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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.

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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

TURKISH MILITARY AND ISLAMISTS: A GRAND RECONCILIATION?

Halil Magnus Karaveli

The conclusion of Turkey's regime crisis calls for a revision of the conventional way of interpreting Turkish political dynamics. Turkey has moved from confrontation over the nature of the regime to a systemic reconciliation in the making. Significantly, the split between the moderate Islamists and the military is about to be bridged. That should make it less difficult for observers in the West to discern and appreciate the reality of civilian secularism in Turkey.

BACKGROUND: With the decision of the Turkish constitutional court this summer not to ban the ruling Justice and development party, the AKP, the confrontation that had shaken Turkey since 2007 was to all intents and purposes resolved. However, all but one of the court's eleven judges did judge that the party had indeed acted in contravention of the secular order of the state, and

there was a majority for a closure, although it remained one vote short of the required qualified majority. Thus, in legal terms the AKP was not acquitted. The court is yet to motivate its decision and account for its reasoning, but the judges evidently wanted to issue a dire warning to the AKP, while refraining from taking a step that would have made Turkish politics unmanageable

and which risked to further exacerbate societal tensions.

There is an expectation among moderately secularist commentators that the reasoning behind the ruling, when it is made public, will reset the boundaries of the secular order, and that these will check the Islamic drive to redefine secularism. The ruling would thus amount to a renewed attempt by the



system to incorporate the moderate Islamists in the established state order. The key question for the future is whether Islamic conservatism will be emboldened or, as it is hoped, further moderated within this new framework of systemic reconciliation. The reconciliation on offer is however undeniably based on tacit secularist admittance of relative weakness. Basically, it signifies that the officially secularist state establishment has had to reconcile itself with the reality of the entrenched power of the Islamic movement. The moderate Islamist government not only enjoys broad popular support; the larger Islamic movement, the religious brotherhoods, wields significant power over the economy and controls much of the media. The secularist establishment has also had to take into account the international, not least American, support for the moderate Islamists.

IMPLICATIONS: An indication of the accommodation under way is the evolution of the relationship between the military and the moderate Islamists. It was obvious already a year ago that the General staff was seeking a consensus with the AKP government. There has been widespread speculation in Turkish media that Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and then Chief of staff Gen. Yasar Büyükanit had indeed reached an agreement at a three-hour meeting at the Dolmabahçe palace in Istanbul in May 2007, but that Erdogan subsequently failed to keep his

part of the bargain. Accordingly, the prime minister was to deliver a compromise candidate to the presidency, but Abdullah Gül apparently imposed himself. The growing understanding between the AKP government and the General staff was manifested at the meeting of the High military council (*Yüksek askeri sura*) which was held two days after the constitutional court announced its non-closure decision. Since the AKP came to power in 2002, the gatherings of the High military council, at which the military and civilian leadership



convene, had turned into manifestations of the split between the Islamists and the military. The council's primary function is to approve of the purges decided by the General staff of junior military officers who have been found to be associated with Islamic movements. The representatives of the AKP government used to submit their reservations to the purges. This year they did not have to, since for the first time ever the General staff had not detected any Islamist

activity within military ranks. The General staff responded to the criticism of the incredulous secularist opposition by stating that it did not act out of any desire to please any particular interests. The statement failed to impress the secularist opposition. Kemal Kilicdaroglu, deputy chairman of the parliamentary group of the Republican people's party, the CHP, declared that the "military and the government are indeed best friends". As the military accommodates religious conservatism, secular opinion is alienated.

Kilicdaroglu had earlier this year told this author that he did not see the military as being particularly sensitive about secularism at any deeper level. "What they want is just to be able to dance", that is, to carry on with the traditional, westernized social life at the officers' messes, he suggested. Hikmet Cetin, a former chairman of the CHP, on the other hand, used the word "existential" to denote the importance that secularism carries for the Turkish military. One momentous outcome of the Turkish regime crisis of 2007-2008 is that the former perception of the military's relation to secularism has gained credibility.

Turkey's experience with military rule is in fact not reassuring at all from a secularist perspective. The military dictatorship of 1980-1983 in particular, when the ruling junta introduced Islamicization as a counterweight to the left, cast a lasting doubt over the officer corps' secular trustworthiness. The secular estrangement from the military is also due to democratic sensitivity; the rallying call of the "republican rallies" in 2007 - at which several million demonstrators gathered - "no to Sharia and no to a coup", did capture the general mood



among an urban middle class that is unwilling to sacrifice democracy in order to thwart the perceived threat to secularism.

Pragmatism, rather than secularist ideological purity, defines the military's relationship to political Islam. Significantly, Islamic solidarity has revealed itself to be an effective antidote to separatism, as shown by the AKP's ability to marginalize the Kurdish nationalist party, the DTP, in the Kurdish southeast. Indeed, that fact alone would account for the generals' accommodation of the AKP.

In 2000, Abdullah Gül, then a leading representative of the Islamist Virtue party, had predicted that "the military will be isolated if it tries to direct the future". The developments of 2007-2008 have not proven him wrong. For the first time in the history of the republic, the military failed in its attempts to steer politics; Abdullah Gül was elected president over the military's objection, and the General staff has had to acquiesce in the continuation of the AKP's rule. Although it still remains by far the most trusted institution in society (with a steady confidence level of eighty percent), the military has lost much

of the high ground in the public discourse, a fact that was born out during the confrontation of 2007-2008, when the military was subjected to heavy criticism in the media and its political interventions were challenged – and repelled – as never before. The spectacular arrests of the retired four-star generals Sener Eruygur and Hursit Tolon (who are yet to be charged) this summer symbolizes the new vulnerability of the military.

Yet, it should not be assumed that the moderate Islamists seek any degradation of the military as an institution. The heritage of history and Turkey's volatile strategic environment combine to secure the future political clout of the military. Nothing suggests that the moderate Islamists are unprepared to reconcile themselves with that reality. Implicit in their vision is rather a division of labor, which basically would leave the supervision of national security to the military, while the generals would be expected to step back as supervisors of internal ideology and accept that religion permeates more of the daily life in society.

CONCLUSIONS: The main conclusion of the Turkish regime crisis of 2007-2008 is that the military, although it evidently does have a certain secular sensibility, will not stage a coup and that there is on the contrary a convergence of interests between it and the Islamic movement. The

implication of that reconciliation is that while Turkey may become less secular, it may remain as militaristic as ever. It also means that the military will – reasonably – cease to bar the view of the secular, civil society of Turkey. The perception of the military as the watchdog of a secular order has given Turkish secularism an authoritarian connotation, which in turn has made it intellectually and emotionally difficult for Western, liberal opinion to appreciate the civilian implantation of Enlightenment values in Turkey.

And despite enduring misgivings about the military's secularist resolve and the repugnance to authoritarianism, the military had until now been counted on by the secularist opinion in Turkey as a bastion of last resort. The awareness that the military is no longer to be relied on can eventually result in civilian secularism evolving into a progressive political force – into a liberalism and/or social democracy of the modern, European kind – that would help to secure Turkey's democratization. The urban middle class, and its civilian secularism, remains an untapped democratic resource. With the Turkish military reaching out to the moderate Islamists, the West would do well to reach out to Turkey's civilian seculars.

TURKEY AND THE GEORGIAN WAR: A BUNGLED STABILITY INITIATIVE

M. K. Kaya and Svante E. Cornell

Turkey's relative neglect of Central Asia and the Caucasus in recent years turned into a rude awakening when Russian tanks rolled into Georgia. Turkey seemed torn between its western-aligned interests, on the one hand, and a desire to seek common ground with Russia, on the other. The launching of a Turkish stability initiative for the Caucasus illustrated Turkey's dilemmas, as the initiative explicitly excluded the West. Yet in the long term, a more active stance and coordination with its western partners could bring Turkey many benefits.

BACKGROUND: Even though Turkish policy towards the Caucasus has appeared in recent years like a sinus curve, with many ups and downs, Turkey cannot ignore the region simply because of its close proximity. While Azerbaijan is a kindred country, its mainland has no borders with Turkey. Hence for Turkey's access to the Caucasus and Central Asia, given Ankara's problematic relations with Armenia, the key country is Georgia.

Turkey's role is all the more important given Iran's positions, and its conflict with the west. Particularly for trade and transportation, Turkey has come to play a crucial role.

Aside from the transportation of oil and gas from the Caspian sea to European markets, trade in commodities has picked up seriously as well. Indeed, the war broke out only days after the opening ceremony for the construction of the

Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railroad, attended by the presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey.

Turkey perceives both the South and North Caucasus as a buffer zone, mostly because of the strong impression left from the centuries of warfare with the Russian Empire. Issues in the

Caucasus affect Turkey through

Diaspora

populations as well.

While the region was only ruled from Istanbul for relatively short

periods and very long ago, Diasporas

representing

virtually all the Caucasian nations

are present in Turkey, relatively well organized, and

forces to be

reckoned with. The solidarity groups of Muslim Georgians and their activities on the Turkish political arena are a known phenomenon. But the Abkhaz are a factor too: the Abkhaz Diaspora in Turkey counts many more souls than the present-day Abkhaz population. The same can be said for



Ossetians. Hence Turkey is representative of the Caucasus, seeing a competition among ethnic elites from the region. As a natural consequence of this characteristic, even putting aside the security and Russian factors, it is almost impossible for Turkish governments to have a clear stance supporting either Georgia, Abkhazia or South Ossetia. Thus interviews with the foundations and pressure groups established by these Diasporas display a clear picture: nobody is content with Turkey's policies.

Up until now, however, Turkey has seen Georgia as a strategic partner, and has supported the territorial integrity of Georgia. Turkey has played an important role in strengthening the orientation of Georgia toward the West. In increasing the standards of the Georgian army, supporting the construction of ports, airports and other infrastructural investments, Turkish firms have been a leading force in Georgia. Clearly, such infrastructure carries strategic importance for Turkey: the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum oil and gas pipelines, respectively, have made Georgia a key factor in achieving the Turkish goal of becoming an energy hub and connecting the energy fields of Caspian basin to the world markets.

However, it is also clear that the current Turkish government has displayed a much lower degree of interest toward the Caucasus compared to previous governments. Indeed, the *Milli Görüş* tradition from which the AKP government hails emphasizes Muslim solidarity rather than linguistic and cultural ties with the Turkic world; hence the AKP has been much more interested in the Middle East than in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Yet the crisis prodded Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to launch an initiative for a Caucasus alliance, later renamed a "stability and cooperation platform".

IMPLICATIONS: Turkey's reaction to the war showed the quandary it is in, but also the

conflicting pressures and instincts guiding its decision-making. On the one hand, Ankara paid lip service to its western alignment and the joint projects it has been pursuing with the West for years; but on the other, it launched an initiative that explicitly kept the West out.

Following the crisis, the Turkish government allowed U.S. warships, most significantly the flagship of the U.S. Mediterranean Navy, the USS Mount Whitney, to cross the Turkish straits into the Black Sea. This took place even though the ships were at the limit of the tonnage allowed under the Montreux Convention. This showed that Turkey is sensitive to western policies, despite Russian criticism. Likewise, Turkey was among the first to provide assistance and logistics for Georgia, in spite of some of its aid being stopped by Russia's war.

Indeed, such actions are directly in line with Turkey's long-term interests in the region, as defined for the past decade. Turkey's main accomplishment in the region has been the realization of the South Caucasus energy corridor, which makes it an emerging energy and transportation hub for Europe. Russian actions in Georgia, widely interpreted to threaten the future of this energy and transportation corridor, therefore were a major blow to Turkish interests. This strategic picture would logically provide an impetus for a strengthening of the existing Turkish-American coordination on South Caucasus affairs, which was launched in the late 1990s but has been increasingly moribund since the 2003 Iraq war led to a worsening of relation between Washington and Ankara.

This makes the stability project launched by Erdogan appear all the more puzzling. Most obviously, the prospect of achieving consensus around a multilateral mechanism in the middle of a raging war between Russia and Georgia appeared to be guided either by wishful thinking or a serious underestimation of the gravity of the events.

Indeed, Georgia's official reaction suggested no less, agreeing to consider the initiative only once its territory had been liberated from Russian occupation.

The format and proposed membership of the proposed initiative raises questions as well. It includes the three Caucasian states, Turkey, and Russia. Neither the West nor Iran are included. The logic behind this particular membership

the region does not seem to be congruent with Turkey's own long-term interests. Hence the initiative does not appear to be guided by calm, rational analysis.

Of course, this is a clear result of the fact that Russia's place in Turkish foreign policy gains more and more importance as time goes by. In terms of trade volume, Russia is a key partner for Turkey. It generates half of its electricity from

natural gas turbines, and buys over two thirds of its natural gas from Russia. The Anti-American atmosphere in Turkey also makes Russia appealing in the eyes of sections of the Turkish leadership.

CONCLUSIONS: The latest war clearly led Russia to reinforce the reality it had created in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, separating these territories from Georgia. Through this war, Russia showed that it will not remain silent in the face of the involvement of NATO or other Western institutions in the region. This affects not

only Georgia, but the entire Black Sea region, specifically Ukraine. Indeed, the place of Black Sea region and the South Caucasus in the emerging post-post cold war order is uncertain. It is likely, however, that the region will increasingly be a stage for the power struggle between Russia and the West. In such a divide, Turkey's objective interests would be best defended by standing with the Western alliance, something the war in Georgia makes abundantly clear. If the current and possible future crises focus the attention of the West more toward this region, Turkey will be forced to take a more active stance. Provided that its policies are congruent with the West's, that could boost Turkey's own EU ambitions.



structure has never been fully explained. The exclusion of the U.S. and the West in general could be explained by the regional character of the initiative; but that logic would imply the inclusion of Iran.

In effect, although a Turkish initiative, this mechanism would create a structure dominated by Russia, with Turkey playing a secondary role. Given Russia's overt claims to a sphere of interest of its own in the South Caucasus, it is difficult to see what role Moscow sees for Turkey in the region, other than a secondary power legitimizing its dominance. Such a structure would therefore clearly not be in the interest of Azerbaijan and Georgia. Moreover, creating a structure that, by excluding the west, legitimizes Russian primacy in

THE FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW

SECTION I: WHAT THE COLUMNISTS SAY

The inauguration of General Ilker Basbug as new Chief of staff has been widely commented in the Turkish media. The columnists in general hail Basbug as a moderate and as an intellectual with a keen sense of the challenges and demands of globalization. They note that he restated the military's commitment to Turkey's alliance with the U.S, and that he abstained from displaying any dogmatic attitude about the nation-state and secularism in his inauguration speech.

IDIZ: BASBUG RESTATES COMMITMENT TO ALLIANCE WITH THE U.S

Semih Idiz of *Milliyet* quotes General Basbug as saying that the cooperation and understanding between the Turkish armed forces and the armed forces of the United States are at an "excellent" level, and that "one of our primary missions is the protection of that cooperation." The statement of Basbug that the Turkish-American relation today "is more important than ever before" is significant against the background of the rampant, almost pathological anti-Americanism in Turkey. The words of the new Chief of staff serve as a forceful disclaimer of the speculations that Turkey harbors any intentions to steer away

from the U.S-NATO-axis. It is not difficult to imagine that this statement is as welcomed in Washington as it is regretted in Moscow.

SAHIN: AN INTELLECTUAL WORRYING ABOUT THE NATION-STATE

The speech of Ilker Basbug suggests that the new Chief of staff is not an ordinary military man, but one with intellectual pretensions, writes Haluk Sahin of *Radikal*. It is evident that General Basbug is a person that tries to understand global developments, including important interpreters of our time such as Jürgen Habermas in his reading. What this change of mind will signify for Turkish politics and for the armed forces remains to be seen. It is evident that the future of the

nation-state occupies a central place in the mind of Basbug. That is not surprising. The Turkish armed forces were after all conceived as the army of a nation-state and were equipped with its ideology.

BILA: "WE HAVE HEARD SUCH SPEECHES MANY TIMES BEFORE"

Fikret Bila of *Milliyet* refers to the comments of Deniz Baykal, the leader of the opposition Republican people's party, CHP, to the inauguration speech of Ilker Basbug, in particular to the new Chief of staff's restatement of the importance of secularism: "The generals always hold great speeches, but.." At first, Baykal was unwilling to continue; when I asked him what he meant by "but", he said "I no longer want to be a party in political discussions about the statements made by the commanders. I have the feeling that we are past the time when words alone could have any impact. I myself and the commanders have at several occasions before warned against the direction in which Turkey is being taken. And what good did those warnings do?" The leader of the CHP is thus doubtful that the words of Ilker pasha will check the government. On the contrary, Baykal believes that statements and warnings of this kind only create disappointment.

BIRAND: SUCCESSOR TO BASBUG IS A HAWK

Mehmet Ali Birand of *Posta* finds Ilkes Basbug conciliatory as well. "I observed that he did not turn his speech into a check-list of 'red lines' not to be crossed. He did not issue any threats. He did not give the impression of being a commander that is ready to pick a fight with the government, raising tensions." Birand is however surprised by the statements of the new army chief, Isik Kosaner (who is scheduled to succeed Basbug as Chief of staff in two years, and remain at that function for three years.) Those listening

to the speech of Gen. Kosaner found a commander which sees a "global threat" emanating from Washington, and which is not sympathetic to the EU. According to Kosaner, this global enemy is supporting ethnic separatism in Turkey, and is trying to turn the country into a model of "moderate Islam", using the associations of civil society and media to subvert the republic. General Kosaner emphasized the importance of a strong reaction to Northern Iraq; he thinks that the armed struggle should be given priority in the fight against PKK-terrorism, and he pointed to the Armed forces as the principal guardian of the "secular-unitary-nation-state". These statements are full of hints about the internal dynamics within the General staff.

KORU: THE MESSAGE OF BASBUG

Fehmi Kuru of *Yeni Safak* finds the references to Atatürk, secularism and the nation-state rather numerous in the inauguration speech of Ilker Basbug. But, as we know, these references constitute the building-blocks of the Turkish army, and should hence be regarded as normal. Instead, what matters is the evaluation made of the impact of globalization, which in turn will help us find the answers to the questions "Which Atatürk?" and "What kind of secularism?". And there is plenty of evidence in the speech of Gen. Basbug to suggest that we should be optimistic in those two respects.

Globalization forces us to reevaluate the ways in which we have understood democracy, secularism and our way of organizing the state. It is evident that Ilker Basbug is painfully well aware of this reality. He displays an attitude which is distinguished by a willingness to be convinced and not to obstruct change. The coming period has a chance of being rewarding for the development of the country, if not only the politicians but the military-civilian bureaucracy as well make the proper

evaluation of the messages that Basbug delivered.

AKYOL: IMPERIALIST RUSSIA

Taha Akyol of *Milliyet* points to the gravity of the crisis over Georgia, which has come to serve as a reminder of the critical, strategic importance of the Turkish straits. Russia argues that the presence of Western navy ships in the Black sea is in violation of the Montreux convention of 1936. The row between Russia and Turkey risks becoming enflamed. If Russia persists in its imperial policies, the Straits will become even more critical. Today, Russia punishes Turkey by de

facto obstructing the Turkish export to Russia, raising technical barriers; however, Turkey could in turn respond by using the right to inspect the Russian merchant ships passing through the Straits, to which it is entitled according to the Montreux convention. Such a development would cause harm to both Russia and Turkey and further provoke East-West tensions globally. The history of the last two hundred years is testimony to the terrible havoc brought on to Turkey, Europe and Russia by such confrontations.

SECTION II: DOMESTIC POLITICS

Summary: The past month's politics were dominated by the constitutional court's decision not to close down the AKP, but to issue a warning and to cut its state funding.

ŞENER'S POLITICAL SUICIDE OR A NEW FUTURE FOR TURKEY

4 July

Former AKP deputy, Deputy Prime Minister and Member of AKP's central committee *Abdüllatif Şener's* attempt to establish his own party was evaluated by the German weekly *Die Welt*. The weekly searched for an answer to the question, "Is the attempt of Mr. Şener political suicide or an effort to change Turkey's future?"

Mr. Şener was portrayed as both a friend of President Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip *Erdoğan* and a person whom the secular people can relate well to. It is also said that the AKP closure case is behind Mr. Şener's move to establish his party.

While acknowledging that Mr. Şener has a more moderate political approach than Mr. Erdoğan, *Die Welt* noted that he has an "AKP moustache" and supports the main party policies of AKP such as the Islamic headscarf. It was also mentioned that former president *Süleyman Demirel* is rumored to support the establishment of the new party.

The weekly indicated that people were fed up with the conflict between the AKP and the opposition over secularism and that the Turkish political arena needs a moderate center alternative. (*Milliyet*)

LEHMAN BROTHERS: THE AKP WILL NOT BE CLOSED

25 July

One of the major worldwide investment banks,

Lehman Brothers, published a report concerning the AKP closure case on July 25. Despite the general expectation, Lehman Brothers claimed that the AKP would not be closed.

The most likely scenario is that the AKP will not be closed. The Islamic headscarf decision of the Constitutional Court is held forth as critically important. The decision restricts the freedom to change the constitution, checking possible, future similar moves of the AKP; thus the need to close the party is diminished. The ruling about the Islamic headscarf and the risk of is believed to have served as warnings, leading to the moderation of the AKP. Surveys made lately show that the popularity of the AKP is decreasing. Lehman brothers speculate that a closure of the AKP would strengthen public support of the party, and thus have a boomerang-effect.

Another interesting point in the Lehman report was the things that would happen if the AKP were closed. Underlining that a controversial process concerning Mr. Erdoğan will begin if the Constitutional Court decides to close the AKP, Lehman Brothers says that the political uncertainty will last for long and predicts serious fluctuations in the market. Emphasizing that Mr. Erdoğan may be faced with cases relating to his term as the Mayor of the Istanbul municipality, the report claimed that this may be interpreted as the end of road for Mr. Erdoğan.

The concluding section of the report makes a number of interesting remarks. "We are optimistic that the process will end with a more constructive dialogue between the AKP and

secular citizens. There is already enough pressure from social groups in Turkey that this debate should come to an end. Moreover, there is international pressure on Turkey to act like a responsible regional power. We think that Turkey can fulfill this mission if it more adequately strengthens its democracy. The crisis could have ended more easily if Turkey had a more powerful EU card.” (*Hürriyet*)

SERIOUS WARNING TO THE AKP

31 July

The Constitutional Court ruled that the AKP had become the focal point of anti-secular activities but did not close the party. The court cut half of the treasure aid the AKP receives and added that the party may face a new case in the future if it does not pay attention to the warnings in the ruling.

Constitutional Court President *Haşim Kılıç* delivered messages to the media, political actors and the governing party before the declaration of the ruling. Stressing that the court had not taken its decision under the effect of any external pressures, Mr. Kılıç however said, “We could not ignore that this case had to be dealt with first after taking the social, economical and political aspects into due consideration”. Mr. Kılıç stressed that none of the court members were comfortable with the closure of political parties; he regretted that a consensus is yet to be reached about the desirability of constitutional changes in this respect, as it befits a modern democratic country. Mr. Kılıç said, “A change in the rules is discussed only when a closure is pending. I am appealing to the political actors; if there is a problem, if there are rules and laws which disturb the public, then these should be subject to change, with compromise”. Mr. Kılıç declared the ruling after his speech: “The AKP is not closed down. However six members voted for the closure, four members voted for cutting the treasure aid and one member voted against the case. When considering the closure and financial sanctions together, it was

decided that half of the treasure aid this party received last year should be cut. The court did not close the party because it did not reach the necessary number of votes, seven. Nevertheless, this is an important warning”. Mr. Kılıç also said that he hoped that the AKP will consider the warning closely.

Upon a question whether a new case could be opened against AKP or not, Mr. Kılıç said, “the Head Prosecutor will continue its duty and if he feels the need to submit a case again he will do so”. (*Milliyet*)

WE SHOULD RETURN TO THE MAIN AGENDA

1 August

Upon the ruling of the Constitutional Court, President Abdullah Gül made a statement in which he requested the government and other actors to return to the main agenda of Turkey immediately. The main points of Mr. Gül’s statement were as follows:

“Turkey is a constitutional state with all the necessary institutions, and its democracy is functioning. All of our institutions are fulfilling their constitutional duties. These points are valid for the political and legal discussions and processes experienced in the last months. In the period ahead I find it crucial for the government and all other actors to focus more on the prior agenda titles by taking into consideration the latest international political and economic developments.

Among those priorities it is possible to identify the ultimate success in the fight against terrorism, continuation of the reform process and concluding the negotiations with the EU. I believe that we must work together for these purposes by strengthening the communication, trust and harmony within the community. I believe that focusing on these priorities will contribute greatly to the stability, confidence and welfare of our country and in the long run to the image of Turkey as being a predictably stable country”. (*Radikal*)

SECTION III: FOREIGN RELATIONS

Summary: The past month's foreign relations were overshadowed by the war in neighboring Georgia, as well as the controversial visit of Iranian president Ahmadinejad to Turkey.

“SILK” RAILROAD

24 July

The inauguration ceremony of the construction of the Kars-Tbilisi-Baku railroad project which will connect Turkey with Central Asia and is planned to revive the old Silk Road, was held with the participation of the presidents from Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey.

Speaking at the ceremony, Turkish President Abdullah Gül stated that the project was initially criticized as a dream impossible to realize, however today the project is being realized. Emphasizing that the railroad will not only connect the three countries but also Europe and Central Asia, Mr. Gül said that the project was open to any country willing to participate and expressed his hope that the project will contribute to the peace and stability of the Caucasus. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev stated in his speech “new history is being written”. He referred Georgia, Turkey and Azerbaijan as strategic partners and emphasized that this railroad will contribute to the cultural progress of the three countries together with bringing economic benefits.

Reminding that similar criticisms were voiced about the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline,

which was nonetheless constructed and is currently well functioning, Mr. Aliyev stated that the KTB (Kars-Tbilisi-Baku) project would be realized. (*Sabah*)

ADL ADMINISTRATORS VISIT TURKEY

24 July

One of the most prominent Jewish foundations of the U.S., the Anti Defamation League (ADL) Director Abraham Foxman and President Glen Lewy visited Turkey last week and met with all high level officials including President Abdullah Gül.

In an interview with the Jerusalem Post, Mr. Foxman commented on his visit to Turkey and said that the negative feelings caused by their statement “Armenians were subject to genocide” had vanished. Mr. Foxman said that they had abandoned their views on this issue and further advised the U.S. congress about the possible problematic repercussions of a decision concerning the Armenian genocide. During their visit to Ankara, Mr. Foxman and Mr. Levy made some high level contacts including President Gül and Prime Minister Erdoğan. They met with CHP Leader Deniz

Baykal, General Staff 2nd in Command General Ergin Saygun, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan, Minister of Justice Mehmet Ali Şahin, and Minister Education Hüseyn Çelik. They also visited the Ambassadors of the U.S. and Israel to Turkey, Mayor of Istanbul Kadir Topbaş and the leaders of the Jewish society.

Indicating that they re-evaluated the idea that Armenians were subject to genocide in 1915, Mr. Foxman said that they lobbied the U.S. Congress in order to prevent a decision about the Armenian genocide to be passed because it would harm relations between the two countries. Additionally, it would not be helpful for the rapprochement between Armenia and Turkey and would cause problems for the Jewish society in Turkey. ADL Director Foxman said, "We stood against a possible Armenian genocide decision of the Congress. We displayed a strong stance against the use of word "genocide".

Mr. Foxman also stated that they gave advice to the Turkish government regarding solutions to the Armenian problem, and emphasized that he told Turkish officials, "Be creative about improving the relations with Armenia and take initiatives. Finding areas of cooperative study may improve the negative environment. The Armenian problem is the problem of the two countries, not of congresses or parliaments". Saying that he was worried about the developments in Armenia after the elections, Mr. Foxman stressed that Turkey should help its neighbor and added that opening the borders may be the most important step in this way. (*Hurriyet*)

LEADERS IN CYPRUS WILL BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS

25 July

Turkish Republic Northern Cyprus (TRNC) president Mehmet Ali Talat and Greek Cypriot president Dimitris Christofias are expected to meet in Nicosia to declare that they will start negotiations in September. In this framework, the UN Secretary General's new Cyprus Special Representative Aleksander Downer will also

make his first visit to the island this weekend. According to the agreement on March 21, the two leaders began the negotiations on a technical level and declared that they were in agreement that a federal government, in which the Turkish and Greek founding states will be equal partners, and which will have one international identity is to be established.

In an interview with AA yesterday, Mr. Talat indicated that they are aiming for a quick solution and said "Our aim is to reach a solution as soon as possible. We will not negotiate for months or years. There are four months, which is sufficient". The TRNC leader also repeated that the agreement reached would be put to a referendum. (*Radikal*)

"NEOCONS" BEHIND THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE AKP

26 July

The think-tank Foreign Policy in Focus claimed that neoconservatives who advocate an operation against Iran were not pleased with the foreign policy of the AKP in Turkey and concluded that they as a consequence support the plans to overthrow the government.

According to the claims, the "zero problems with the neighbors" foreign policy of the AKP has displeased some neoconservatives in the U.S. administration. These people, who could not find the support they expected from Turkey regarding the Iran issue, initiated this campaign with two aims. The first is to overthrow a democratically elected government. Persuading a Turkey that is less democratic with an increasingly politically active military to lend its support for a military operation against Iran would be easier. According to the claims, the second aim is to deepen relations between Israel and Turkey, particularly on the military level. In order to attain this goal, a Turkish operation against the PKK would be tolerated. (*Sabah*)

SECRET ISLAMISM IN TURKEY

26 July

In an interview in Deutsche Welle, German Ministry of Defense Undersecretary Thomas Kossendey made an interesting remark while evaluating the situation in Turkey. Mr. Kossedey said there was a threat of secret Islamism in Turkey and advocated that this threat was down to top, instead of top to down.

When asked, "You have been to Turkey many times and know Turkey and Turks very well. Do you observe a threat of Islamism in Turkey?" Mr. Kossendey replied, "There is a secret threat. We cannot say that laws and regulations are the cause of Islamism. However we can say that there is a secret Islamism and it is similar to public pressure. For instance, women wearing the Islamic headscarf and muezzin calling for prayer in the mosques more loudly... In some districts of Istanbul, women wearing headscarf are more comfortable than those who do not. This was not like that ten years ago. I don't think that it is only about religion. I think this is a secret Islamism, more dangerous than top to down Islamism. You can struggle with that by political means. But secret Islamism and public pressure as a result of that is almost impossible to deal with". (*Hurriyet*)

NEW CYPRUS REPRESENTATIVE HAS ARRIVED

28 July

After the Turkish and Greek leaders met in Nicosia last Friday and declared that the direct negotiations will begin on September 3, UN Secretary General's Special Representative Alexander Downer arrived at the island. While visiting Larnaka in the Greek section, Mr. Downer said, "We will do whatever we can to carry a very important step further". Mr. Downer will meet the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus President Mehmet Ali Talat and Greek President Dimitris Christofias for the first time on Tuesday. The visit of the 56-year-old Australian Foreign Minister Downer was said to be the first to the island. According to the survey

published yesterday in the Greek Cypriot newspaper Politis, 75 percent of the people living in the Greek section were supportive of the direct negotiations and are behind Mr. Christofias. (*Radikal*)

BABACAN'S CONTACTS IN IRAN

29 July

Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan went to Iran in order to exchange views about regional and international developments and bilateral relations. Mr. Babacan discussed bilateral relations, Iran's negotiations with the western countries and Mr. Ahmedinejad's future visit to Turkey with Mr. Ahmadinejad himself, Minister of Foreign Affairs Menuchehr Mutteki and National High Security Council Secretary General and Nuclear Head Negotiator Said Djelili,

Mr. Babacan purportedly stated that the nuclear negotiations between Iran and the western countries were a crucial opportunity and it was important to continue them. It was also stated that Turkey has an important role in moderating the dialogue in the nuclear negotiations between the two sides, as a country which maintains good relations with the U.S., the EU and Iran. (*Yeni Safak*)

EU-TURKEY RELATIONS ARE BEING HARMED

29 July

One of the most prominent Christian Democrats in Europe, Federal Parliament Foreign Relations Commission President Ruprecht Polenz stated, "A crisis experienced in Turkey is a blow given to the EU relations".

Speaking to Deutsche Welle, Mr. Polenz indicated that the current crisis in Turkey was negatively affecting Turkish politics and said, "The first signs of crisis are already seen in economy. Because the focus is now on that crisis, it is highly possible that the reform process will be slowed down. My advice to the EU is to

continue helping Turkey to realize its reforms. However, this crisis is certainly a blow to the Turkey-EU relations”.

Mr. Polenz, who frequently visits Turkey, was asked a question about the closure of the AKP, to which he replied, “I think that the most important issue is the political bans proposed for 71 AKP member rather than if the party will be closed or not. For instance, imagine if 60-70 politicians from the Social Democrats are banned from politics for five years. How would that affect the persuasiveness of the political activities of that party?”

CURSE ON TERRORISM

29 July

The terrorist bombing in Istanbul, which resulted in 17 deaths, was condemned worldwide as nations offered support for Turkey in the fight against terrorism. The US embassy released the following statement: “We will continue our support for our ally Turkey in the fight against terrorism. Killing innocent people is unjustifiable.” Russian President Dmitri Medvedev also offered condolences, while Israel, Italy and Spain stated: “we support the fight against terrorism.”

Europe has openly condemned the terrorist attack that took place in Istanbul on Sunday night. European Commission Spokesman Amadeu Altafaj stated “we strongly condemn the bomb attack in Güngören, Istanbul and we would like to state that we support Turkey in its fight against terrorism.” A statement was released by EU term chair France: “The EU stands by Turkey in the fight against all kinds of terrorism.” The EU Commission and EU Joint Foreign Policy and Security Representative Javier Solana condemned the attack and pointed out that the attack aimed to kill as many people as possible. (*Sabah*)

LAGENDIJK AT EASE

30 July

With regard to the ruling of the Constitutional Court Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary Commission Co-President Joost Lagendijk said, “I am at ease”.

Stating that he expects the AKP to accept the ruling and act accordingly, Mr. Lagendijk said “Turkey should, quickly and with greater motivation, continue to realize reforms that will carry her to the EU. The first step for this should be the civil and democratic constitution. Articles in the current constitution allowing political parties to be closed should be amended without delay”.

Underlining that the AKP should pay more attention to the anxieties of the people who did not vote for them, Mr. Lagendijk indicated that these people want to see more obvious signs that the AKP protects and respects the secular character of the Turkish Republic. (*Sabah*)

EU: IT IS TIME TO GET TO WORK

1 August

The European Union evaluated the Turkish Constitutional Court’s ruling as “an element that paved the way to return to regular business in the EU-Turkey relations” and made a call for “dialogue” and “compromise”. EU leaders said, “reforms must continue”.

The statement that EU Term President France made on behalf of all member countries states, “The EU calls all of the political actors in Turkey to solve their problems within the context of compromise and dialogue by showing respect to the rule of law and fundamental freedoms”.

While the attention of the EU concerning the democratic functioning of the institutions in Turkey was underlined, it was stated that the situation would be monitored closely.

It was aid that German Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed her content about the court’s ruling to Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan. German Minister of Foreign Affairs Walter Steinmeier also made a statement and said “Now the important thing is the contribution of all of the decision makers to the country’s peace and

political stability and continuation of the reform process”.

Foreign Minister of Greece Dora Bakoyanni said in a written statement “The ruling of the Turkish Constitutional Court ended the uncertainty in the Turkish political arena. Now the Erdoğan government can continue the reforms in order to sustain the necessary improvement in the EU process”. (*Milliyet*)

SUNDAY TIMES: ERDOĞAN REGARDS BAŞBUĞ AS A HARD RIVAL

4 August

English Sunday Times wrote that Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan regards next Chief of General Staff, current Army chief *İlker Başbuğ* as a tougher rival than his predecessor *Yaşar Büyükanıt*.

The article continued, “65 year old Başbuğ will be the top official in the military for the coming two years. Loyal to his principles and a tough military character, Mr. Başbuğ will cause the Erdoğan government, which received 47 percent of the votes but is not trusted by the military that regards itself as the protector of the secular society, to walk in a much narrowed political line. Due to these reasons, Mr. Başbuğ definitely would not be the general whom Mr. Erdoğan would want to promote. Current Chief of General Staff *Yaşar Büyükanıt* is also firm when it comes to principles and decisions; however he was more reactive and the Prime Minister could outmaneuver him. A military source claimed that ‘Mr. Erdoğan sees Mr. Başbuğ as a tougher rival than his predecessor. He is more cunning’. Manipulating the government with veiled warnings was not Gen. Büyükanıt’s best ability. It is expected that Gen. Başbuğ will be more able putting pressure on the Erdoğan government, without giving it the excuse to complain about an anti-democratic suppression. (*Radikal*)

BABACAN: DEBATES ARE QUITE INAPPROPRIATE

4 August

Foreign Minister Ali Babacan reacted harshly to the speculations concerning the visit of Iranian President Ahmadinejad to Turkey. Mr. Babacan said “I find the debate inappropriate. I think that such approaches will cast a shadow over the success of the visit”.

Underlining that Iran was on the global agenda, the talks over its nuclear program ongoing and it being a crucial period in the negotiations, Mr. Babacan said, “I find debates over small details, about the form of the visit etc, just before a such important visit in a such an important time as inappropriate and I think these are attempts to reduce the success of the visit. The focal point should be the meetings. We must focus on substance, not form”. (*Sabah*)

HARSH ANSWER FROM TURKEY TO THE US

5 August

After the finalization of the closure case, the AKP government stepped into the most critical problem of the Middle East and invited Iranian President Ahmadinejad to Turkey on 14 August under the shadow of the war scenarios.

The most important topic of the meeting will be the nuclear case. Turkey will also discuss the natural gas energy issue. The summary of the Foreign Ministry’s Iran policy reads “Turkey is against the nuclear armament of Iran as well as possible limitations of the future established standards in order to bring sanctions Iran over Turkey’s nuclear energy policy. Turkey is anxious for all ‘nuclear’ UN Security Council permanent members to establish a ‘nuclear energy monopoly’. That is why Turkey is trying to mediate Iran and U.S.”

In a message directed at the U.S the Ministry of Foreign Affairs states, “There is an effective lobby war in the U.S. They advocate that there is no other option than war to solve the problem of Iran, which refuses to halt its uranium enrichment program. They criticize Turkey and say that we will be the first NATO country to

meet Mr. Ahmadinejad. To them we say ‘Iran is our neighbor. We are not Denmark. Solving the nuclear problem through ways other than negotiation will create instability in the region, which we will be affected by. Thus, we oppose this’”. (*Vatan*)

GUARDIAN: FOUNDER OF THE STATE WAS SNUBBED

7 August

The news that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad did not want to visit Anitkabir, the mausoleum of Turkey’s founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, found place in the foreign press. The Guardian used the title “Turkey plays down Ahmadinejad snub to state’s founding father. The Guardian reported that Mr. Ahmadinejad was not eager to pay his respects to Atatürk, a practice that is expected from all of the foreign leaders according to protocol. The Guardian wrote, “Atatürk was the antithesis of everything the devout Iranian president represents. He was also an ally and role model of Reza Shah”. The article states that the Turkish officials described the visit as a working trip in order to disguise the exceptional arrangements.

The opposition CHP vice chairman was highly critical: “Ali Babacan defines the question of visiting Anitkabir and the show of respect to Atatürk as a detail and an unimportant aspect. The AKP’s Minister of Foreign Affairs regards respect to Atatürk as a detail!”

MHP Group Vice President also reacted to Mr. Ahmedinejad’s unwillingness to visit Atatürk. He said, “Showing respect to our country’s founder is the least act of kindness expected of any leader of a country claiming that it is a friend of Turkey”. (*Milliyet*)

IRAN REACTION OF ISRAEL TO TURKEY

9 August

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who caused public reaction because he declined to visit Atatürk’s mausoleum in Ankara during his visit to Turkey,

has now created tension in Turkish–Israeli relations. One of the leading newspapers in Israel, Haaretz, wrote that Israel protested Mr. Ahmedinejad’s visit. Israeli Ankara Embassy officials also stated that Iran refuses to give a clear answer to the international community regarding its nuclear program.

According to Haaretz, a message was given to Turkey’s Ambassador to Israel Namık Tan, “Israel is very disappointed to see Turkey inviting a leader, who openly rejects the Holocaust, for an official visit, thus granting him legitimacy ”. (*Milliyet*)

RUSSIA THREATENS TURKEY

9 August

The Russian Ministry of Foreign affairs stated “Those who provide weapons to Georgia are also responsible”. Russian Foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said that those who help Georgia’s armament despite the warnings should feel responsible. Mr. Lavrov also accused Western countries of aiding Georgia with armament and military training. Russian President Dmitri Medvedev repeated the same accusation. Turkey has trained the Georgian army since 1997 in addition to giving it weapons support. In the construction and modernization of Georgian military bases, naval ports and airports there is considerable contribution of Turkish companies and of the Turkish Armed Forces. (*Yeni Safak*)

BABACAN IN DISCUSSIONS WITH GEORGIAN AND RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTERS

10 August

Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan has held talks with Georgian Foreign minister Ekaterina Tkeselasvili and her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov on the phone. According to the statement of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Babacan expressed his anxiety about the increasing tension in Georgia’s South Ossetia region.

According to the statement, Mr. Babacan emphasized that the conflicts, which caused significant harm to the security in the region, posed a serious threat to the peace and stability of the South Caucasus. He also expressed his sorrow for the loss of many civilians and said that Turkey was ready to provide humanitarian aid to those affected by the conflicts. (*Sabah*)

ERDOĞAN SUGGESTS ESTABLISHMENT OF CAUCASUS UNION

11 August

Regarding the tension in Caucasus, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said, “We could establish a Caucasus alliance or Caucasus union”. Mr. Erdoğan also stated that the criticisms leveled at Turkey because of its arms sales to Georgia were inappropriate and said, “Every country sells its products”.

Indicating that the developments were troublesome, Mr. Erdoğan said, “Our position since the first day is that a ceasefire should be sustained and diplomatic solutions should be enacted. We told this to each side. I intend to speak with Mr. Putin. I want to speak with him about these issues. It is a very sensitive and fragile region and peace can only be sustained by peaceful diplomacy following a ceasefire”. Upon a question regarding whether one of the aims of the war was to cut the oil flow to Turkey, Mr. Erdoğan responded, “I do not want to interpret the developments like that. We can establish the formation of an alliance in Caucasus like the Balkans. We can play a role in such an endeavor. If the U.S. and EU member countries all step in for an alliance in the Caucasus we can prepare the necessary environment for peace in the Caucasus. Naturally Russia should be included in this alliance too”. (*Sabah*)

GÜL'S EVALUATION OF THE DEVELOPMENTS IN GEORGIA

12 August

President Abdullah Gül said that Turkey will

continue its initiatives for the reestablishment of peace and stability in Georgia and in this context he underlined that he gave the utmost importance to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

Underlining that the Caucasus is Turkey's neighbor, Mr. Gül indicated that Turkey always closely followed the developments in the Caucasus. Mr. Gül said “I see the information that Russia has halted the military operations as a positive development. I hope this positive sign will transform into a mutually assured ceasefire and that gunfires will be silenced. However I think that the application of this decision is quite crucial. For this, both sides must act carefully”. The President stressed that Turkey supports the initiatives of the EU, OSCE and UN Secretariat for the reestablishment of peace and said, “While these political initiatives continue, I am very happy to see that Turkey initiated a humanitarian aid operation immediately. I believe that Turkey will continue this operation in the coming days. Turkey has always provided its peaceful support to people in need and it is displaying this in the Caucasus in Georgia. This should serve as an example for everyone”.

Regarding the pipeline issue Mr. Gül said, “There are no problems in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines. There are no problems in the Georgia section either. These pipelines were constructed for entirely peaceful purposes. It is out of the question that anybody would target them”. (*Sabah*)

WE ARE TWO BIG AND POWERFUL COUNTRIES

14 August

While indicating that Turkey was for a solution provided by diplomatic means in the Iranian nuclear issue, President Abdullah Gül said, “We want the solution to Iran's nuclear program issue to be a solution that will pay attention to the international community's concerns while protecting the legal rights of Iran in the context of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty”.

Underlining that good neighborhood relations between Turkey and Iran have continued for 400 years, Mr. Gül said “Together with President Ahmadinejad, we mutually assured that our relations are based on the principles of non-interference in each others domestic affairs, mutual respect, good neighborhood and cooperation, and that they aim to serve the benefit and stability of our region and our two societies.

Mr. Gül stated that during his meeting with Mr. Ahmadinejad, they discussed regional issues and Iran’s nuclear program case. Mr. Gül said “We are in favor of a solution that will respect the concerns of the international community and concurrently protect the rights of Iran in the context of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. As you know, Turkey hosted one of the meetings between Javier Solana and his Iranian counterpart Dr. Laricani in order to encourage the diplomatic process. We told our Iranian friends that Turkey is ready for such initiatives, encouraging the diplomatic process as in the past”. (*Sabah*)

THE KREMLIN APPROVED OF THE CAUCASUS ALLIANCE IDEA

14 August

The Russian government showed the importance it gives to Turkey in the solution of the crisis in Caucasus with an extraordinary protocol. The green light was given to the Caucasus Alliance proposal of Prime Minister Erdoğan during his meeting with Russian high officials.

Moscow, which looks unfavorably upon the West’s Georgia-oriented diplomacy, showed that it gave more importance to Turkey’s mediating efforts for the crisis in Caucasus with a very rare diplomatic protocol. Prime Minister Erdoğan met with Russian President Dmitri Medvedev, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov and other high officials at a working dinner. After the meeting, Mr. Erdoğan declared that Turkey and Russia approved the efforts regarding the establishment of a Caucasus Stability Pact. Mr. Erdoğan said, “The work

between Russia and Turkey will be conducted by the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs”.

Stressing that the visit was realized during the Georgia crisis, Mr. Erdoğan said “I will continue to Tbilisi after Moscow. We will meet Mr. Saakashvili as well. There is also a 6-point plan initiated by France and the U.S. in order to sustain peace. We will also try to contribute to the reestablishment of stability and security”. (*Hurriyet*)

SUPPORT TO THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF GEORGIA

15 August

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan met with his Georgian counterpart Mikheil Saakashvili yesterday in Tbilisi. During the meeting Turkey once more emphasized that it supports the territorial integrity of Georgia. In the joint press conference Mr. Erdoğan gave his support to the claims of the Tbilisi government over the secessionist South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions. He said, “We are for the protection of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia which has been recognized by the UN Security Council”. During the meeting between the two leaders, the situation of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and the “Caucasus alliance” project previously mentioned by Mr. Erdoğan were discussed. Upon a question about the BTC pipeline and sustaining energy security, Mr. Erdoğan said that this project is a mutual concern for Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia and added that the measures that will be taken for energy security should consequently be decided by these three countries.

Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that he would visit Azerbaijan and discuss this issue with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev as well. Stating that Turkey’s aim is to sustain peace in the whole region, Mr. Erdoğan stressed the importance of establishing a Stability and Cooperation Platform in Caucasus. Reminding that he had discussed the project with Russian President Dmitri Medvedev as well, Mr. Erdoğan

stated that Turkey hoped to see Georgian participation in this organization. (*Zaman*)

ERDOĞAN: ARMENIA SHOULD BE IN THIS ALLIANCE TOO

15 August

Returning to Turkey after his visits to Russia and Georgia, Prime Minister Erdoğan said that including Azerbaijan and Armenia in the future “Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform” would contribute to the peace in the region. Mr. Erdoğan stated that Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov would begin the process next week.

Mr. Erdoğan said “We are planning an Azerbaijan trip next week. We want Azerbaijan to be in this organization too. I also believe that Armenia should be in this formation. There is of course the Minsk process. Among its first hand conductors are the U.S., France and Russia. However in this 13-year-old process there are still no solutions. We want this process to be swift and we want to find a solution immediately. Solving the Nagorno-Karabakh problem will pave the way to normalize the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Of course another step is the problem between Russian Federation and Georgia. I believe that the new Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform will eventually help overcome this problem as well. When there is no peace, there cannot be stability and confidence. When we accomplish this, serious cooperation and peace can be achieved.” (*Yeni Safak*)

CONTROVERSIAL GUEST IN THE TURKEY-AFRICA SUMMIT

17 August

Leaders of the 43 African countries together with their delegations arrived to Istanbul for the “Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit”. During the three-day-summit, which will be hosted by Turkish President Gül, Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign minister Babacan, African guests will find the chance to work as well as visit Istanbul.

One of the most interesting guests of the summit is the Sudanese President Omar Al-Basher who has been pointed out as responsible for the massacres in Darfur by the International court of Justice in Haag.

Having embraced the “Africa Action Plan” in 1998 and made the most visible opening to the region diplomatically and economically, Turkey showed the importance it gives to Africa by declaring the year 2005 as “Year of Africa”. After the African Union accepted Turkey as a ‘strategic partner’ in 2008, the accelerating cooperation process between Turkey and Africa will reach its peak with the Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit being realized with the slogan ‘Cooperation and Partnership for a Common Future’. The summit is an opportunity for Turkey to improve its relations with Africa as well as an opportunity to gather more points for the candidacy of the UN Security Council temporary membership. (*Radikal*)

TWO MESSAGES FROM GÜL

17 August

In an interview with The Guardian, President Abdullah Gül said that he did not share Mr. Ahmedinejad’s ideas and indicated that the U.S. cannot shape world politics on its own anymore. Speaking to the reporter of The Guardian Stephen Kinzer, Mr. Gül said that the developments in the Caucasus are signs of a multi-polar world. Mr. Gül said that the Russian-Georgian conflict showed that the U.S. cannot shape the world politics on its own anymore and added that Washington needs to start sharing power with other countries. Mr. Gül said, “There are great nations, big crowds. Some unbelievable developments are taking place in some parts of the world. Because of these reasons, we have to avoid unilateral behaviors, and instead act in union and arrive at decisions jointly. We have to consult the world. A new world order is emerging”.

Mr. Gül also mentioned the tension between Iran and the West regarding Iran’s nuclear program.

He said that he did not agree with the “exclusion, sanction and punishment” option that the U.S. and Israel are using against Tehran. Mr. Gül said “There are a lot of problems such as the nuclear issue, Iraq, the Caucasus, Afghanistan and Iran has an effect on each of them; that is why we are speaking to them”. He said that Iran had the right to have access to nuclear energy; however he underlined that Turkey is opposed to Iranian possession of nuclear weapons. President Gül said, “We do not want to see weapons of mass destruction in the region and in the neighborhood”.

Regarding a possible attack from the U.S. against Iran, Mr. Gül said, “I do not want to consider this. Everyone should learn a lesson from Iraq. Diplomatic means are always preferable to harsh solutions”. Mr. Gül indicated that he did not share Mr. Ahmedinejad’s ideas, but argued that establishing good relations contributes to regional stability.

Stating that Turkey could play a bridge role

between the West and problematic areas to the East, president Gül said that the main agenda of Turkey is to join European Union. Mr. Gül said “I want to see Turkey as an island in which the democracy is comparable to the European standards and the free market economy is functioning healthily. This will be an invaluable gift to the region and to the world, enhancing prospects for peace. Such a Turkey will be an inspiring element for many. While we are transforming into that we cannot ignore our natural connections, our relations with other countries and interests. Turkey has a positive effect on Muslim countries, Central Asian, Caucasian, Middle Eastern and other countries... Turkey is being watched with admiration”.
(*Milliyet*)

