

The Turkey Analyst

BI-WEEKLY BRIEFING
VOL. 1 NO. 18
21 November 2008

ANALYSIS

THE SEASON OF THE AKP'S DISORIENTATION.....3

Haluk Sahin

Turkey is moving towards local elections in March of 2009 in a state of disorientation and flux. The ideological deck of Turkish politics is once again about to be reshuffled. The ruling AKP's room for political maneuver is seriously curtailed, which creates new opportunities for the opposition parties.

KURDISH PROBLEM FORCES ERDOGAN TO SHIFT TO THE RIGHT.....7

M. K. Kaya

Faced with an increasingly intractable problem of PKK terrorism, coupled with increasing tensions in society between citizens of ethnic Turkish and Kurdish origin, the governing AKP appears to have moved to the right. Erdogan's rhetoric has become increasingly nationalistic, aligning itself more with the military brass on issues concerning the PKK, the Kurdish question in general, and Iraq. This has led to some discontent among ethnic Kurdish forces within the AKP, which have been an important support base for the party. The split was most clearly visible in the resignation of the AKP's deputy Chairman and prominent politician of Kurdish origin, Dengir Firat. This likely has important implications for the AKP's electoral hopes in upcoming local elections, not least in the Southeast.

THE FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW

I. What the Columnists Say10

During the last fortnight, the plight of the discriminated Alevi minority caught the attention of several columnists. The statements of Prime Minister Erdogan about Iran and the question of nuclear arms were commented upon. The wide-ranging debate about the heritage of Kemal Atatürk continued. And the columnists try to make sense of the ideological sea-change underway in the ruling AKP and the opposition CHP respectively.

II. Domestic Politics.....12

II. Foreign Relations.....14

THE TURKEY ANALYST

Editorial Board

Svante E. Cornell, Editor-in-Chief
Halil Magnus Karaveli, Managing Editor
M. K. Kaya, Associate Editor
Elin Kinnander, Assistant Editor

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

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

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

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

Submission Guidelines:

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

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

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

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

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

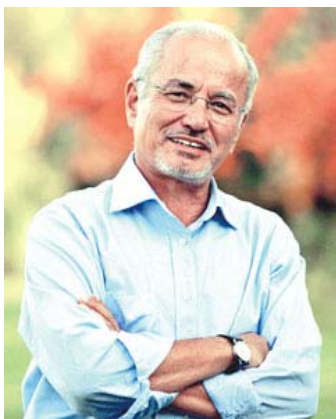
Those interested in submitting an article to the *Turkey Analyst* should send their submission, or an article query describing the main arguments of the article, together with a CV to: info@silkroadstudies.org.

Editorial Coorespondence should be direct to:

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

THE SEASON OF THE AKP'S DISORIENTATION

Haluk Şahin



Turkey is moving towards local elections in March of 2009 in a state of disorientation and flux. The ideological deck of Turkish politics is once again about to be reshuffled. The ruling AKP's room for political maneuver is seriously curtailed, which creates new opportunities for the opposition parties.

BACKGROUND: Nothing is where it is supposed to be – or where it was surmised to be after the decisive victory of the neo-Islamic Justice and Development Party, AKP in 2007. It was thought, or feared, that having acquired a strong electoral mandate, the party would now feel free to implement its “real agenda”, especially after the election Abdullah Gül as president, despite strong resistance from the secularist quarters.

During the first five years of AKP rule, the office of the presidency, then held by Ahmet Necdet Sezer, was considered to be the final safety valve of the secularist system. Almost anything could happen now that Sezer was gone. As result, the attempt by the re-elected AKP to draft a brand new constitution was perceived in this framework and led to automatic resistance. As the country was polarized, the discussion was immediately politicized. The opposition narrowed its objections to a limited number of proposed articles that had a bearing on secularism; the foremost of which was the ban on Islamic headscarves in university campuses. This being the traditional red line between the staunch secularists and the dedicated

Islamists, the debate became increasingly acrimonious. The AKP, which had stayed clear of the issue because of its potential ramifications during its first term, seemed hesitant until one day Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan upped the ante in an ad-lib speech by saying “What if headscarves are a political symbol. Such symbols cannot be banned in democracies!” These remarks generated a fierce debate. The Nationalist Movement Party, the MHP, also favoring the lifting of the ban, quickly extended a helping hand to the AKP. The AKP could not back out. The constitution was hastily amended.

However, collaboration with the MHP in the National Assembly proved near-disastrous for the AKP in the medium term. Not only was the constitutional amendment nullified as unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court, it was also placed in the AKP file as strong evidence of its anti-secularist intentions. The AKP barely survived the case for its closure in the Constitutional Court, where the Court did find it guilty of anti-secularist activities.

These two decisions redrew the Turkish political map and has taken the wind out of AKP's sails. In the new map, the AKP's room for maneuver seems to be seriously curtailed. The headscarf issue is even more risky now than before, after the rulings of the Constitutional court. Having been shown a yellow card, so to speak, by the high court, the AKP has to watch its steps in matters that are related to religion and secularism.

What is even more important, the Constitutional Court has made it clear that all constitutional amendments passed by the National Assembly are under its jurisdiction lest they contain elements pertaining to the first, four "unchangeable" articles of the constitution. The AKP's supporters have objected to this interpretation, arguing that this

would be tantamount to a government by judges rather than by the parliament which represents the people's will. Others, supporting the decision, have responded by stating that such judicial limitations are a natural outcome of the checks and balances of modern democracies. In either case, in terms of maneuvering room and compared to what it enjoyed when it came to power in 2002, the AKP has effectively lost ground.

Obviously, Prime Minister Erdoğan is frustrated, as he is able to do nothing more than advice patience to his grass roots backers (a virtue, though, in Islamic faith) "until the fruit ripens". His intellectual supporters, both Islamist and liberal, on the other hand, have begun work to remove the immediate obstacles, i.e. the powers of



the Constitutional Court and the “unchangeable” articles of the constitution. There are even those who go so far as calling for the outright abolition of the Constitutional Court in a new constitution. Likewise, the existence of “unchangeable articles” in a democratic constitution is questioned, although those who do question them have been quick to point out that they have no quarrel with the content itself of those articles. (That Turkey is a secular, democratic, social republic adhering to rule of law.) Notably, the Chief Justice of the Constitutional court, Hasim Kilic, has himself called for a discussion about the “unchangeable” articles. It looks like this debate will simmer in the backburner for a while.

And while the debate simmers and the fruit “ripens”, to cite Prime Minister Erdogan, what is the governing party to do? Just fill time? In a dynamic society like Turkey, where high level crisis management skills are constantly called for, disorientation may prove costly, especially at a time when a global economic disaster is unfolding. During its first term, or rather during the first three years of its first term, the AKP was lucky enough to have inherited a program for action from the outside: The economic stability program of former Economy minister Kemal Derviş, based on World Bank-IMF precepts, and the political reform program of the European Union, comprising of the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria. Yet, once these goals were achieved, the AKP started to waver as if it did not know what more to do in way of economic and political reforms. Now, this uncertainty has been further exacerbated as a result of the restraints that the recent rulings of the Constitutional Court inevitably imply.

IMPLICATIONS: The AKP seems to be zigzagging or spinning to the right; most notably, it is using a fiercely nationalist rhetoric against the Kurdish nationalists. Some liberal supporters have

expressed disappointment in Erdoğan for “cozying up” to the military on the Kurdish issue. The disappointed liberals say the party of their hopes, which was making a “heroic” move against the “deep state”, has now been “nationalized” by the state.

What they are referring to is obviously the Ergenekon case, allegedly filed to prosecute (former) members of the Turkish deep state who stand accused of having tried to create an atmosphere of anarchy, in turn to pave the way for a military coup. Prime Minister Erdoğan has given strong support to the case, even stating that he is indeed one of its chief prosecutors. Meanwhile, the leader of the opposition Republican people’s party (CHP), Deniz Baykal, has declared himself a defender of the “wrongly accused”. Thus, the case is deeply politicized. And it has come under criticism for dilution and lack of focus, as wave of arrests have expanded to such unlikely hitmen and coup-mongers as film stars and transvestite singers.



Operations against the deep state are obviously always sensitive and risky undertakings. The question “How deep should we go?” is intricately

problematic. If the cut does not go deep enough, then the malignant growth cannot be removed. If it goes too deep, one runs the risk of harming adjacent organs. There is always a real possibility that the growth may have spread too far or that the operation may get out of control. One of the hitmen of the secret paramilitary groups that carried out death squad raids against the PKK and other leftist terrorist organizations in the mid-1990s, when Tansu Çiller was Prime Minister, recently appeared on a television newscast and said he was ready to pay a price for what he had done, provided his superiors who gave him his orders were also held accountable. He said those superiors included civilians and politicians. Who might they be? Police chiefs, governors, ministers, even prime ministers? When Pandora's box is opened, it is probably impossible to control the chain of culpability. It is likely that other alleged hitmen who are standing trial in the Ergenekon case may use the same reasoning if they conclude that they are being singled out for the sins of others. It is highly unlikely that the political establishment – of which the AKP is increasingly becoming a part – is brave enough to go that far.

Anyway, the case is proceeding ponderously with lessening public interest and is likely to last for several months, if not years. In the meantime, the AKP's state of disorientation and shift to the nationalist right seems to have created maneuvering room for the opposition parties. The main opposition Republican people's party's invitation to devout believers in Islamic garb to join their ranks is one example. Likewise, the MHP's changed stance vis-à-vis the Alevis has come as a surprise to many. Obviously, both

parties are trying to expand their political base at the expense of the disoriented AKP. The AKP's monopoly of flags may be coming to an end.

CONCLUSIONS: In my book “Liberaller, Ulusalçılar, İslamcılar ve Ötekiler” (Liberals, nationalists, Islamists and the Others) I pointed out that one of the reasons behind the huge success of the AKP was its zeal for capturing political flags of all colors, whether deserved or not. The party unabashedly reached out in all directions. As a result, it seemed to be marching behind many flags including those of “religious freedom”, economic development, membership in the European Union, democracy, modernization, liberalization, even social justice. By contrast, the CHP, the traditional agent of Westernization and modernization in Turkey, confined itself to a single flag, that of secularism, while the MHP stood behind its standard banner, Turkish nationalism. The recent moves by CHP and MHP indicate that they are no longer pleased with this imbalance. They are mustering up courage to engage in forays into new lands.

Are these just cosmetic moves on the eve of the local elections or is the ideological deck of Turkish politics being reshuffled? It seems likely that the latter is true, even though we have to wait until we have the results of the March 29 elections to make more definitive statements.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Haluk Sahin is Professor of Journalism at Istanbul Bilgi University and a columnist in the daily Radikal. He has recently published “Liberaller, Ulusalçılar, İslamcılar ve Ötekiler”, a book about the ideological paradigm shift in Turkish politics.

KURDISH PROBLEM FORCES ERDOGAN TO SHIFT TO THE RIGHT

M.K. Kaya

Faced with an increasingly intractable problem of PKK terrorism, coupled with increasing tensions in society between citizens of ethnic Turkish and Kurdish origin, the governing AKP appears to have moved to the right. Erdogan's rhetoric has become increasingly nationalistic, aligning itself more with the military brass on issues concerning the PKK, the Kurdish question in general, and Iraq. This has led to some discontent among ethnic Kurdish forces within the AKP, which have been an important support base for the party. The split was most clearly visible in the resignation of the AKP's deputy Chairman and prominent politician of Kurdish origin, Dengir Firat. This likely has important implications for the AKP's electoral hopes in upcoming local elections, not least in the Southeast.

BACKGROUND: Though the latest period of the Ottoman Empire can be taken as the era marking the beginning of the Kurdish separatist movements, the terrorist activities of PKK started in 1984 dragged the situation to another dimension. PKK, being recognized as a terrorist organization by Turkey as well as the international community, made a significant impact on Turkey's internal, external, social and economical agenda. While the terror campaign of PKK cost many civilians and security forces to their lives, also country's resources were allocated to sustain the fight against terrorism and millions of people had to migrate from the east to the west.

In the beginning of 1999, the activities of the PKK slowed down following the capture of Abdullah Ocalan -the leader of PKK- with a carefully planned operation. However, starting with the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, the PKK gradually revamped its activities. Unquestionably, Turkey's failure to calculate the changing balance in the region following the Iraq War contributed to this outcome. When the Turkish Parliament on March 1, 2003, refused to allow U.S. troops to use Turkish

soil in the invasion of Iraq, Turkey effectively accepted its isolation from developments in the region. So while Northern Iraqi Kurds, being in full alliance with the U.S., empowered their autonomy, the PKK also started to flourish in the power vacuum of northern Iraq.

The election of the AKP in 2002 also had significant impact on the region and on the Kurdish movement. In the Milli Görüş or National Outlook Movement, from which the AKP stems, Kurds have occupied important positions. Moreover, the Kurds and Kurdish sheiks have been influential in the Naksibendi religious order, which has been influential on the Milli Görüş movement. Taking its cue from Milli Görüş, AKP elites always kept close relations with the Kurds. With a self-perception as being among the aggrieved, the AKP elites accepted a sort of parallelism between their perceived suffering on account of religious issues and the situation of the Kurds. This perception boosted support for the AKP in the region and in the 2007 elections, where the AKP emerged as the leading party among the ethnically Kurdish parts of the population. The

many social, political and economic programs that were launched by the government played a role in this regard, as did the AKP's decision not to order the Turkish Armed Forces to conduct operations against PKK camps in Northern Iraq in spite of increasing PKK activities. This repudiation of a military solution seemed to have a positive impact



on the regional population's view of the AKP.

However, the further increase in terrorist activities after the elections, which escalated to include ambushes on military posts, led to a backlash with popular demonstrations against the PKK across the country, which even risked leading to tensions in society. (See 10 October issue of the *Turkey Analyst*) This cornered the AKP, leading it to pass legislation in September 2007 allowing the military to conduct cross-border operations against terrorist targets abroad. In the framework of Turkey's alliance with the U.S. and in coordination with U.S. forces, a series of operations against the PKK were conducted in the first months of 2008. Since then, the Turkish Armed Forces continued to conduct operations in the region intermittently.

IMPLICATIONS: As the PKK activities increased further in the Summer months of 2008,

the military responded with intense military operations and Prime Minister Erdogan began to use more assertive rhetoric against the PKK. In early November, Erdogan held a speech in Van, where he emphasized "One flag, one nation, one country", adding that people uncomfortable with this could leave the country. This statement,

subsequently repeated to the AKP parliamentary group, was criticized in some quarters as a duplicate of the traditional official ideology, and Erdogan was said to be distancing himself from the reformist line. The Chief of the General Staff's briefing on terrorism in the council of ministers, and Erdogan's visit to the Egridir commando training camp together with prominent ministers further reinforced this perception.

The military operations, as well as the increasingly nationalist rhetoric on the part of the prime minister, generated visible discomfort and dissent among some of the AKP's deputies of ethnic Kurdish origin, leading the issue to become a contentious issue in intra-party discussions. It was not long before this led to staff changes in the party's upper echelons. Early November saw the resignation of Dengir Mir Mehmet Firat, the AKP's second-in-command. Firat, a deputy of Kurdish origin, had long suffered from corruption allegations unveiled by the opposition. Though he stated health problems as the reason for his resignation, there is little doubt that Erdogan's rhetoric had disturbed the Kurdish deputies and the Kurdish population in general. The protests organized by supporters of the PKK and the legal DTP pro-Kurdish political party, held during Erdogan's visit to Southeastern Anatolia, were an indicator of this situation.

Of course, for Turkish politics, the reaction of the Kurdish deputies within the AKP holds much greater importance than that of PKK supporters. The PKK-DTP line, which claims to represent the Kurdish people, proved unable to drag itself out of its association with terrorism and violence. On the other hand, many Kurdish deputies in various political parties believe that it is possible to gain cultural rights through democratic reforms. Indeed, during the five years that the AKP has been in power, there were important developments improving the status of Kurdish language and culture. However, the Prime Minister's current stance seems to be pushing moderate Kurdish deputies to search for other alternatives, where they can express their views. In this context, this raises the potential for the establishment of a moderate Kurdish party, perhaps issued from the Islamic conservative movement, which could provide its alternative versions on how the problems of the Kurdish-inhabited parts of Turkey should be addressed.

Prime Minister Erdogan stated two important aims in his political agenda for the 2009 local elections: capturing the municipalities of Izmir and Diyarbakir. Izmir has been dominated by leftist parties, while Diyarbakir is held by pro-Kurdish DTP. However, it is evident that Erdogan's increasingly nationalist rhetoric undermines the latter aim. Indeed, recent opinion polls show that the Prime Minister's popularity in the region is decreasing. Notwithstanding the decrease in the polls, there are four months left until the elections, a long period in Turkish politics.

Following the PKK's ambush of a military post in Aktutun in September, in which 17 servicemen were killed, the government ratcheted up its diplomacy, leading to a trilateral summit on PKK terrorism in Baghdad in November with U.S. and Iraqi representatives. The latest feeling in Ankara,

however, is that no concrete results have been accomplished. In turn, that raises the issue of an increase in the military's authority – something that the Armed Forces are eagerly awaiting. However, these pose problems because it would not be in line with the EU reform package, and moreover would likely prove harmful for AKP's credibility in the Southeast on the eve of 2009 local elections.

CONCLUSIONS: It appears unlikely that Turkey could provide a comprehensive solution to the Kurdish question in the near future. New reforms in line with Turkey's EU membership process, which notably lacks the enthusiasm displayed until 2005, do not seem possible currently. Meanwhile, Erdogan has clearly ruled out any prospect of negotiating with a terrorist organization. Being stuck between Kurds, general society and the state, Erdogan appears to seek to gain some more time until the local elections. Public speeches and meetings will not be enough to solve the problem.

Having been punished by the constitutional court for being the focal point of anti-secularist activities, the AKP now wants to respond through a victory at the ballot box. Erdogan's aim is to emerge victorious from the local elections with an increased share of votes compared to the 22 July general elections. But Erdogan's maneuvers to gain more time in such an unpredictable issue may not provide the expected results. On the other hand, being exhausted by the "one man" policy of Erdogan, Kurdish deputies may eventually search for a more appropriate platform. Meanwhile, the PKK question remains tightly connected to developments in Iraq. The PKK was rejuvenated after the U.S. came to the region, and Turkey will certainly watch for signs of a potential U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, and take appropriate measures.

THE FORTNIGHT IN REVIEW

SECTION I: WHAT THE COLUMNISTS SAY

During the last fortnight, the plight of the discriminated Alevi minority caught the attention of several columnists. The statements of Prime Minister Erdogan about Iran and the question of nuclear arms were commented upon. The wide-ranging debate about the heritage of Kemal Atatürk continued. And the columnists try to make sense of the ideological sea-change underway in the ruling AKP and the opposition CHP respectively.

BIRAND: TURKISH BLACKS WITHOUT AN OBAMA: THE ALEVIS

Mehmet Ali Birand of Posta calls attention to the “real blacks” of Turkey, the oppressed Alevi minority. There are around 6 to 7 million of them, he argues, which may be a low estimate. When fundamentalist religious sentiments run high, the Alevis tend to be viewed as the “safety valve” of the secular system. Yet, in reality they are systematically discriminated against. The state is in the hands of Sunni Muslims, and the Sunnis tend to dislike the Alevis whom they don’t even regard as real Muslims. The Sunni state does not allow Alevis to become Generals or provincial governors. It has tried to force them to become Sunnis, using the education system. For many years the Alevis remained silent. Lately however, they have begun to raise their voices, but they have never turned violent, although they are now taking to the streets. The state should listen and accommodate the Alevi demands, before the Alevis lose their patience. Their call for equality is the most reasonable, as is the

demand that the compulsory education in the tenets of Sunni Islam is abolished.

GÜRSEL: A PRO-IRANIAN PRIME MINISTER

Kadri Gürsel in Milliyet writes that the recent declarations of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the United States about the issue of Iran and nuclear weapons are astounding. Erdogan’s statement that those countries who deny Iran the right to acquire nuclear weapons should first of all rid themselves of their own nuclear armory, was worthy of a leader of a small Middle Eastern country which has slid under the hegemony of Iran, rather than of a leader of a country which is supposed to be part of the Western alliance. By openly siding with Iran, Erdogan has effectively sunk his own initiative to act as a mediator between the United States and Iran, a role which presupposes impartiality. However, Turkey would anyhow had had difficulty playing such a role, as the country would ultimately be expected to show solidarity with the alliance of which it is officially a member.

ALKAN: ARE KEMALISTS REALLY FASCISTS?

Türker Alkan in *Radikal* notes that Atatürk (the founder of the Turkish republic) and the Kemalists are currently subject to harsh criticism. That is only to be considered normal. Yet, what is not normal is that Atatürk and Kemalists are caricatured, that they are portrayed in ways that have little bearing to reality. According to the caricature, a Kemalist is by definition hostile to religion, a believer in extreme étatism, a fanatic nationalist which is dead against the European Union, who is responsible for all previous military coups in Turkey and who is feverishly praying for another coup, who is uninformed of world events and intrinsically unable to adjust as the world and Turkey evolves. Obviously, there are Kemalists who fit this caricature. But, let us be reasonable. Is it really in accordance with realities to put all Kemalists in such a category? Current Kemalists aside, is it even true when it comes to the Kemalists of the time when Turkey was a one party state? Wasn't Atatürk himself opposed to the military's involvement in politics? And shouldn't we give credit to the fact that the early republic took steps that paved the way for democracy - the abolition of the khalifate, women's rights, secularism - at a time when the international climate favored anything but democratization?

ÜLSEVER: WHY HAS THE AKP CHANGED?

Cüneyt Ülsever in *Hürriyet* notes that the ruling AKP has increasingly become the defender of the status quo, that the party has adopted a nationalist rhetoric in the Kurdish question, thereby aligning itself with the armed forces. The change of the AKP has bitterly disappointed its erstwhile liberal supporters. There are those who explain the change by referring to the fact the Prime

Minister is supposedly worn out, unable to produce new policies, and that cozying up with the military is the easy way out. You could also say that he has in fact never been a true liberal. All these explanations may hold a certain grain of truth. Yet, I believe that one explanation matters more than anything else: the upcoming municipal elections. In that perspective, Erdogan has concluded that he has nothing more to gain from using a liberal rhetoric of which he has already made most of the use he can.

KORU: IS THE CHP BECOMING A NEW AKP?

Fehmi Kuru of *Yeni Safak* notes that the opposition Republican people's party, CHP, traditionally an ardent supporter of secularism, is inviting women wearing the Islamic chador as party members. Kuru writes that the change in the behavior of the CHP cannot be viewed separately from what is concurrently going on in the AKP. The CHP takes on the traditional position of the AKP just as the latter party is accused of losing its ideological bearings, as it is increasingly perceived as the party of the state system, and not of the popular masses. Is it a coincidence that CHP adopts a line that will make it look sympathetic to the broad masses, just as the AKP is assimilated by the state? It may be conspiratorial, but one has to admit that changing the "chemistry" of the AKP, while having the CHP abandon its principles, makes perfect sense. Of course, that presupposes the existence of some power that would be capable of steering the two parties. Such a power does not appear to exist. Yet, I wonder what the military is making of the change of the CHP? Is the General staff about to submit an e-memorandum to the CHP as well? There is only one party that can derail this scenario, and that is the AKP. And it should do it.

SECTION II: DOMESTIC POLITICS

THE FINANCIAL CRISIS HAS ALSO HIT TURKEY

In a conference on Wednesday the World Bank's director Ulrich Zachau claimed that Turkey needs \$130 billion in foreign financing during 2009 to be able to pay back debts. The World Bank sees no problem in managing this debt. The global financial crisis has also hit Turkey and investors do not want to invest in countries that would be unable to finance their large account deficits. Turkey's current account deficit is expected to reach 50 billion dollars in 2008. Hürriyet 12/11-08

VECDİ GÖNÜL CLAIMED THAT ARMENIA SUPPORTS PKK

The Turkish defense minister Vecdi Gönül who participated in a European Union defense minister's meeting gave a speech at the Turkish Embassy in Brussels on the anniversary of the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on Nov. 10. He claimed that if Greeks and Armenians were still living in the country, Turkey would not be the same nation-state it is today. He also indicated that Armenia supports the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). His speech met harsh criticism from intellectuals and civil society organizations and he responded to this by saying that he had been misunderstood. Gönül was an unofficial candidate for the presidency in 2007 and some say that he told his close circle that his wife doesn't wear a headscarf and that his relationship with the military is good so that he could become president. Zaman 12/11-08

A NEW TESTIMONY IN THE COURT CASE AGAINST ERGENEKON

A testimony was given yesterday concerning the court case against the Ergenekon conspiracy. It was stated that the hand grenades that were found in the summer of 2007 inside a house in the Ümraniye district in Istanbul belonged to Oktay Yildirim, a retired, non-commissioned army officer. It was in the 13th hearing in the Ergenekon trial that Ali Yiğit, one of the suspects, claimed that the hand grenades that were found belonged to Yildirim. Yiğit also claimed that he had been threatened to not testify that the explosives belonged to the retired officer. He claims that he was even warned that his one-and-a-half-year-old son would be killed if he did not change his testimony.

Yiğit denied all of the allegations against him and argued that "neither my lawyer nor I saw those hand grenades [in the Ümraniye house]. Zaman 14/11-08

PEOPLE CAN BE PUNISHED FOR PARTICIPATING IN PKK SUPPORTED DEMONSTRATIONS

The Supreme Court of Appeals issued a verdict punishing people who participated in PKK supported demonstrations, as if they are PKK members. The decision refers to the Turkish Penal Code, which states, "People who are not members of an organization but commit crimes in its name are to be punished as if they were members". The court was examining a case of a teenager who participated in an illegal demonstration in December 2006. A local court had convicted the youth for participating in an illegal demonstration, but the Supreme Court of Appeals has ruled that he should be punished for being a member of the PKK. A lawyer and deputy for the Democratic Society Party (DTP), Hasip Kaplan, said that if courts reach verdicts on this basis, their rulings will be rejected by the European Court of Human Rights. Zaman 17/11-08

EVERYONE HAS A PLACE IN CHP, DESPITE THEIR WAY OF DRESSING

At a meeting last weekend where the CHP leader Deniz Baykal held a speech, several women with headscarf and in the Islamic chador attended the meeting and a lot of criticism was pointed at Baykal and questions were asked about his stand on the headscarf issue. Baykal responded by saying that politics must be above questions concerning people's way of dressing and people are the same no matter how they look. He stressed that cultural conservatism should not be confused with making a plea for political Islam. After the meeting Baykal said that regular people, despite their culture, way of dressing, religion or the way they decide to live, has a place in CHP. Baykal was very pleased that women with headscarf came to the meeting and stated that people feel deceived by AKP. The AKP won many votes because it gave priority to religious questions, but now people is turning to us and it's important that we treat them in a good way. The way people choose to dress is not important when it comes to politics, the important thing is that everyone has the right to participate in

political activities. AKP has been afraid that their supporters will turn to CHP and have with all their strength tried to prevent this from happening. Milliyet 19/11-08

PEOPLE MAY HAVE LOST THEIR TRUST FOR AKP

A poll of the Turkish people's political opinions showed that people's highest political priority right now is the financial crisis. The poll showed that the criticisms that have been leveled at AKP have begun to make people doubt the party. The priority for the people right now is to find a solution to the financial crisis so that the prices on the market will not increase, to fight and find a solution to separatist terrorism and to stop the abuse of authority. There was a small proportion that answered that the priority should be on the Turkish foreign policy. 61,4 percent believes that the allegations pointed at AKP, that it has abused its authority, is true and 30,5 percent believes the allegations to be false. These figures may indicate that AKP is losing ground among the electorate. The opinion poll also shows that people are worried about the risk that Turkey will be divided. 54,3 percent believes such a risk exists. Radikal

TRT WILL START BROADCASTS IN KURDISH NEXT YEAR

The Turkish state channel will begin broadcasts in Kurdish next year which will be the end of an era in which the use of Kurdish was prohibited after the 1980 military coup. The Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) will dedicate one of its five channels to fulltime broadcasts in Kurdish and other languages. Since 2004 Turkey has aired programs in Kurdish, Arabic, Bosnian and Circassian with every language broadcasted 2 hours a week. But this scheme proved to be insufficient. TRT will start with a channel with full-time broadcasting in Kurdish and then later on add Arabic and Persian sometime next year. A Kurdish intellectual, Ziya Ekinci, said that broadcasting in Kurdish will significantly contribute to the establishment of social peace in Turkey. AKP and DTP support this new suggestion with a Kurdish speaking channel while the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) is opposed to it. Even if DTP supports this development it claims that the broadcasting in Kurdish is "unconstitutional". The DTP Co-chairwoman Emine Ayna, said "if the intention is to

only broadcast this will be against the Constitution. If the broadcast is made in order to strengthen fundamental rights and freedoms, then constitutional guarantees should be provided for this". Kurdish intellectuals support this development and indicate that this move will make Kurdish citizens believe the state places importance on them. Subtitles in the Kurdish programs will be necessary since Kurdish dialects in Turkey vary considerably and these subtitles are expected to help standardize Kurdish in the long run. Zaman 20/11-08

PRESIDENT ABDULLAH GÜL HAD A CONVERSATION WITH BARACK OBAMA

The Turkish president Abdullah Gül had a discussion with President-elect Barack Obama which lasted for about half an hour. During that discussion Obama stressed that Turkey is an important ally for the U.S. and that he was following Turkey with appreciation. Obama supports Turkey's fight against terrorism as long as it is in the framework of self-defense. Gül was very pleased with the discussion and thanked Obama and also stated that "As two close allies, Turkey and the United States have a close relationship based on comradeship due to mutual vital interests. We accord a lot of value on our friendship". Sabah 20/11-08

BUSINESSMEN WILL NOT BE ABLE TO THREATEN THE GOVERNMENT, ERDOGAN STATED

During a speech concerning the financial crisis Prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated that TÜSIAD (Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association) should help the government and that the businessmen will not succeed in threatening this government like they managed to do with the last one. They will not be able to threaten this government by saying that they could remove us from office. Erdogan continued by saying that he will not give after for this kind of threats and that it is the people who have elected him and they are also the ones who can remove him from his duty as the prime minister. Erdogan claimed that if AKP does not win the next election he will step down as the party leader. Milliyet 24/11-08

SECTION III: FOREIGN RELATIONS

“A EUROPE WITHOUT TURKEY IS NOT POSSIBLE”

The Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi stated that “a Europe without Turkey is not possible, Turkey is the most obvious example of the possibility of compatibility between secular and democratic institutions and the Turkish model of Islam, and giving Turkey a cold hand would nurture fundamentalism”. In Izmir today the first intergovernmental summit between Italy and Turkey will begin. Berlusconi continued by saying that “in Turkey’s European Union process, being a secular and Muslim country is one of the most important factors, and leaving Turkey outside Europe would be an unforgivable move” and “Europe is the natural destination point of Turkish democracy, considering a Europe without Turkey is not possible”. EU has expressed concerns about the involvement of the Turkish Armed Forces in the political life and Berlusconi commented on this by saying that the military in Turkey are the guarantors of secularism in the country. He also complimented the Turkish Prime Minister by saying that “he is a charismatic, strong and balanced leader, he has also won over Italians with his love for his family and for football”. *Sabah 12/11-08*

TURKEY HAS TWO MAIN GOALS WITH ITS IRAQ POLICY

The rapprochement between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds can signify a victory of pragmatism over ultra nationalism on both sides. The International Crisis Group released a report on Thursday that said that the situation was still fragile and that the current rapprochement is not enough to solve all problems, but supported the dialogue between the two sides. Turkey has regularly tried to defeat the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in northern Iraq, but at the same time Turkey has initiated a public dialogue with the Iraqi Kurdish administration running the region. The report concluded that Turkey’s Iraq policy is based on two main goals, first, preserving the war-torn country’s territorial integrity and second, fighting the PKK. The secularist state establishment, the nationalist opposition and the AKP and liberals differ on how these goals are to be achieved. The first group advocates isolating the Kurdish administration diplomatically and keeping it economically weak, while the second groups sees the landlocked Kurdish region as vulnerable and having little choice but to rely on Turkey for protection. Yet, the report states that

there has been a “strikingly pragmatic and largely effective compromise between the AKP and the more traditional establishment, combining military pressure, politics, diplomacy and economic incentives”. The Kurdish administration has realized that U.S. forces may leave Iraq, which leaves them dependent on the federal Iraqi government and neighboring states such as Turkey and Iran, and if this will be the case Turkey would be a much more useful partner to the Kurds than either Bagdad or Tehran, since Turkey possibly would give access to the European Union and its availability as a trans-shipment country for Kurdish oil and gas. *Zaman 14/11-08*

PRIME MINISTER ERDOGAN TOUCHES UPON SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS DURING HIS VISIT AT THE BROOKING INSTITUTE IN THE U.S

During Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s visit at the Brooking Institute in Washington on Friday he touched upon some important questions concerning U.S and European Union foreign policy. In a speech at the Institute, Erdogan warned the in-coming U.S administration of issues that could harm future bilateral relations between Turkey and the U.S by saying, “U.S. support is essential for maintaining the dialogue initiated with Armenia. Steps taken during the new period must not hinder our efforts”. He continued by saying that “Lobbies must not take part in solving international dispute”, referring to the Armenian lobbies in U.S that have had Barack Obama promise to formally recognize the mass killings 1915 as genocide. Erdogan met the emissaries of Obama for the first time at the G-20 summit this weekend, a meeting, which according to one of the emissaries, was successful. Erdogan stressed that those countries that want Iran to drop its nuclear weapons scheme should first get rid of their own weapons and stated “That Iran tries to defend itself when faced with such demands, is normal for any country to do”. Erdogan continued his speech by criticizing U.S handling of the development efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan and noted that Turkey was doing a successful job in many hot regions. Erdogan said that “We are ready to train Iraqi security forces” and “It is Barack Obama’s call to set a date for the withdrawal from Iraq. I wish that it would be announced after preliminary preparations were concluded”. Erdogan also stressed that “We do not give money to Afghanistan, but invest there. Turkey supplies the country with education and health

services” and added that Afghanistan is a long term commitment for Turkey. Turkey’s position on the European Union membership and the Cyprus issue were also among the topics in Erdogans speech, in which he noted that EU has failed to honor its obligations towards Turkey. Turkey was promised “justice” in the divided island of Cyprus in 2004 but despite Turkey’s efforts to reach a solution, northern Cyprus is still being punished. *Hurriyet 17/11-08*

TURKEY WON A SEAT IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

The claims that Turkey has paid the membership dues of poor UN countries in order to secure their votes in the election last month, has been denied by the Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan. Turkey won a seat by wide margin in the UN Security Council competing against Iceland and Austria. Turkey got votes from 151 out of 192 countries. Babacan said in a written statement that Turkey has pursued an active policy not only in its relations with the neighboring countries but also in Africa, Southeast Asia, the Pacific and Latin America. He continued by saying that Turkey has been lobbying effectively for the election to the UN Security Council since 2003, but denied paying other countries dues to win their votes. *Zaman 17/11-08*

NEW SECURITY PACT BETWEEN BAGHDAD AND THE U.S

After Jan. 1 Turkey will be obliged to seek permission of the Iraqi government in order to conduct air operations to crack down on the terrorist organization PKK in northern Iraq, according to the security pact between Baghdad and the U.S. Up until now Turkey and U.S had an agreement that allowed Turkey to carry out air operations against PKK positions in northern Iraq, since the U.S currently controls Iraqi air space. U.S has helped the Turkish air forces to strike their targets by providing intelligence on PKK movements in northern Iraq. An official from the Turkish Foreign Ministry told the daily *Hürriyet* that “it is important to remember that Iraq does not have a strong air force. In that case, if an operation, which is deemed as crucial for Turkey is needed, then Turkey can present a fait accompli”. The Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki will send a representative to Ankara on Wednesday to inform about the security agreement between Iraq and the U.S and the Iraqis also insisted on a pledge that American forces would not use Iraqi territory to attack another country. *Hürriyet 18/11-08*

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND AZERBAIJAN HAVE BEEN STRAINED

BECAUSE OF DISAGREEMENT ON ENERGY PRICE

The relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan have intensified mainly because of three reasons concerning the region’s energy fields. The relations between the two countries have been strained for some time and a crisis has only been avoided thanks to the intervention of leaders from both sides. The first major problem between the two countries is about the price of the natural gas. Turkey is buying from the first stage of the Azerbaijan Shah Deniz field. The gas has been transported through the BTE route (Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum) since July 2007. During a period of one year there was an agreement between Ankara and Baku that foresaw the price of natural gas as \$120 per-cubic-meter. Negotiations for a new price began last July and Turkey is offering a price around \$150 which was turned down. The international market price for gas is around \$300 and Turkey buys gas from Russia and Iran for \$280 - \$290. Russia has told the Azerbaijani government that it will buy its gas for the international market prices. This has increased Azerbaijan’s resentment towards Turkey further. Another problem area involves the second stage of the Sha Deniz field which has been newly discovered. One of the biggest actors that would like to get a share of this field is the European Union which is looking for the best supply for the Nabucco pipeline project. According to talks in the energy cognoscenti Turkey has asked for eight billion cubic meters to be allocated, whereas the Azerbaijani government has been proposing four billion cubic meters only. Even if the two negotiations over the first and second stages are held separately, the two issues are related. The Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev stated on a visit in Ankara at beginning of the month that unless Baku gets a satisfactory deal over the price of gas it will not be enthusiastic in closing a deal on the allocation of gas from stage two. An official from BP has said that Turkey’s offer is not acceptable and unless there is an agreement, BP will be looking for other alternatives than to allocate gas to Turkey from stage two. Turkey must increase its price offer in the face of rising competition from other buyers. The third problem concerns the BTC pipeline (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan) where the state owned Turkish Pipeline Company, BOTAS has asked for an increase to the 35 cents-per-barrel fee it charges to transfer oil, a request turned down by the BTC consortium. *Hürriyet 20/11-08*

US: TURKEY WILL PLAY AN IMPORTANT GEOPOLITICAL ROLE IN THE FUTURE

According to an U.S. intelligence report Turkey’s geopolitical importance would have increased by 2025. The report of the National Intelligence Council

forecasts a rise of the geopolitical importance of non-Arab Muslim states such as Turkey, Indonesia and Iran. The report also predicts that global warming could help Russia's economy, Eastern and Central European countries could be overrun by organized crime and the U.S dollar could further decline in importance. The global warming will extend Russia's growing season and ease access to northern oil fields, which will strengthen its economy, but the report also predicts that Russia potential emergence as a world power may be prohibited by lagging investment in its energy sector, persistent crime and government corruption. *Hürriyet* 21/11-08

IRAQI CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION IN BAGHDAD CONDEMNS THE PKK ATTACKS

Turkish foreign Minister Ali Babacan responded with confidence to the agreement recently signed between the U.S. and Iraq, and said that the withdrawal of the U.S forces within three years will not have a negative impact on Turkey's fight against PKK, which has bases in Iraq. This deal also envisages that the U.S will hand over full control of Iraqi airspace to Iraqi forces in less than two month's time. Last Wednesday a trilateral meeting between Iraqi, Turkish and U.S officials took place in Baghdad at which it was decided that a joint committee to combat the PKK will be formed. After the meeting, Babacan said "there were also military officials and other related parties at the meeting. The fact that the PKK is a terrorist organization has once more been confirmed at this meeting". There is strong cooperation between the U.S and Turkey concerning the fight against terrorism and the Iraqi central administration in Baghdad also condemns the PKK attacks but claims that they have little power in the Kurdish-run north to curb them. At the meeting there were also two representatives from the regional Kurdish administration in northern Iraq. Babacan commented on the future U.S withdrawal by saying "This means that Iraq will get more involved in its own issues. There is nothing more natural than Iraq's further involvement in the efforts that have been exerted so far. We will see a more intensified Iraqi presence in further efforts against the PKK". The Iraqi state minister for national dialogue tried to ease the concerns of the Turkish public, saying "The deal

doesn't spell the opening of the way to terrorists, but it implies a blocking of them". *Zaman* 21/11-08

THE ARMENIAN FOREIGN MINISTER VISIT ISTANBUL

The Armenian foreign minister, Edvard Nalbandyan arrived in Istanbul today and his purpose with the visit is to have talks with the Turkish foreign minister Ali Babacan. The two ministers are expected to discuss the relations between Turkey and Armenia. Another topic that is expected to be discussed is the Karabag issue, the genocide claims and the Turkish proposal of the Caucasus stability and cooperation platform. *Yeni Safak* 24/11-08

RUSSIA CLAIMS THAT TURKS FOUGHT AGAINST THEM IN THE GEORGIAN WAR

Russia claims that during the war in Georgia Turkish citizens took part in the fight against Russia. The head of the Russian state prosecution committee answered a question during a conference in St. Petersburg concerning which nations that were involved during the war, and alleged that the U.S, the Czech republic, Ukraine, the Baltic states and Turkey were represented. Aleksandr Bastriykin continued by saying that they have enough evidence to prove that this was the case. Some supposedly trained the Georgian armed forces, and among them there were two snipers, one from Ukraine and one from Estonia. Bastriykin stated that these are criminal acts and that Russia will bring this subject up on their next meeting with the Interpol. The Georgian chief of the National Security council, Kaka Lomaia, told Reuters that it is difficult to respond to such ridiculous allegations, since it is only possible for Georgians to join the Georgian army. He continued by saying that by listening to this story, it would seem like almost the whole world was in Georgia during the August war and that this is only Russian imaginations. *Radikal*, 24-11-08