarded the criticisms of the U.S. and the U.K. directed at the countries such as Turkey that opposed further deployment of troops to the problematic areas of Afghanistan. Mr. Babacan also said that an approach favoring more military involvement would weaken the Afghan government and would unavoidably backfire. Mr. Babacan further described the government in northern Iraq as a significant problem and predicted that the cross-border operations would continue. Mr. Babacan commented the approach of French president Sarkozy and German Chancellor Merkel toward Turkish membership to the EU, and said that this approach, combined with the failure to reach a permanent solution in Cyprus, is transforming Turkish public opinion about EU in a negative direction. (Sabah)

THERE IS NO "RESERVE" PARTY

16 April

Prime Minister Erdogan stated that he did not believe that his party would be banned. Speaking to Al-Jazeera TV in Qatar yesterday, as a response to the question "Are you prepared for

the possibility that your party could be banned, and do you have a substitute party?" Mr. Erdogan said that he did not believe that his party would be banned and added that the AKP had not done anything that was unconstitutional. When asked whether they would amend the constitution in order to make banning political parties more difficult, Mr. Erdogan said, "We do not have such an issue on our agenda for now. We will hold a meeting after my return from Qatar to discuss the matter. We will not make a hasty decision." (Hurriyet)

REACTION FROM CHP TO GÜL

17 April

A negative signal came from the leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP) Deniz Baykal to the invitation of President Abdullah Gül. Mr. Gül has invited the political party leaders to his residence on 23 April. Within CHP circles it is said that the participation of Mr. Baykal in a meeting that "has no subject" is unthinkable. Mr. Baykal has previously stated, "We will not go to the presidential residence unless we are invited to discuss vital issues of Turkey." (Hurriyet)

PLAN B: EARLY ELECTIONS

18 April

The AKP has begun to devise a plan to resort to in the event that it does not receive the support of the MHP and CHP regarding the constitutional amendment to make it more difficult to ban political parties. The AKP has decided to hold early elections if an agreement cannot be reached and the 29th of June is mentioned as a possible date. Moreover, the AKP executive committee is considering holding the local elections planned for March 2009 at the same time. A top AKP parliamentarian stated that "The only way to come out of this chaotic situation is by an election ... The ban case is predicted to end within six or eight months. No country can tolerate such a long period of uncertainty. There have been three consecutive elections even in Greece." The AKP intends to make it an election "for or against democracy". (Sabah)

SENER: ANSWER DEMANDS NEW FORMATION

19 April

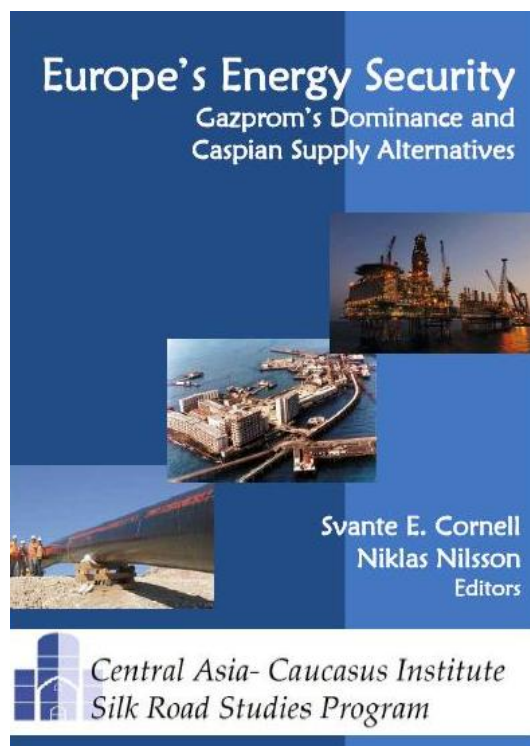
Former Deputy Prime Minister Abdüllatif Sener, one of the founding names of the AKP, gave an indication of new political formations. Speaking at a meeting of the Trade and Industry Chamber in Sivas he said, "Everyone knows that I am trying to put a different political understanding in place. If social demand comes out to give me new expectations, I will act accordingly... We can see that our citizens expect a new formation. There are new expectations about the shape and operation of politics. All these are propagated with my name... This demand has to mature first. If a popular expectation for a movement giving rise to a new political understanding manifests itself and grows stronger, I will then answer those expectations. (Radikal)

TURKEY LIKELY TO AMEND ARTICLE 301 NEXT WEEK

April 22

Minister of Justice Mehmet Ali Sahin has stated that the parliament may pass an amendment to the Article 301 next week. The parliament's justice committee accepted the bill to amend the

controversial Article 301 on Friday. Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code criminalizes insulting "Turkishness". Under the amendments proposed by the government, the term "Turkishness" will be replaced by the "Turkish nation," and the term "Republic" will be replaced with "State of the Republic of Turkey." The committee agreed to make the Minister of Justice responsible to approve any prosecution under the law. The initial proposal by the government sought the president's approval for prosecutors before they could press any charges related to the article. The bill also decreases the maximum punishment from three to two years, opening the way for the postponement of the prison term of those convicted under Article 301. The European Union has called on Turkey to amend Article 301, which has been the basis for charges against Turkish writers and journalists including Hrant Dink, Elif Safak, Haluk Sahin and Orhan Pamuk. (Hurriyet)



New Book!

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SECTION II: FOREIGN RELATIONS

Summary: Foreign relations continued to be dominated by the international reaction to the court case against the ruling party and its effect on EU relations, particularly given EU Commission Barroso's visit to Turkey. In other news, Armenia-Turkish relations fail to move forward, while Ankara, Baghdad and Washington discussed the PKK.

SOLANA: THERE WILL BE PROBLEMS WITH THE EU IF THE AKP IS BANNED

8 April

EU Common Foreign and Security Policy High Representative Javier Solana said that Turkey is in a serious constitutional crisis. Mr. Solana stated that if the AKP, which is recognized by the EU and came to power through democratic elections, was banned as a result of the case opened against it, the EU-Turkey relationship would be damaged. Mr. Solana said, "It appears that banning the governing party which came to power through democratic elections is on the agenda of Turkey. The AKP is a legitimate political party in Turkey. The importance of the issue is increased by the fact that the two highest representatives, the President and Prime Minister, are from this party. I hope that banning parties in Turkey will become more difficult with the planned amendments in the law. With these regulations, Turkey can move faster in her route to becoming a more democratic country." (Sabah)

EU IS CONTENT WITH THE AMENDMENT OF ARTICLE 301

8 April

The proposal of the AKP to amend article 301, which seeks to criminalize insulting 'Turkishness', was brought to the parliament and received positive reactions from EU circles in Ankara. An EU ambassador said, "This is a long awaited move and the message delivered concerning the freedom of speech is very important. However, everything certainly depends on the application." EU diplomats said that the EU has frequently requested this move

and stated that the proposal would be examined closely, although the direction thus far was considered 'good'. EU circles further described the issue of the proposal as 'important' and 'interesting'. (Sabah)

SOLANA: THE JUDICIARY MUST BE SENSIBLE IN ITS DECISION

April 9

The High Representative of EU Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, said that the ban of the AKP could generate "very serious results" for EU-Turkish relations. In a speech delivered at a European Parliament Committee, he stated that the ban of the AKP would comprise "a significant setback" to relations between the EU and Turkey. Mr. Solana stated, "That is why the Constitutional Court must be reasonable in its decision on this subject". In a seminar in Brussels yesterday, the EU Commissioner responsible for Enlargement, Olli Rehn, stated that the AKP closure case was another test for 'the stability anchor'-claim of Turkey in its relations with the EU. Mr. Rehn noted that last year's presidential and general elections seriously tested Turkey's claim of being a stability anchor and added that "this test will repeat itself with the case to ban the AKP". In his speech at the opening ceremony of the communication platform "Istanbul Center-Brussels", marking the candidature of Istanbul as the European Culture Capital in 2010, Mr. Rehn maintained that the EU accession process was a guarantee for Turkey's 'democratic secularism'. He also said that the removal of Article 301 would be good news in the context of the need for additional reforms in Turkey. (Milliyet)

KACZYNSKI: POLITICAL CRISIS HARMS EU AMBITIONS

10 April

Polish President Lech Kaczynski stated that the political crisis in Turkey is harming the aim of EU membership. Mr. Kaczyński confirmed that Poland supports Turkey's EU bid but warned that the former Soviet republics of Ukraine and Georgia, which also want to join the EU, could surpass Ankara. During an interview with Reuters, Mr. Kaczynski stated that in contrast to Ukraine and Georgia, the problems of Turkey are largely cultural. Analysts assert that although Poland is one of the strongest supporters of Turkey's membership, its support can decrease if the Polish government receives the backing of the countries opposing Turkey's bid for the inclusion of Poland's eastern neighbor Ukraine to the EU. (Sabah)

BARROSO TO BAYKAL: DO YOU REALLY WANT TO JOIN EUROPEAN UNION?

11 April

President of the EU Commission José Manuel Barroso has met with the opposition party leaders in the parliament. During his meeting with CHP Chairman Deniz Baykal, he inquired if they truly wish to join the EU. "We have supported this project since the beginning. However, the question remains is if there is a desire in the EU for the full membership of Turkey. If we are assured full membership, we can wait for 20 or 30 years. We will be more motivated if we know that Turkey will become a member." Mr. Baykal responded. After the meeting Mr. Baykal said, "Mr. Barroso's speech in the parliament was predictable. We saw the reflection of our sensitivity not to make a comment regarding the legal process. We appreciate this. Our meeting was beneficial and well-balanced." Mr. Barroso maintained that it was not possible to prioritize democracy or secularism and stated "There are three important elements that we underline; compatibility with the constitution, democracy and the supremacy of law. We want to see these three elements together." (Milliyet)

BARROSO DELIVERS SPEECH IN THE TURKISH PARLIAMENT

11 April

President of the EU Commission José Manuel Barroso made his speech in the parliament yesterday. While delivering messages on a variety of issues from secularism to Cyprus, Mr. Barroso refrained from mentioning the case to ban the AKP. He stated, "Don't expect us to take sides on the issue of secularism. The issue of the Islamic headscarf requires a decision that should be taken by every woman according to her beliefs. Democracy should be more effective in the civil-military relations". When expressing his content about the steps taken to amend Article 301, Mr. Barroso delivered the following messages: "Turkey's and Europe's support for the conducted activities, such as those in Bosnia, is of crucial importance. We admire the professionalism of the Turkish army." "Turkey plays a very important role in the dialogue with the Muslim world. It is integrating in Europe by demonstrating that it is a secular and democratic country. As a Muslim country, Turkey presents a strong alternative to Islamic fundamentalism. Turkey has become a central player, particularly after the end of the Cold War." "Nationalist sentiments, feeling that you are a part of a country or a nation, do not contradict peace, democracy and being a member of the European Union. There is no shortcut for membership. It is the responsibility of the Commission to support the preparations of the reforms while the candidate states realize them. This is not interfering with the internal politics of this country. Turkey has realized many effective changes. Freedom of speech and democratic principles in civil-military relations should be emphasized. These are of key importance to us. "I recognize the importance of the secularism debate in Turkey. Other countries also underwent this in different periods and found solutions of their own. Do not expect the EU to take sides and impose standards in this matter." "There is no standard concerning the Islamic headscarf issue in the EU. This is a decision that should be taken by each woman, according to her own beliefs." "We stand side by side in the fight against terrorism. The PKK is a terrorist organization and is on the list. There is no misunderstanding here. We think that the problems in the southeast regions of the country can be solved within the

framework of a more comprehensive strategy. The problems can be solved by granting political and cultural rights to the Kurdish citizens. There is a great opportunity in Cyprus. The wall in Nicosia is the last wall dividing Europe. We fully believe that Turkey supports a comprehensive solution that can be formulated under the UN umbrella. Responsibilities stemmed from the Ankara Agreement and the supplementary protocol are important for Turkey. When looking at previous enlargement processes, it is clear that Turkey is not an exception. Be sure that discussions will last until membership is granted. Turkey should fully engage with the reforms. (Sabah)

HARSH MESSAGES FROM ERDOGAN TO THE EU

11 April

Prime Minister Erdogan delivered a number of harsh messages during his speech at the Turkey-EU Joint Consultation Committee meeting. Mr. Erdogan stated that Turkey was determined in her bid to join the EU. He criticized the suspension of the 8 chapters as being unacceptable. Mr. Erdogan also criticized the views expressed by those opposing Turkey's membership on the basis that Turkey is not geographically part of Europe, by pointing out that there were already member states that are not geographically part of Europe. He added that Turkey was ahead of at least 10 countries according to the Copenhagen and Maastricht Criteria. Lastly, he called on the EU to be more honest. Mr. Erdogan also complained about the opposition in his speech. He noted that the opposition was doing every move to prevent the reforms while the AKP government regarded the year 2008 as the year of reform. (Hurriyet)

BARROSO: LATE IN TERMS OF REFORMS ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

12 April

The President of the EU Commission José Manuel Barroso underlined that Turkey needs to find a structural acceleration in her political reforms and said, "The reforms about freedom of expression are long overdue. The Ombudsman law, the judicial reform, the development of the cultural and minority rights parallel to the union

and social rights are other necessary areas where reforms should gain pace. Full membership can only be achieved when there is a strong political consensus. The delegation visited the Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul, and met Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs Mehmet Görmez, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Chief Negotiator Ali Babacan. While pointing out that the timing of this visit was very important, Mr. Babacan added "Turkey is not a burden but an asset for the EU". Mr. Barroso, among others, said that the economic success of the Turkish economy needs to be sustained though structural reforms. (Milliyet)

EU ALLIES TO BLAME FOR DIMISHED SUPPORT

12 April

Prime Minister Erdogan, participating in a meeting of the Turkey-EU Consultation Committee, responded to claims made by some EU member countries regarding Turkey's membership. He assured Mr. Barroso that "We have no hesitation regarding participation with the EU. Despite these discouraging developments, we continue on the road to EU membership with the same enthusiasm as ever. Some recommendations, like 'privileged membership', amount to changing the rules of the game. Two countries started this. It affected the Turkish people. Support for the EU in 2004 was 75%, but has now dropped to 59%. Our EU allies are responsible for this diminished trust," noted the Prime Minister. "We enter the EU not to become a burden, but to lighten the EU's burden. Turkey has more than done its homework. We aim to complete all the relevant legal arrangements by 2013." (Hurriyet)

"WE ARE OBSERVING THE AKP CASE CLOSELY"

15 April

British Foreign Minister David Miliband stated that the British Foreign Ministry is closely observing the AKP case. Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan and British Foreign Minister Miliband held a joint press conference after lunch today. Regarding the AKP case, Mr. Miliband said, "We are observing the

developments in Turkey anxiously. We regard the Turkish government as a government representing the will of the people. Hence this government deserves strong support from the international community and of course from Great Britain. We hope that these developments do not disrupt attention from the important matters with which the Turkish government is occupied. We support the Turkish government's reforms, which are necessary and need courage and responsibility to realize. Regarding the case; the international community believes that the Turkish people made their decision about which government they want in a clear way. We have an efficient relation with the current government and want this to continue." (Radikal)

TURKEY IS NOT A "MODERATE ISLAMIC" COUNTRY

April 16

Speaking at the meeting of the US-Turkish council in Washington DC, Turkey's ambassador to the United States Nabi Sensoy implored American policy makers and journalists not to depict Turkey as a "moderate Islamic country". "I and many others in Turkey feel disturbed by this description. Turkey is a secular country. It is thus much more accurate to use definitions such as "secular country" or "secular democracy" when speaking about Turkey", ambassador Sensoy stated. (Hürriyet)

NEGOTIATION PROCESS OFFICIALLY STARTING IN CYPRUS

17 April

The "Study Groups and Technical Committees", which will constitute the basis of the negotiations during the meeting of the leaders of both sides of Cyprus on 21 March, officially begin to work tomorrow. After agreeing on a preparation period of 3 months, the leaders of the two communities had approved the establishment of 6 Study Groups and 7 Technical Committee during their meeting on March 21. The Study Groups will evaluate the Turkish and Greek positions about the Cyprus issue. The Technical Committees will discuss the everyday issues between the two societies of the island. The heads of the Study groups and Technical Committees will meet in Nicosia tomorrow. While the Study Groups are

established under the titles of Administration and Power Allocation, EU issues, Guarantees and Security, Land, Property and Economical issues; the Technical Committees will consist of the following titles: Crime/Issues Related to Crime, Economical and Commercial issues, Cultural Heritage, Crisis Management, Humanitarian issues, Health and Environment. (Milliyet)

U.S. PRESS: COURT SHOULD WARN, NOT BAN THE AKP

17 April

U.S. daily newspaper Boston Globe wrote in its editorial that if the AKP was banned, democracy in Turkey would deteriorate and the bid of Turkey to join EU would weaken. The newspaper asked the Constitutional Court of Turkey not to ban the AKP, but to advise the party to respect the principle of secularism. In its editorial "Tremors in Turkey", the Boston Globe evaluated recent developments in Turkey and claimed that a new and "ominous" phase in the "power struggle" between the "moderate Islamist" government party and staunchly secular military, judiciary and academic elites had started. (Sabah)

EUROPEAN SUPPORT FOR AKP

18 April

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe published a proclamation condemning the dissolution case against the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Among the parliamentarians signing the declaration are the leaders of the Christian Democrat, Socialist, Liberal and United Left parties. The proclamation emphasizes "the importance of the principle of respecting the independence of the judiciary" and "the importance of freedom of expression and organization for the proper functioning of pluralist democracy." Turkey is encouraged to continue democratic reforms and to enact the necessary constitutional and legislative reforms related to political parties in line with the European Human Rights Agreement. This document does not represent a common position of the Parliamentary assembly and binds only the signatory parliamentarians. (Zaman)

VERHEUGEN: NO EXCLUSION FOR TURKEY

19 April

The President of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), Rifat Hisarcıklıoğlu, transmitted the message of the Vice-President of the European Commission Günter Verheugen: "For every day my realization that the decision to begin negotiations with Turkey was right grows stronger. The membership of Turkey is very important for the EU. There is a need for vision in this process of participation. Negotiations are held to realize membership. The confused and negative signals coming from the EU are not encouraging; however nobody has the courage to leave Turkey out of the process". Mr. Hisarcıklıoğlu also announced a meeting with the Chambers' Union of Greece and the Turkish and Greek sides of Cyprus on 23 May. They will meet on the island and "for the first time we will talk around the same table. This is a positive and promising step," said Mr. Hisarcıklıoğlu. In the meantime, it was confirmed that the Intergovernmental Conference (HAK), which could give Turkey a possibility to open new negotiation chapters, would not be held as planned on 21 April 2008 as a result of "not having completed the necessary technical work". The work on the subject area continues. (Milliyet)

IRAQ, US AND TURKEY DISCUSS PKK IN KUWAIT

April 22

The expanded ministerial meeting of Iraq's neighboring countries, with the participation of representatives from the U.N. Security Council, the European Commission, the Organization of Islamic Conference and the Arab League, was held in Kuwait on Tuesday. The foreign ministers of Iraq, Turkey and the U.S. met at the conference. Mr. Ali Babacan and his Iraqi counterpart Hoshiyar Zabari expressed their pleasure at the improvements in the relations between the two neighboring countries. The US secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that she is pleased with the cooperation between Iraq and Turkey. Ms. Rice told reporters in Kuwait that everyone is "concerned that Iraq doesn't become a haven for terrorist attacks on Turkey." She added

"cooperation is producing some results there." Ms. Rice also said that the PKK, or Kurdistan Workers Party, is "an enemy of stability and therefore an enemy of Iraq, Turkey and the United States." Turkey launched several aerial attacks and a major ground operation in northern Iraq against the outlawed PKK positions in February. The Turkish Foreign Minister said that the fight against the PKK continues with the support of the U.S. and Iraq, and that Turkey is ready to contribute to the efforts for stabilizing the country. Turkey is using every instrument in the fight against terrorism, Turkish Foreign Minister Babacan added. The foreign ministers also discussed ways to improve cooperation between their countries in areas such as economy and energy. (Hürriyet)

ARMENIA COLD TO TURKEY'S CALL FOR THE DIALOGUE

April 22

Armenia's stance toward dialogue with Turkey remains unchanged despite Ankara's calls for the beginning of a new era in bilateral ties between the two neighbors that currently lack diplomatic relations. Foreign Minister Ali Babacan told reporters yesterday that he had dispatched a letter to his Armenian counterpart, congratulating him on his new post and stating that Turkey is open for dialogue in order to normalize Turkish-Armenian relations. "There is no doubt that there are problems in the two countries' relations, but a solution passes through dialogue. Our doors are open to dialogue," Mr. Babacan said. "We received the letter of Mr. Babacan and we considered it very positive," an Armenian diplomat, who wished to remain unnamed, told Turkish Daily News. "But this [call for dialogue] should not only be in words, but also in deeds. We expect action," he said and reiterated the well-known Armenian position that the re-establishment of diplomatic relations and re-opening of the closed borders without any preconditions play a major role in normalizing the ties. "This is one of the key elements. It is nonsense for a European Union candidate country to keep its borders closed with its neighbor," added the Armenian diplomat. (Turkish Daily News)